



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: I-18-0107-O

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Our office received an allegation of data falsification related to an article published by two NSF-funded PIs. The complaint alleged the PIs knowingly published an article that contained numerous errors and nonreproducible data. The complaint also alleged the PIs knew of these errors and made no attempt to correct them or to retract the article. The complaint further raised questions about the assumptions and approximations used by the PIs in the article.

We referred the matter to the PI's institution and they subsequently performed a pre-inquiry assessment per their policy. During this assessment, they interviewed both PIs, obtained data files related to the data in the article, and received reviewer comments from the manuscript when it was originally submitted. They also obtained expert opinions from independent, unbiased researchers at their university.

Based on the evidence it received, the university determined that there is an error in the header of a table of data in the article; however, the data is correctly described in the text of the article. The university sought an expert opinion from two researchers. The first researcher concluded that the error does not warrant a correction by the journal. He also concluded that given the stated goals of the article, the assumptions and approximations made by the PIs were reasonable. A second researcher concurred with the positions stated by the first researcher in his summary.

We reviewed the evidence and concur with the university that the allegations do not meet the definition of research misconduct, as the error in the table is an honest error. We also agree that the assumptions and approximations made in the article are reasonable for its intended purpose.

This case is closed with no further action taken.