

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION  
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL  
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

## ACTION MEMORANDUM

TO: AIGI

File Number: A-01100031

Date: March 20, 2002

Subject: Closeout

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We received allegations of misconduct in science involving the subject's<sup>1</sup> declined NSF proposal.<sup>2</sup> First, the subject allegedly plagiarized text from two source documents<sup>3</sup> into the proposal. Second, the subject allegedly misrepresented three references<sup>4</sup> and details about one manuscript<sup>5</sup> in the same proposal.

Our initial review of the alleged plagiarism showed that the subject's proposal contained a small amount of text that appeared to have been copied/paraphrased from two source documents without distinguishing the copied text from text original to the subject. In three of the four sections, however, the subject had cited the appropriate source document within the text. In the fourth section, which consisted of a single sentence, the subject had failed to cite the appropriate source document.

Our initial review of the misrepresentation of references allegation showed that the subject included three citations in the body of the proposal that were not listed in the reference section of the proposal and that were not readily verifiable as existing publications. We also noted that the subject listed one manuscript as "accepted" by a journal, but other information suggested that the manuscript had not been "accepted."

<sup>1</sup> The subject, [REDACTED], is [REDACTED]  
<sup>2</sup> [REDACTED], entitled "[REDACTED]"  
<sup>3</sup> [REDACTED], "was submitted by the subject [REDACTED]"  
<sup>4</sup> [REDACTED]  
<sup>5</sup> [REDACTED] were all cited in the proposal but none was listed in the reference section and none could be verified as published articles.

Name:	Prepared by:	Cleared by:		
	Agent:	Attorney:	Supervisor:	AIGI
Signature & date:				



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With respect to the alleged copied/paraphrased sections in the proposal, the subject pointed out that three of the four sections contained the appropriate citation to the source document, and that two of these sections cited the source documents twice. Further, the subject stated that the four sections of material identified as copied were either descriptive protocol information to be employed in the proposed research or general information that was well-accepted by other scientists in the field. Because the vast majority of copied/paraphrased text were cited, we concluded that, although this was a deviation from accepted practice, it did not rise to the level of misconduct in science.

With respect to the misrepresented citations and details about the manuscript presented in the proposal, the subject's explanation supported a conclusion that these were the consequence of honest errors caused by inadvertent sloppiness and equally honest errors caused by the electronic submission of the proposal to NSF. The subject provided the corrected citations and plausible and, in two instances, verifiable explanations as to how the errors with the citations occurred. Further, the subject provided evidence that the manuscript had been resubmitted following significant revision and, instead of being accepted, was sent out for review again. The subject said it had been a mistake to list the manuscript as "accepted." We concluded that the misrepresentations were the result of honest errors and carelessness and not misconduct in science.

We wrote to the subject strongly urging that all future material submitted to NSF be carefully reviewed for accuracy and appropriate scholarship.

This case is closed and no further action will be taken.