

CLOSEOUT FOR M00030014

On 13 March 2000, a program officer¹ brought an allegation of misconduct in science to our attention. The complainant² received a NSF proposal submitted by subjects 1, 2, and 3³ to review. He declined to review the proposal, however, alleging these subjects failed to cite him as the source of some of the data in the proposal. In addition, the complainant alleged that subjects 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6⁴ used these same data without permission in a manuscript submitted for publication.⁵ He wrote to subjects 1, 2, and 3 about his concerns.

After receipt of the complainant's letter, the subjects withdrew the proposal and revised the draft manuscript, removing unpublished data and citing the complainant more thoroughly. The subjects offered to make the complainant a co-author, but he declined. The complainant said that he had learned that subjects 1 and 2 had resubmitted the proposal and he suspected his unpublished data had been removed and the recent publication with other data cited appropriately.

In our conversation with the complainant, he described his concerns as issues between collaborators that he thought had been resolved. As part of an ongoing collaboration, the complainant explained that he shared samples and data with subjects 1 and 2. The complainant explained that he thought data shared prior to publication should be treated as privileged information. Although subjects 1, 2, and 3 acknowledged him in the proposal, the complainant thought it read as if subject 1, the lead PI, had done more work than he actually had. In addition, he said that some of the data used in the proposal were recently published,⁶ but not cited appropriately. The complainant also said that when subject 1, a young scientist, wrote the proposal he may not have been aware of the complainant's recent publication that contained some of these data.

We observed that the first NSF proposal did contain references to the complainant for the data. It did not contain a reference to the publication mentioned by the complainant. The

¹ [REDACTED] is a program officer, [REDACTED]

² The complainant, [REDACTED] in the [REDACTED] at the [REDACTED]

³ NSF proposal [REDACTED] entitled [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] was submitted by PI [REDACTED] (subject 1), and co-PIs, [REDACTED] (subject 2), and [REDACTED] (subject 3). All three were from [REDACTED]

⁴ [REDACTED] (subject 4), [REDACTED] (subject 5), [REDACTED] (subject 6) are from [REDACTED]

⁵ [REDACTED] was submitted to the [REDACTED]

⁶ [REDACTED] co-authored by subjects 1, 2, 4, 3, 5, and 6.

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resubmitted proposal⁷ contained significantly more citations and references to the work of the complainant and contained no unpublished data. Although we did not receive a copy of the manuscript, the published article contained numerous references to the complainant.

On the one hand the subjects should have been more careful in citing the source of the data used in the proposal, both published and unpublished. On the other hand, the subjects and the complainant were part of a collaborative effort, one that had shared samples and data for many years. Once the subjects realized the complainant was upset about the proposal and the manuscript, they corrected them. Although the subjects should have been more diligent in their reporting and citing of data in the proposal and the manuscript, in this case, it does not rise to the level of misconduct in science.

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

cc: Integrity, IG

⁷ NSF proposal [REDACTED] entitled [REDACTED] with subject 1 as the PI and subject 2 as the co-PI.