



**Bending Science: How Special Interests Corrupt Public Health Research**

Thomas O. McGarity and Wendy E. Wagner  
Cambridge, MA:Harvard University Press, 2008. 400 pp. ISBN: 978-0-674-02815-9, \$45

Biased reporting of science has been documented for industry-supported research on many hazardous substances, including the plasticizer bisphenol A, secondhand tobacco smoke, asbestos, and lead. Several books that have hit the stands recently (e.g., David Michaels' *Doubt Is Their Product*) use case studies to document and discuss the effect this kind of bias has on public health and environmental protection.

In *Bending Science* McGarity and Wagner discuss the methods and motivations that make this practice so pervasive. The book could be called "Idiot's Guide to Bending Science" because its chapters neatly and logically provide a step-by-step plan for manipulating science to support a predetermined conclusion. Starting with who has an interest in the manipulation of science, the book describes how to distort science without getting caught, how to support "bent" science by attacking legitimate science and scientists, and finally how to use public relations firms and journalists to advertise and disseminate the "bent" science. In addition to "how," the book tells us why manufacturers and other financially interested parties are motivated to manipulate science—namely, to weaken the regulation of their products and to defend themselves in litigation if harm comes from their products.

A recent illustration of the impact of "bent science" on public health is evident in the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) draft assessment of bisphenol A issued this summer, declaring the chemical was safe as currently used. The FDA's assessment relied on just two studies, which were funded by the American Chemistry Council

(formerly the Chemical Manufacturers Association), Dow Chemical, Bayer, and other plastics manufacturers, and the agency ignored dozens of other studies done by independent scientists that reported evidence of harm. The FDA's conclusions also conflict with two National Institutes of Health reviews and the actions of its counterpart in Canada.

An example of the failure of our regulatory oversight mechanisms to provide a backstop was evident this summer when Congress was compelled to pass legislation to eliminate lead in children's toys and to ban or temporarily suspend the use of six types of phthalates (components of plastics) in children's products. Congress stepped in after regulatory agencies failed to take action, even though children had been widely exposed (one child died in March 2006 from lead-contaminated toys) and there was substantial scientific evidence that these chemicals were highly hazardous.

*Bending Science* has a halting academic writing style that overly relies on secondary sources as resources. In addition, the authors argue that everyone bends science, even public health advocates; however, the few public health examples that the authors provide are relatively rare instances that do not support those sweeping conclusions. For example, a case study of plaintiffs' lawyers artificially inflating silicosis cases fails to mention that this was a highly unusual instance for which the offending lawyers were issued sanctions for their transgressions. In fact, without trial lawyers much of the evidence that the authors rely on for this book, such as the tobacco industry documents, would have never been released for public scrutiny.

This is a topic of great importance. *Bending Science* warns that when science becomes artificially manipulated to misrepresent the hazards of products, "serious adverse consequences for human health and the environment, as well as for the economic well-being of legitimate businesses," may arise.

**JENNIFER SASS**

*Jennifer Sass is a scientist at the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), working to strengthen federal oversight of hazardous chemicals, pesticides, and nanomaterials. Sass directs the scientific integrity project at NRDC. She has published more than two dozen articles, served on federal advisory committees, and provided testimony to the U.S. Congress and National Academies.*

Announcements | New Books

**Biodiesel: Growing a New Energy Economy, 2nd ed.**

Greg Pahl  
White River Junction, VT:Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008. 296 pp.  
ISBN: 978-1-933-39296-7, \$19.95

**Biofuels, Solar and Wind as Renewable Energy Systems: Benefits and Risks**

David Pimentel, ed.  
New York:Springer, 2008. 506 pp.  
ISBN: 978-1-4020-8653-3, \$89.95

**Carbon and Nitrogen in the Terrestrial Environment**

R. Nieder, D.K. Benbi  
New York:Springer, 2008. 432 pp.  
ISBN: 978-1-4020-8432-4, \$159

**Carbon Nanotubes: Angels or Demons?**

Silvana Fiorito  
Hackensack, NJ:World Scientific Publishing Co., 2008. 164 pp. ISBN: 978-981-4241-01-4, \$109

**Global Warming: A Very Short Introduction, 2nd ed.**

Mark Maslin  
New York:Oxford University Press, 2008. 176 pp.  
ISBN: 978-0-19-954824-8, \$11.95

**Handbook of Toxicology of Chemical Warfare Agents**

Ramesh Gupta, ed.  
St. Louis, MO:Elsevier, 2009. 1,300 pp.  
ISBN: 978-0-12-374484-5, \$225

**Health Environment: Managing the Linkages for Sustainable Development**

World Health Organization/United Nations Environment Programme  
Geneva:WHO Press, 2008. 86 pp.  
ISBN: 978-924-156372-7, \$20

**Impacts on U.S. Energy Expenditures and Greenhouse-Gas Emissions of Increasing Renewable-Energy Use**

Michael Toman, James Griffin, Robert J. Lempert  
Santa Monica, CA:Rand Corporation, 2008. 118 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8330-4497-6, \$34.50

**Lake Effect: Two Sisters and a Town's Toxic Legacy**

Nancy Nichols  
Washington, DC:Island Press, 2008. 192 pp.  
ISBN: 978-1-59726-084-8, \$24.95

**Large-Scale Ecosystem Restoration: Five Case Studies from the United States**

Mary Doyle, Cynthia Drew  
Washington, DC:Island Press, 2008. 344 pp.  
ISBN: 978-1-59726-026-8, \$35

**Natural Disaster Analysis After Hurricane Katrina: Risk Assessment, Economic Impacts and Social Implications**

Harry W. Richardson, Peter Gordon, James E. Moore II, eds.  
Northampton, MA:Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc., 2008. 320 pp. ISBN: 978-1-84720-357-1, \$160

**Poisoned for Pennies: The Economics of Toxics and Precaution**

Frank Ackerman  
Washington, DC:Island Press, 2008. 352 pp.  
ISBN: 978-1-59726-401-3, \$25

**Practising Science Communication in the Information Age**

Richard Holliman, Jeff Thomas, Sam Smidt, Eileen Scanlon, Elizabeth Whitelegg, eds.  
New York:Oxford University Press, 2008. 264 pp.  
ISBN: 978-0-19-955267-2, \$40

**Progress on Drinking-water and Sanitation**

World Health Organization  
Geneva:WHO Press, 2008. 54 pp.  
ISBN: 978-924-156367-3, \$15

**Protocells: Bridging Nonliving and Living Matter**

S. Rasmussen, M. Bedau, L. Chen, D. Deamer, D. Krakauer, N. Packard, P. Stadler, eds.  
Cambridge, MA:MIT Press, 2008. 776 pp.  
ISBN: 978-0-262-18268-3, \$75

**Science Magazine's State of the Planet 2008-2009**

Editors of Science, Donald Kennedy  
Washington, DC:Island Press, 2008. 216 pp.  
ISBN: 978-1-59726-405-1, \$40

**Surviving 1,000 Centuries: Can We Do It?**

Roger-Maurice Bonnet, Łodewyk Woltjer  
New York:Springer, 2008. 442 pp.  
ISBN: 978-0-387-74633-3, \$39.95

**Sustainability by Design: A Subversive Strategy for Transforming Our Consumer Culture**

John R. Ehrenfeld  
New Haven, CT:Yale University Press, 2008. 272 pp.  
ISBN: 978-0-300-13749-1, \$28

**Tactical Biopolitics: Art, Activism, and Technoscience**

Beatriz da Costa, Kavita Philip, eds.  
Cambridge, MA:MIT Press, 2008. 504 pp.  
ISBN: 978-0-262-04249-9, \$40

**The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability**

James Gustave Speth  
New Haven, CT:Yale University Press, 2008. 320 pp. ISBN: 978-0-300-13611-1, \$28

**The Design of Climate Policy**

Roger Guesnerie, Henry Tulkens, eds.  
Cambridge, MA:MIT Press, 2009. 408 pp.  
ISBN: 978-0-262-07302-8, \$38