

CLOSEOUT FOR M 97090026

On 29 September 1997, a program director¹ brought an allegation of misconduct in science to OIG's attention. In his *ad hoc* review of the subject's² NSF proposal,³ the complainant⁴ alleged that the subject misrepresented information in the proposal. The complainant said, and OIG subsequently confirmed, that the subject had changed the titles of two co-authored papers (papers 1 and 2)⁵ in the proposal. The complainant said that the subject had changed the title of one co-authored manuscript⁶ in the proposal as well. Most significantly, the subject had changed the species named in the titles of the papers to another species. OIG found no evidence that either paper title had been officially changed by the respective journals. According to the complainant, the use of the second species in the titles of the papers and manuscript made it appear as if the subject had been working for several years on the second species, the focus of the proposal. The complainant claimed that the subject had not been working or publishing results on the second species.

Paper 1 discussed the authors' uncertainty in using the original species designation and deferred any final decision on its use until they had more information. OIG learned from an NSF expert⁷ in this field that considerable scientific disagreement existed over the speciation of the organism discussed in the papers and manuscript. The expert explained that some scientists thought the two names represented the same organism while others thought the two names represented different organisms. OIG concluded that the subject changed the titles of two papers listed in the "Biographic Sketch" and in the "Literature Cited" sections of his NSF proposal. We concluded the title changes would be consistent with an attempt by the subject to clarify his position in the debate. The *Grant Proposal Guide* instructs

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² The subject,

³ NSF proposal

⁴ The complainant

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⁷ The NSF expert

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applicants to prepare their proposals with "strict adherence to the rules of proper scholarship and attribution." (NSF 98-2) The subject was, at least, careless in the way he provided information in his NSF proposal. By failing to first change the titles with the journals, he misrepresented the topic of these papers in his proposal. However, because of the ongoing scientific debate, the changes did not necessarily misrepresent the research work in which the subject was engaged. His actions, in this case, are not sufficiently serious to be considered misconduct in science.

With respect to the alleged change in the title of the co-authored manuscript, OIG concluded that this was not an issue of misconduct in science. Manuscript titles can be changed prior to publication.

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

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