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The Schoen Affair¹

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The Schoen Affair was a series of groundbreaking fraudulent claims in the fields of organic, plastic and molecular electronics. The Affair was exposed in 2002 and perpetrated by Jan Hendrik Schoen, a researcher at Bell Laboratories in New Jersey. In this talk, I draw on interviews with 125 scientists, emails by Schoen and colleagues, reviews of the fraudulent papers, and analyses of the fake data to illuminate Schoen's motive and modus operandi. I focus particularly on how Schoen first began to fake data as a graduate student, and how he progressed to make fraudulent claims that appeared plausible to managers at Bell Labs and other colleagues. I also describe how his claims were handled by the journals, mostly with respect to the actions of editors and reviewers at the journals Nature and Science.

¹Plastic Fantastic: How the Biggest Fraud in Physics Shook the Scientific World (Palgrave Macmillan, May 2009)