



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A02-37

Page 1 of 1

Our office received a complaint concerning potential research falsification. Complaint¹ focuses on the “suspicious” nature of an experiment shown on the web site² of an NSF sponsored research program. The purpose of the experiment is to show how structures may fail under stress. Specifically, the complainant states that the experiment shown on the web site is “suspicious because the ‘old technology’ square column in the middle . . . is loaded with . . . twice as much” weight as the circular columns on the side. Complainant infers that the circular columns on the side represent a “new design” structure and that the new design structures bear only half the weight of the “old technology” square columns in the experiment. Complainant suggests that this experiment is deceptive because it makes the newer circular columns, on either side of the “old technology” square column, appear to be able to sustain the effects of stress simulated via this experiment.

A review of the website indicates that the authors of the web site make no comparative claim between the square and circular columns. The web site clearly states that the video experiments simply are an experimental representation of the progressive collapse of reinforced concrete. The web site makes clear that the center column (what the complainant refers to as “old technology”) is typical of reinforced concrete construction before the 1970’s. However, no mention is made of the nature or construct of the outer circular columns and no claim is made as to their ability to withstand the same shearing force. The apparent sole purpose of the experiment was to demonstrate the effects of stress on older concrete technology.

We conclude that there is no indication of research falsification. Accordingly, this case is **closed**.

¹ [REDACTED]

² Web site is located at [REDACTED]