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Letters

Predetermined conclusions?

What would you think of a "scientist" who proposed to other researchers that they should avoid making certain conclusions from their research ("The 'mother-blaming' problem," SN: 8/3/85, p. 76), because the "proposer" didn't like the implications toward a certain population group? This person also happens to be a member of the potentially implicated group.

Further, how should research done by this individual involving the above population group (women again) be interpreted ("A woman's plight: Spatial slurs," SN: 8/3/85, p. 76)?

I would have grave doubts about its credibility. Ms. Caplan seems to think we should ignore the facts in order to obtain a predetermined set of conclusions.

Paul Drallos
Royal Oak, Mich.

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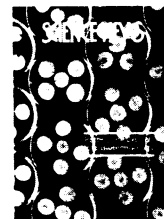
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Cover: Slices of carrots placed into laboratory cell culture are the starting point for the development of new, crunchier varieties of carrots. (Photo: Chris Jones, courtesy DNA Plant Technology Corp.)



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Einstein, Mach make amends

"Clocks test Einstein vs. Mach" (SN: 6/22/85, p. 388) exaggerates the difference between Einstein and Mach.

Mach theorized that the far-flung masses of the universe have local effects, right here on earth, and Einstein quantified the idea by showing that these local effects are due to the space-time metric, which is indeed determined by the energy-momentum tensor of the universe — Einstein's refinement of the far-flung masses contemplated by Mach.

The clock experiments favor Einstein but do not contradict Mach, because the metric had its main effect here long ago, shortly after the "Big Bang," when the universe was so small, and the curvature of space-time was so great, that gravity (the force Einstein derived from the space-time metric) was very much stronger than it is now. At that early stage, the present laws of na-

ture crystallized out of the metric, so to speak, and have retained the form gravity gave them long ago. Now the galaxies recede, having done the work Mach ascribed to them, but it took Einstein to explain how. If the universe recontracts and starts over again, physics may recrystallize in a different form, with new parameters, altered masses and different laws.

Kenneth J. Epstein
Chicago, Ill.

Correction: The Western blot test used to check a positive AIDS ELISA test ("AIDS Blood Test: Qualified Success," SN: 8/10/85, p. 84) does not determine the size of antibodies but instead detects the presence of antibodies to antigens of particular sizes. In the AIDS check, the antigens are known AIDS viral proteins, and only antibodies that react with them represent a positive result.

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