



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A12120086

Page 1 of 1

Closeout

OIG received allegations that NSF-funded¹ publications² contained self-plagiarism, indicating possible duplication, as well as falsification both of demographics for samples and of labels for examples given within the publications. The allegation also pointed out the order of publication for two of the articles as evidence of possible falsification.

Our office determined that the overarching topics stemmed from related ideas and data collection methods, though the main idea of each paper, the data used for results, and each paper's conclusions were not duplicative. In addition, because the articles identified the dates of submission, we found no evidence of misrepresentation related to which study preceded another.

Based on NSF's regulation, an author re-using text in multiple publications is not generally considered research misconduct. However, we wrote to the Subjects³ about the apparent falsifications. Based on the evidence and the Subjects' responses to our letter, we determined that the apparent falsification for the samples was in fact a misreporting based on a mixture of an incomplete understanding of how to report attributes, in addition to error. The Subject also admitted to erroneously labeling two examples in two of the publications. We determined that the mislabeled figures did not rise to the level of research misconduct.

We sent the Subject who took responsibility for the errors⁴ a Questionable Research Practice letter, reminding him of the importance of avoiding research practices that may lead to the impression of research misconduct. We also recommended that he submit errata to the journals in which the articles were published.

This case is closed and no further action will be taken.

