



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION
OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

CLOSEOUT MEMORANDUM

Case Number: A-05060037

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We received an allegation that the subject's NSF proposal¹ contained an idea that was stolen (intellectual theft) from the complainant's² earlier NSF awarded proposal.³ We contacted the complainant who provided us with more detailed information about the allegation.

The complainant explained that the alleged stolen idea involved a very small part of the subject's proposal. The complainant further explained that the subject originally published the basis for the idea. In fact, the complainant cited the subject in his own proposal as the source of the promising method associated with the idea.

We noted that the subject has been working in the theoretical field associated with the allegedly stolen idea for almost 20 years.⁴ We compared one of the subject's earlier NSF awards,⁵ granted 2-years prior with the complainant's awarded proposal and with the subject's most recent proposal that allegedly contained the stole idea. We observed that the subject's earlier NSF award was similar to his most recent NSF proposal. Both contain very broad theoretical discussions about the idea in question as well as many other ideas. Similarly, the complainant's proposal contained a very broad theoretical discussion about the idea in question as well as other ideas. We concluded that the information and ideas in the complainant's proposal, in the subject's award and in the subject's recent proposal all showed that both researchers are progressively developing theoretical work about the same theoretical problem. Both described their research ideas and future directions for their research in very broad terms with numerous different possible directions and outcomes possible as a result of their research. We found no evidence that the subject had incorporated any ideas from the complainant's award inappropriately.

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

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