

CLOSEOUT FOR M92100043

This case came to the attention of OIG when [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] University (the complainant) called [REDACTED] OIG on October 14, 1992. The complainant had reviewed a proposal submitted by [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] (the subject) and alleged that the proposal ignored significant work in their field. The complainant explained that the subject was aware of this work because the two had discussed it over the telephone before the proposal [REDACTED] entitled [REDACTED] [REDACTED] was submitted. OIG was concerned that the subject might have committed intellectual theft and made misrepresentations in his proposal. After the complainant clarified his allegation in a subsequent letter and telephone conversation, we concluded that he was not making an allegation of misconduct in science.

The complainant denied that he was alleging intellectual theft. He said that the subject was proposing research that the subject himself had devised and that was in some respects original. OIG examined the proposal and confirmed the complainant's assessment. Although the complainant's letter states that the "proposed research has already been performed by myself," he subsequently clarified this assertion to mean that he and other researchers had already used similar techniques to address the same problems and that a casual reader might assume from the tone of the subject's proposal that the subject proposed the first application of these techniques in this area.

OIG examined the proposal to see whether it made false or misleading claims. We determined that the proposal minimizes previous contributions in this area of research, but avoids false statements. A careful reader would not be misled and would understand that the subject had provided an incomplete review of the literature from which it would be difficult to judge the originality of the proposed research. OIG concluded that the omission of relevant citations raised questions about the subject's command of the field, but was not evidence that the subject was attempting to portray the work of others as his own.

The complainant stated that the "flavor" of the proposal implied a degree of originality that the work did not possess. He added that he was concerned because reviewers might be misled into seeing the proposal as far more innovative than it was. This does not constitute an allegation of misconduct in science.

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

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
Staff Scientist, Oversight

Concurrence:

Donald E. Buzzelli 11/8/93

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Deputy Assistant Inspector General,
Oversight

noted James J. Zwolenik 11/9/93
James J. Zwolenik
Assistant Inspector General for Oversight

L. Nancy Birnbaum

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cc: Signatories
Inspector General