

Reference

1. For example, G. Burbidge, *Astron. Astrophys.* **309**, 9 (1996).

GEOFFREY BURBIDGE
University of California, San Diego
La Jolla, California

FRED HOYLE
Bournemouth, England
JAYANT V. NARLIKAR
Inter-University Centre for
Astronomy and Astrophysics
Pune, India

Cosmology Addendum: A Turner for the Better and a Web Cite

I would like to correct an error and an omission in the bibliography of my article, "Reply to 'A Different Approach to Cosmology,'" which ran in your April issue (page 44). Reference 3 should have read "E. Turner" (not "M. Turner"). Also, I should have cited an interesting 1994 exchange between Edward Wright (astro-ph/9410070) and Fred Hoyle, Geoffrey Burbidge, and Jayant Narlikar (astro-ph/9412045), which is available on the Web from the Los Alamos preprint archive (<http://xxx.lanl.gov>).

ANDREAS ALBRECHT
University of California, Davis

Dual-Career Couples Can Trouble Students

Your article "The Dual-Career-Couple Problem" (July, page 32) deals with many aspects of the two-professional couple in academia. But the authors fail to address the problem from the student's point of view. Whenever a husband-and-wife team teaches in the same institution, a conflict of interest is inherently created. What if a student performs poorly or has a personality clash with the teacher in one course, and then has to take a course offered by that teacher's spouse? Such a situation can lead to a clear disadvantage for the student. Although the student actually may do well in that second course, the teacher's normal reaction to what had happened in the first course would almost certainly bring extraneous factors to bear on the student's grade. Of course, one cannot blame the teacher for reacting like that.

I know whereof I speak, because I once had to deal with a situation in which the wife was a terribly dull teacher for a terribly dull required

course, and the husband taught a more advanced course that was also required. Because I did not tolerate the dull course well and the wife was upset with me (although I earned A's), I was penalized in the advanced course by the husband for having upset his wife. He denigrated me in class and gave me one-grade reductions (to B's).

Because of the clearly unavoidable conflict of interest in such cases, married couples should not be allowed to teach in related departments, possibly not even at the same academic institution. The prohibition should probably extend to teachers who start dating each other, since the same conflict will immediately arise.

The institutions of higher learning are supposedly funded from the public trough because they exist primarily for the general benefit of students and for training our future scholars and intellectual leaders, not to provide an easier life for dual-career couples. If the interest of the students really is paramount, an institution should hire the one member of a couple that it wants. If it also wants to help find the other spouse a job, then it should do so, but at another institution or organization.

ROBERT E. DENNIS
(rdennis@nesdis.noaa.gov)
National Oceanic and Atmospheric
Administration
Camp Springs, Maryland

MCNEIL AND SHER REPLY: Robert Dennis had a bad experience with a single couple, and received B's instead of the A's he thought he deserved. Complaints from students about "unfair" grades are common, but Dennis's solution to the "problem" is more drastic than most. Based on his view of a single incident, he wants to force thousands of scientists, primarily women, to give up their careers. We are reminded of those employers who refuse to consider female candidates because "We hired a woman once, and it didn't work out."

He even goes further and wants to dismiss faculty members who begin dating one another. Besides the obvious legal difficulties of an institution restricting the social life of its employees, the realities of small college towns limit the options of faculty members who are single. Since they certainly shouldn't date students, and Dennis doesn't want them to date faculty, what are they to do?

Nobody we know of has suggested that institutions of higher learning exist to provide "an easier life for dual-career couples." As we stated in the article, helping dual-career couples helps an institution by allowing it to

attract and keep two talented professors. It certainly is not in the students' best interests to have faculty members leave because a spouse found a job elsewhere. Dual-career couples are generally closely tied to the academic community, which is good for students. Such couples also show students that they don't have to choose between career and family.

One of us (Sher) also had a difficult experience in college, when a professor was never available because his child was sick. He missed office hours and wasn't available before exams; it was not a good learning experience. Everyone agrees that faculty members with children have less time available to help students. Does that mean faculty members should be prohibited from having children?

LAURIE MCNEIL
(mcneil@physics.unc.edu)
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
MARC SHER
(sher@physics.wm.edu)
College of William and Mary
Williamsburg, Virginia

Oppie's Reputation as Leader Is Questioned

In his letter in your June issue (page 13), Ben Oppenheimer says of J. Robert Oppenheimer that "it could be argued that his leadership on the Manhattan Project had been paramount in safeguarding this country's interests during World War II." But it also could be argued that Robert Oppenheimer had little to do with the scientific leadership that produced the A-bomb. The decisions to build the weapon and to use it were both presidential decisions. Scientists played advisory and enabling roles that were critical to the successful design and production of the weapon, but it is arguable as to which scientists were critical to that achievement.

One clearly essential breakthrough was Enrico Fermi's demonstration of a fission chain reaction in Chicago in December 1942. The steps from there to the bomb were, at least in hindsight, matters of scaling and design, to be mastered by competent engineering. Yet Oppenheimer was not even remotely an engineer. In fact, Fermi and Oppenheimer present such a contrast in scientific and personal qualities as to make them models for students of the sociology of science generally.

Fermi was the brain, heart, and soul of any scientific team of which he was a member. He was equally proficient in theory and experiment. That, combined with a natural charm, modesty, and willingness to