

Closeout for M00080031

In August, 2000, the complainant¹ wrote to us to point out that a recent paper in a scientific journal, whose authors² claimed NSF support, described a phenomenon that was identical to his previously published research.³ The complainant believed the authors' experiments were essentially the same as his, acknowledged the authors cited his papers, but thought the reference to his papers was not as forthright and significant as it should be. The complainant also provided a copy of his letter to the journal editor that raised more specific questions about the publication process.

Because of the technical nature of the allegation, we asked an engineer with expertise in the field (a) for an evaluation of the similarity of the two research projects and (b) if the authors' reference to the complainant's papers was reflective of its relevance to the complainant's research. The engineer agreed the two research projects were similar. However, the engineer noted that the authors did not reproduce the complainant's research. Because of this, the engineer thought the authors' reference to the complainant's papers was associated with a serious comment not made in passing; rather it was a polite way to indicate a potential problem. He thought the authors' paper took a more rigorous approach to the topic, and it was now up to the scientific community to either verify or reject either or both.

We agree with the engineer's reasoning that the authors' citation to the complainant's papers is sufficient. This inquiry is closed and no further action will be taken on this case.

cc: Investigation, IG

¹ (footnote redacted).

² (footnote redacted).

³ (footnote redacted).