

Closeout for M96090024

This case was opened on September 3, 1996, to address the complainant's¹ allegations of misconduct in science and engineering against the subject² concerning their joint NSF grant (the grant).³ Specifically, the complainant alleged the subject deprived him of authorship credit, refused to share data, and falsified data.

AUTHORSHIP CREDIT

The complainant alleged he deserved co-authorship on a paper⁴ that resulted from research supported by the grant; the paper listed only the subject and his graduate student as authors. The complainant said that he should have been a co-author because he wrote programs for a data collection instrument and gave the subject a device to record field data.

The subject explained that he and the complainant did not have a formal agreement about authorship, but perhaps they should have; the complainant did not include the subject on his publications that resulted from research carried out under the grant. The subject pointed out that the instrument the complainant said he wrote programs for came with much of its own software. He noted that he spent a lot of time learning to program the instrument himself. He said the complainant was not the only person to provide him with advice about the operation of the instrument. He provided the instrument's programming guide to illustrate that many of the subject's and his programs were simply modifications of the manufacturer's programs. He acknowledged that the complainant wrote one independent program for the instrument, but neither he nor his graduate student had a copy of it or used it for the data presented in the paper.

The subject agreed that the complainant constructed a device for collecting field data and gave them that device, but said that the data they collected with that device were not presented in the paper; they used a different, simpler device to collect the data that were published in the paper. The subject felt that his limited use of the complainant's device did not obligate him to include the complainant as a co-author.

OIG concludes the subject's publication practice was generally consistent with that of the complainant's. Within the complainant's and subject's mutual publication practices (e.g., the complainant did not include the subject as co-author on his publications that were supported by the grant) the complainant's

¹ (footnote redacted).

² (footnote redacted).

³ (footnote redacted).

⁴ (footnote redacted).

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contribution of programs and a device would not require co-authorship. The allegation of deprivation of authorship credit is not supported by the evidence.

DATA SHARING

The complainant alleged the subject had not provided him with a copy of the data generated under their grant and used in the paper. The subject believed his graduate student had given the complainant copies of their research data, but did not know until he received our letter that the complainant did not have all the data (he said the complainant never contacted him to request such data). The subject said he was willing to share his data if the complainant was also willing to share. OIG advised the complainant and subject to work out a suitable arrangement to share the data.

DATA FALSIFICATION

The complainant alleged the subject falsified data because two procedures described in the paper for collecting data were not those actually used in the field, and thus, the resulting data were not accurately represented in the paper. The subject said the data were obtained using the procedure as described in the paper, and that this procedure is used by many scientists in the field. He noted the complainant had collected some field data using a different procedure, but that those data were not used in the paper. The subject provided his original data and our review supported the subject's description. The evidence does not support an allegation of data falsification.

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

cc: IG, Integrity