



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A03090047

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In September 2003, we received an allegation of plagiarism.¹ A PI (subject1)² and co-PI (subject2)³ submitted a proposal⁴ to NSF that allegedly contained material plagiarized from a dissertation thesis⁵ and an NSF grant.⁶

We confirmed text in the proposal appeared copied verbatim from the thesis and grant and wrote to the subjects for their explanations. Before we received a response from either subject, we received a telephone call from an individual (the advisor)⁷ who had been subject1's thesis advisor. The advisor said he was told of the allegation against subject1 and felt partly responsible. It is the long-standing practice in the advisor's laboratory to let his students use his unpublished text. When subject1 graduated, the advisor gave him research material with permission to use it in preparing his own research proposals. Unknown to subject1, his advisor had given him research material prepared in a collaboration with the author of the dissertation thesis and NSF grant.

As we subsequently learned from subject1, the text he copied verbatim from the advisor's material was written by the advisor's collaborator, and not the advisor. Subject2 responded he did not prepare the text in question and had been told the events that led to the use of the copied text by subject1.

From the evidence, we conclude subject1 was responsible for the copied text in his proposal; therefore, the allegation against subject2 is without substance. Given that subject1 had been given unspecified permission to use his advisor's research material, and he was not informed by his advisor that some material was collaborative, we conclude subject1 did not have the requisite culpable intent. Subject1 has apologized to subject2 and the advisor's collaborator for his use of

¹ (footnote redacted).

² (footnote redacted).

³ (footnote redacted).

⁴ (footnote redacted).

⁵ (footnote redacted).

⁶ (footnote redacted).

⁷ (footnote redacted).



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copied text. We have sent a letter to subject1 suggesting he more carefully cite all non-original work, even if he has permission not to do so. We also called the advisor suggesting he more carefully discuss proper attribution with his students. Accordingly, this case is closed.