

CLOSEOUT FOR M95050018

On 12 May 1995, two program officers¹ informed OIG of an allegation of misconduct in science against a scientist,² the subject, in connection with an NSF proposal he had submitted.³ A researcher⁴ alleged that the subject had made inappropriate use of the material in a manuscript in his proposal. OIG also reviewed an allegation that the subject's proposal falsely claimed that the manuscript, co-authored with another scientist,⁵ had been accepted for publication in a journal⁶ published by a prestigious society (the second journal) when it had actually been submitted to, and eventually published in, another journal (the third journal).⁷

The subject submitted three proposals to NSF. The first proposal⁸ cited the manuscript as "submitted" to the first journal⁹ in the subject's Biographical Sketch, as "submitted" to the second journal in the Results from Prior NSF Support section, and as published in a third journal in the most recently submitted progress report. The second proposal, the contents of which precipitated the allegation, cited the manuscript as "accepted" by the second journal (and specified a date of acceptance) in the Bibliography and the Results from Prior NSF Support sections. The second and third¹⁰ proposals listed the manuscript as "accepted" (but did not specify a date) by the second journal in the subject's Biographical Sketch.

Text in the second proposal's project description and preliminary data sections contains five citations to the manuscript. This text appears similar or substantially identical to text in the

¹ The program officers were Drs. [REDACTED]. They are in the Division [REDACTED] in the Directorate [REDACTED].

² The subject is Dr. [REDACTED]. At the time the allegation was made the subject was a faculty member of the Department [REDACTED] at the University [REDACTED]. He is currently on the faculty of the Department [REDACTED] at the University [REDACTED].

³ Proposal [REDACTED] was received by NSF on [REDACTED] and is entitled, "[REDACTED]". It was declined.

⁴ The researcher is [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] University in [REDACTED].

⁵ The scientist is [REDACTED]. He is the [REDACTED].

⁶ The journal is the [REDACTED].

⁷ The citation for this paper is: [REDACTED].

⁸ Proposal [REDACTED] was received by NSF on [REDACTED] and is entitled, "[REDACTED]". It was funded by NSF.

⁹ The journal was [REDACTED].

¹⁰ Proposal [REDACTED] was received by NSF on [REDACTED] and is entitled, "[REDACTED]". It was declined.

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paper published in the third journal. The text also refers to three figures. Only one of these figures was reproduced in the proposal and it appeared in the paper published in the third journal. The citations in the proposal text and accompanying the figures stated that the manuscript had been "accepted" for publication on a certain date by the second journal.

We could find no evidence that the subject had used the material in the manuscripts he had co-authored inappropriately, or that he had failed to cite it to the manuscripts or provide acknowledgment to his co-authors. We concluded there was no substance to this allegation and did not pursue it further.

When we asked the subject about the conflicting publication information, he explained, and provided supporting documentation to show, that the paper had been submitted to the first journal. The manuscript had passed the journal's initial screening, but had been rejected after a detailed review. It was revised and allegedly provided by the subject's co-author to a society member for consideration for publication in the second journal. The subject interpreted the co-author's comments about the member's opinions to mean that the paper might need revising but that it was accepted for publication in the second journal. He began incorrectly citing the manuscript as accepted for publication in it. The subject later learned that the member had not read the manuscript, and when he provided it to the member, learned that the member would not recommend it for publication. The manuscript was revised and submitted to the third journal, where it was published. The subject also provided written documentation that, over the period encompassed by this paper's successive submissions, the deteriorating communications between two of the co-authors had, in part, led to the subject's misunderstandings about the status of the manuscript.

We concluded that the subject's false claims about the manuscript were a bad practice but were not sufficiently serious to initiate an investigation. The seriousness of his actions were mitigated by the misinformation provided by, and poor communications with, his co-author. His false claims had not influenced the review process. The subject concluded that his actions were "honest error[s]" but that he was also "naïve and incorrect" to cite the manuscript incorrectly in his proposals. Through our exchanges, the subject now understands that making such false claims about the status of a manuscript in an NSF proposal is a bad practice and does not meet the scientific community's expectations for high scholarship. The subject's progress report with the accurate citation has corrected NSF's record. We concluded there was no need to pursue this matter further.

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

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