

CLOSEOUT MEMO M01030010

The National Science Foundation (NSF) Office of Inspector General (OIG) received an allegation of plagiarism against a PI.¹ The PI was funded by an NSF [REDACTED] award.² The complainant,³ a former collaborator, alleges that a figure in the PI's published paper (paper #1)⁴ contains the same data as two figures from his paper (paper #2).⁵ He also alleges that the PI fabricated data in one figure.

Upon review, the figure in paper #1 is remarkably similar to two figures in paper #2. The figure in paper #1 does contain the same data as the figure in paper #2 without reference to the published work of the complainant. However, the data reported in the two papers was collected while the complainant was working as a visiting scientist in the PI's laboratory. The laboratory notebook of the PI does contain the data described in the figures of both paper #1 and paper #2. Further, a graduate student⁶ in the PI's lab collected the data for both papers. Also, the two papers report the same data, but the interpretation of that data in paper #1 and paper #2 are different, thus the two papers present incongruous conclusions.

This allegation is the result of a collaboration that has dissolved. The PI, the complainant, as well as the PI's graduate student contributed to the collection of the data and each retain rights to discuss and publish the data because they played a role in creating the data. Therefore, the PI and the graduate student are not required to cite the published work of the complainant; although, an acceptable professional standard would have been for the PI to cite the published work of the complainant to provide readers with a complete delineation of the research record.

The allegation is unsupported, therefore we close this inquiry and no further action will be taken.

cc: Investigations, IG

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