

CLOSEOUT FOR M97070022

OIG received an allegation from an NSF program director,¹ regarding possible misconduct by an NSF-supported PI (the subject²). The complainant³ alleged that the subject failed to give credit in his published articles for certain ideas that the complainant presented in articles or orally at scientific conferences. In addition, the complainant alleged that the subject deprived the complainant of credit for certain ideas by making changes in the proofs of two papers after the journal's referees had completed their review of the subject's manuscripts.

OIG analyzed the documents sent by the complainant and concluded that the allegation of failure to credit the complainant's ideas did not have substance. The complainant acknowledged that the subject published certain papers at issue many years after the complainant presented similar ideas in articles or at conferences. In two instances, a period of 12-13 years elapsed between publication of the complainant's and the subject's articles. Individuals can have many inputs to their ideas during long time lags such as those in this case, making it impossible to determine whether the complainant's ideas were the source of similar ideas set forth in the subject's later publications. Moreover, while citation of earlier, relevant source articles is the best practice, authors have considerable discretion in choosing citations and in the wording of text referring to cited articles.

Indeed, the subject's articles cite the complainant's article, but the complainant objects to the implication in the text of one of the subject's publications⁴ that the complainant drew on the subject's earlier work in formulating the analysis published by the complainant. During the review process the subject had offered to include a reference to the complainant's work,⁵ acknowledging the complainant's priority with regard to certain aspects of the concepts at issue, during an exchange that took place before publication of the subject's article. However, when actually published, the textual reference to the complainant's work had apparently been altered to state that the complainant had suggested and published those concepts after receiving the subject's earlier, related publication,⁶ which the subject alleged had also been altered in proof. While the subject's wording regarding the origin of the complainant's ideas may be impolite or even incorrect, we believe it is indicative of a scientific disagreement over the origin and relation of certain ideas, rather than misconduct in science. Moreover, in this case the question of the propriety of the small additions or changes in words when the

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3 [REDACTED]
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5 [REDACTED] (supported in part by National Science Foundation grants [REDACTED])
6 [REDACTED] (supported in part by National Science Foundation grants [REDACTED])

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manuscripts were in proof, is a question best addressed by the editors. Accordingly, this case is closed and no further action will be taken.

cc: Integrity, IG