

Logical Biology 5(1): 76-78, 2005

<http://logibio.com>

© Truthfinding Cyberpress

PUBLIC NOTICE

EDITORIAL

A Public Robbery of Science in the Public Library of Science

Shi V. Liu

Eagle Institute of Molecular Medicine
Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, USA

E-mail: SVL@logibio.com

(Received 2005-03-03; revised 2005-03-04; accepted 2005-03-04)

(Published online 2005-03-04)

HIGHLIGHT

It is a very ironic situation that, while true pioneering scientific works have been suppressed for publication for over a decade by mainstream scientific journals, a flawed repetition suddenly became a spot-lighted “discovery”. Even after the oversight was pointed out to the editors, the journals who brought out the repetition-type study still insist on their standings. This situation resembles a typical robbery in science. However, such misconducts should be condemned and stopped.

KEY WORDS

Misconduct, Robbery, Misrepresentation, Misjudgment, Ethics

Robbery is a serious crime in any society. People committed robbery are not only condemned by the public but also severely punished by the justice. However, what about the robbery in science?

Recently, *PLoS Biology*, the first “new” scientific journal launched by the Public Library of Science (PLOS), published a research report by Stewart *et al.* (15). The report claimed that “Previous studiesdo not address aging in terms of parent and offspring” and “..... individual cells growing under the microscope have been followed in the past for a small number of divisions”. Such a statement was a deliberate attempt to elevate their study to a “ground-breaking” level. Unfortunately, “experts” apparently believed in this and even the top scientific journal *Science* joined the praise to this study.

However, I must say that statement is a complete lie!

I have started such kind study fifteen years ago (5). More importantly, I have published experimental reports and theoretical studies (1, 3, 6, 7, 9-14) much earlier than this paper despite a significant delay due to repeated failures in seeking publication in the

so-called top journals. In fact, I have even obtained a patent for a method and apparatus to produce truly age-homogenous cell population (4). I believe, if people will discount my publications because of their bias against some journals, an awarded patent should stand for true novelty of my study then.

I initially thought that Stewart *et al.* might just overlook my previous publications. So I kindly suggested Stewart to write a correction to overcome the “overlook” problem in his paper. However, he firmly refused to do so. I also wrote to *PLoS Biology* editor Kirkwood since he was the science editor for this paper and pointed out this significant oversight. However, the reply (not from Kirkwood but from Catriona MacCallum) was that (*PLoS Biology*) “will not be able to include a correction ...”. I replied to this response and asked the journal to re-consider this decision. However, I received no reply at all. Thus, it became clear to me that Stewart *et al.*’s action was not simply an oversight but a serious misconduct (2). To grab a scientific credit that does not belong to them and insist on keep it is a typical robbery. To allow such robbery happen and to enjoy the benefit of such robbery (*PLoS Biology* may be very happy to see that this top-1 viewed publication actually boosted its image), the scientific journal actually becomes a participant of this robbery.

Before I reached that conclusion, I was actually trying to give Stewart *et al.* some credit for bringing spot light to this once dark field of research, even though I had already come up with my conclusion that this paper contained many scientific mistakes and fallacious reasoning (8). I submitted a perspective-type manuscript to *Science* to further advance the implications of bacterial aging study. The manuscript was entitled “A High Time to Unify Biology under Common Life Principles” (submitted on Feb. 14, 2005 with a manuscript ID 111112 which was handled by editor Orla Smith). This manuscript pointed out the current dichotomous view of life between microbial and microbial life forms and showed that a correction of the mistaken view on microbial life actually leads to a unification of biology under the common life principles. Unfortunately, *Science* rejected this paper quoting the “article was not received as enthusiastically as other unsolicited piece in the Perspective’s section of *Science*’s Compass” and “majority of articles in *Science*’s Compass are commissioned”. In fact, a shorter version of this paper was submitted as a letter to *Science* earlier in May 13, 2004 (before the “breaking news” caused by the Stewart *et al.*’s paper). But even that very short letter was rejected because, as I was told over the phone by an editor, it contains too strong statements.

After I run into such a stonewall of refusing correction by Stewart and *PLoS Biology*, I sent to *Science* another manuscript entitled “Another Common and Detrimental Misconduct in Scientific Research” (submitted on Feb. 18, 2005 with a manuscript ID 1111295 which was handled by editor Katrina L. Kelner). Unfortunately again *Science* was unable to publish it because the “manuscript was not given a high priority rating during the initial screening process”.

So both of my “high road” and “low road” approaches did not work in *Science* despite the fact that both manuscripts are highly related to an “hot” issue prominently covered in *Science* (Feb. 4 News of the Week and Feb. 18 Editors’ Choices). This makes me wonder, as a leading scientific journal presumably dedicated to promoting science and seeking truth, how could *Science* be so willing and generous to spent its time and space to promote a fraud research paper while so reluctant and frugal to communicate the truth?

What kind a moral standard does this top journal have in dealing with misconduct in science? Does *Science* feel any guilty by glorifying a robbery in science?

REFERENCES

1. **Liu, S. V.** 2004. Age synchronization: Retrospectives and perspectives. *Logical Biology* **4**:88-101.
2. **Liu, S. V.** 2005. Another common and detrimental misconduct in scientific research. *Logical Biology* **5**:70-72.
3. **Liu, S. V.** 2000. Logical fallacies and methodological mistakes in microbiology - An overview. *Logical Biology* **1**:25-31.
4. **Liu, S. V.** 2004. Method and apparatus for producing age-synchronized cells. **US patent US6767734B**.
5. **Liu, S. V.** 2005. PhD: Using philosophy and logic in scientific research. *Logical Biology* **5**:33-37.
6. **Liu, S. V.** 2004. Prokaryotic aging: Breaking through the "cell cycle" limitation. *Logical Biology* **4**:1-6.
7. **Liu, S. V.** 2000. Revisiting the concept of microbial resuscitation. *ASM News* **66**:123.
8. **Liu, S. V.** 2005. Right direction but backward movement: A new finding or a flawed repetition in bacterial aging study? *Logical Biology* **5**:38-47.
9. **Liu, S. V.** 1999. Tracking bacterial growth in liquid media and a new bacterial life model. *Science in China* **42**:644-654.
10. **Liu, S. V.** 1999. The validation of microbial "resuscitation". *ASM News* **65**:185.
11. **Liu, S. V.** 2000. Viable but non-culturable (VBNC) microorganisms: A misnomer or a whistle-blower? *Logical Biology* **1**:17-20.
12. **Liu, S. V.** 2000. What is bacterial life? *Logical Biology* **1**:5-16.
13. **Liu, S. V., and J. J. Zhang.** 2004. Age synchronization of *Caulobacter crescentus* and implications for prokaryotic aging study. *Logical Biology* **4**:7-15.
14. **Liu, S. V., and J. J. Zhang.** 2004. Crossband in *Caulobacter*'s stalk is a cell reproduction remnant and bacterial age indicator. *Logical Biology* **4**:16-27.
15. **Stewart, E. J., R. Madden, G. Paul, and F. Taddei.** 2005. Aging and death in an organism that reproduces by morphologically symmetric division. *PLoS Biol* **3**:295-300.