

## CLOSEOUT FOR M-93110059

On November 19, 1993, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] brought two letters to OIG. These letters, addressed to [REDACTED] were from the complainant, [REDACTED]

In these letters he alleged that four subjects<sup>1</sup> had: 1) failed to include all the available data in an initial published paper on which the complainant was a co-author; 2) overstated the available "evidence" in the initial paper and other subsequent review articles; and 3) omitted the complainant as a co-author on an abstract that included some of his work. The complainant further alleged that subjects #1 and #2 had: 4) failed to provide him sufficient opportunity to review the initial paper on which the complainant was a co-author prior to publication; 5) failed to credit collaborators including the complainant in three articles that contained joint work; and 6) failed to acknowledge NSF supported work in the same three articles. These allegations involved 13 NSF awards, each with one or more of the subjects as investigators, collaborating with the NSF supported [REDACTED] (the project).

OIG reviewed the complainant's letters, the relevant diary notes provided by one program manager, and the articles in question. OIG contacted the complainant who provided additional information. Finally, OIG contacted the subjects to elicit their views.

With regard to the first allegation, OIG determined that the subjects did not incorporate all the available data in the initial paper, but instead included selected diagrams to represent pertinent information collected in the large database. OIG concluded that the data not included in the subjects' paper would not have changed the paper substantively. OIG understands that it is not always possible or desirable to include all the data gathered especially when these represent a large dataset. There was nothing improper about the subjects not including all the diagrams associated with the large database. This allegation has no substance.

With regard to the second allegation, the data presented in the published paper, on which the complainant was a co-author, supported the subjects' interpretations and OIG found no evidence that the subjects had overstated the data in the article. OIG learned from the

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complainant that when he reviewed the co-authored initial paper he disagreed with some of the interpretations. OIG learned that the complainant, although he disagreed with some of the interpretations, wanted credit as a co-author. Scientific disagreement with respect to reasonable interpretations is not an issue of misconduct in science. OIG determined that the subjects repeated these same interpretations in subsequent review articles. This allegation has no substance.

With regard to the third allegation, the subjects explained that the abstract was an interpretative abstract based primarily on data collected during the most recent field season. The subjects explained that, although the complainant had participated in the collection of these data, he had not been involved with their interpretation and therefore was not included as a co-author. The complainant confirmed that he had not been involved with the interpretation of these data.

OIG learned that within this scientific field it was commonly accepted practice that authorship privileges on interpretative abstracts are granted only to those investigators who were involved with the actual interpretations and that data collection alone was not sufficient for co-authorship. This allegation has no substance.

With regard to the fourth allegation, OIG was told by the complainant that he had received a copy of the initial paper on which he was a co-author just prior to his departure for a lengthy field season, and he did not have sufficient time to adequately review it. The complainant believed that subjects #1 and #2, who were responsible for distributing copies of the paper, should have provided him more time to review it. OIG determined that the complainant had received a copy of the paper at least three months before its publication, but because of his own commitments did not review the paper until shortly before it was published. Although the subjects' behavior may not have been collegial with respect to assuring that the complainant had sufficient time to review the paper, OIG determined that, in this case, the seriousness of this allegation did not constitute an issue of misconduct in science.

With regard to the fifth allegation, OIG determined that all three articles in question were general news articles. Two of the articles were written by science reporters, not by the subjects. The third article, authored by subjects #1 and #2, did not include the names of the other participants in the project in the text. However, the subjects mentioned the group project several times in the article as well as including as suggested reading a paper that was jointly authored by all the participants. Although it would have been collegial if subjects #1 and #2 had included the names of all the participants in the news article, they were not required to name everyone in the group. OIG determined that there was insufficient substance to the allegation to pursue it further.

With regard to the sixth allegation, OIG determined that NSF support had not been acknowledged in the three news articles. Although subjects #1 and #2 did not write two of the

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articles, they did write the third and should have acknowledged NSF's support. OIG learned that their failure to acknowledge NSF support in this article had already been brought to their attention by the NSF program manager in charge of the project. In response, the subjects had offered to write a letter to the journal explaining their omission. However, the program manager told them that this was not necessary, but urged them to acknowledge NSF support in the future. OIG determined that the subjects had been reminded of their responsibility to acknowledge NSF support when reporting work completed with NSF funds. OIG determined that the program adequately dealt with the subjects' failure to acknowledge NSF support and that in this case the matter was not sufficiently serious to pursue further as an issue of misconduct in science.

This inquiry was closed and no further action will be taken on this case.

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