

CLOSEOUT FOR M97100039

On October 30, 1997, Dr. [REDACTED] of NSF's Division of [REDACTED] informed OIG that a proposal review raised questions about the "ethics and integrity" of the proposal's authors. The proposal in question is [REDACTED] entitled "[REDACTED]" [REDACTED] The PIs are Drs. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (the subjects) of [REDACTED] The review was submitted by Dr. [REDACTED] (the complainant) of the [REDACTED] of the [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]

The complainant alleged that "rather than responding to these [technical] criticisms, or acknowledging errors," members of the subjects' research group "assimilate the criticisms and republish them as their own insights . . . without ever citing the original sources." The complainant noted an example in the proposal that allegedly illustrated his point. The example was part of the "Overview and Research Objectives" section of the proposal, which explained the theoretical grounding of the PIs' proposed empirical research and gave indications of the relation of the ideas the PIs planned to develop and test to those in the scientific literature on this topic. However, in the complainant's example, the ideas the subjects discussed were represented in a way that neither credited them to other scientists nor clearly claimed them as original to the subjects or their collaborators.

In the complainant's example, the relevant ideas have a close logical connection to the subjects' long standing research interests and previous published findings. It is acceptable to modify an idea in response to other scientists' criticisms. Although including a citation in such a situation might arguably be desirable, the alleged failure to do so in this case cannot be considered misconduct in science.

We concluded that there was insufficient substance to the complainant's allegation to pursue this matter further. This inquiry is closed and no further action will be taken on this case.