



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: I-19-0075-O

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We investigated an allegation that a former postdoctoral researcher (Postdoc) falsified images in publications of NSF-funded research. When questioned, the Postdoc indicated that at that time, she used unrelated images as placeholders in manuscripts and did not intend for the images to go to publication. Nevertheless, the images appeared in the final articles. We found the images did not reflect the data or results discussed in the articles, which were not affected by the images. There was no issue with the data itself, which has been replicated. The journals for the articles in question accepted retractions or corrections. During the investigation, we noted the research was conducted more than 15 years ago, and there were questions about the degree to which the Postdoc was mentored.

Based on our review of the evidence and totality of circumstances, we concluded, that the former Postdoc's actions did not rise to the level of research misconduct. We sent the Postdoc a warning letter about her questionable research practices. We also sent her former mentor a warning letter about the importance of mentoring in preventing research misconduct.

This case is **closed** with no further action taken.