

Fostering Independence Case Study
Adapted from [CIMER's Mentoring Up curriculum](#)

Launching an Independent Career?

Dr. Klein is the only postdoc in the department and is very excited about the book proposal that she is writing to circulate to publishers. The proposal builds upon research she was conducting as a graduate student and now as a postdoc. Dr. Klein presented her research at her job talk and believes this is how she was offered the only postdoctoral appointment in the department.

Dr. Janco was appointed by the department as her postdoc mentor because their research specializations generally overlap. When Dr. Klein meets with Dr. Janco to discuss the proposal, she is surprised to discover that Dr. Janco has recently incorporated/pivoted their own research to more closely align to Dr. Klein's specialization. Dr. Janco informs her that the proposal is too closely aligned with Dr. Janco's current work and its future direction. She (Dr. Janco) says that the proposal needs to be reworked and focused on a different, more independent direction of research. Dr. Klein leaves the meeting frustrated, disappointed, and unsure how to proceed.

Reflection Questions:

1. What are the main themes raised in this case study?
2. What could have been done to avoid this situation? What should the mentor do now? What should the mentee do?
3. How is independence defined and re-defined in a mentorship situation where there is not often co-authorship in manuscripts and books? How can boundaries between projects be established and how can ownership be clearly defined?