

CLOSEOUT FOR M-92070029

On June 23, 1992, OIG received an allegation of misconduct in science from the complainant, [REDACTED]

He alleged that portions of his MS thesis at the [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and parts of a MS thesis of a fellow graduate student, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] had been plagiarized. He alleged that subject #1, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] also a graduate student in the Department [REDACTED] had transcribed or closely paraphrased portions of the two theses in her MS thesis, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] without proper citation or indentation for sections of transcribed material. In addition, the complainant alleged that subject #1, in conjunction with subjects #2, [REDACTED] #3, [REDACTED], a graduate student, both in the same department as subject #1, had transcribed or closely paraphrased portions of his MS thesis in their jointly authored publication, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED], without proper citation or offset for sections of transcribed material. Finally, he indicated that the fellow graduate student's thesis contained transcribed or closely paraphrased portions of the complainant's MS thesis. However, he was not indicated as a subject in this case by the complainant because he had cited the complainant in his thesis.

In response to OIG's inquiry, two of the subjects indicated that the institution had investigated these allegations and determined that no misconduct was involved. However, the following changes in subject #1's thesis were instituted as a result of the institution's investigation. Subject #1's MS thesis was revised to include twenty-five references to the complainant's MS thesis and two references to the fellow graduate student's thesis. Subsequent examination of subject #1's revised MS thesis verified that these references were in her thesis. In addition, at the investigation committee's recommendation, subject #1 wrote a letter to the editor of the journal in which their jointly authored paper appeared explaining the omission of the reference to the complainant's MS thesis. In this same letter to the editor, subject #1 stated that the paper cited her MS thesis which also referenced the complainant's MS thesis. The letter was published in the journal. OIG concluded that the institution's actions in this situation have protected the scientific literature by assuring the record was corrected to cite the original work of the scientists involved.

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With regard to any action by NSF in this case, NSF's misconduct regulation states that NSF investigates allegations of misconduct involving "activities funded by NSF" (45 CFR §689.1). The acknowledgment sections in the relevant MS theses and in the subjects' published article identified either a private or a corporate foundation as the funding source for the work. Examination of subject #2's only NSF award that could possibly have been associated with the work involved, provided no definitive evidence that NSF funds had been used by any of the subjects for the relevant work.

The three subjects stated that no NSF funds had been involved in the work. In addition, the complainant was unable to provide any additional information that would show that NSF support had been used for any of the work associated with these allegations. Because this work was funded by private and corporate foundations, and not by NSF, we lacked jurisdiction to pursue this allegation further.

OIG determined that because the institution's action had corrected the literature and because NSF could take no further action, the case should be closed.

cc: Senior Scientist, Deputy AIG-Oversight, AIG-Oversight, IG