

Physics 596 – Fall 2020

Scientific Ethics Case Study #15*: Britney Spears' Guide to Semiconductor Physics

You are the only woman working in an experimental condensed matter physics group. Recently the male members in the group have been laughing and joking about the “Britney Spears’ Guide to Semiconductor Physics,” a website featuring photos of a scantily clothed Britney Spears, in a variety of provocative poses, that supposedly presents her tutorials on semiconductor laser physics. You feel uncomfortable with the jokes and ongoing conversation about the website because you think they present women in a demeaning light, but you’ve not said anything about your feelings.

Today when you got to the lab, you found your computer wallpaper had been changed to one showing Britney in a provocative pose in front of the vacuum chamber of an MBE machine. Several of the other students were obviously waiting for you to come in to see your reaction.

What should you do?

***Before discussing the cases:** Identify people in the group for the following presentation duties: (i) A person to present the ‘case’ in their own words to the rest of the class; (ii) a person to present one point of view in this study; (iii) a person to present the opposing point of view; and (iv) a person to lead a class discussion of the case. Feel free to take notes as necessary to present your discussions to the class.

Discuss this case study with your team and prepare to relate your discussions to the rest of the class.