



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A-03080044

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We received an allegation that a figure in a published paper¹ was used in the recent NSF proposal² jointly submitted by the PI (subject 1) and three co-PIs (subjects 2, 3, and 4) without appropriate citation or attribution.

Our review suggested that part of the figure used in the recent NSF proposal appeared to have been copied from the published figure. Further, our review of subject 1's earlier NSF proposal³ showed a similar, although not identical, figure to that used in the recent NSF proposal. Consequently, we determined that, reasonably, it was subject 1 who was responsible for including this figure in the recent NSF proposal. Therefore, we decided to contact subject 1 first to ask about this matter.

Subject 1, responding via email, explained that this was all a mistake. He said his former Post Doctoral Researcher (former researcher), whom he copied in his email response to us, prepared the figure that was used in the recent NSF proposal. Subject 1 did not blame the former researcher for what happened, but explained that he as the PI on the proposal, should have been more careful. He said that because the figure was not really necessary for the proposed NSF project, a fact we separately confirmed, he did not pay much attention to it. Subject 1 also provided a prior paper⁴ he co-authored with the former researcher that contained a their own version of the figure that was similar to the figure used in the recent NSF proposal. He noted that this figure had been used for a long time (about 20 years) by researchers and it had become common knowledge. He said he would apologize to the primary author of the paper.

Subject 1 apologized, via email, to the primary author of the paper.⁵ We concluded that subject 1 had been solely responsible for the inclusion of the figure in the NSF proposal. Further, although subject 1's action was a deviation from accepted practice, it was not a serious deviation. Therefore, this case is closed and no further action will be taken.

¹ [REDACTED]

² NSF proposal [REDACTED], entitled "[REDACTED]" submitted by the PI, [REDACTED] (subject 1) co-PIs, [REDACTED] (subject 2) and [REDACTED] (subject 3), [REDACTED] and co-PI, [REDACTED] (subject 4) from [REDACTED]

³ NSF proposal [REDACTED], entitled "[REDACTED]" submitted by [REDACTED] (subject 1) as the sole PI.

⁴ The subject is [REDACTED], a [REDACTED] (subject 1) "[REDACTED]" [REDACTED]