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Is It Safe?: BPA and the Struggle to Define the Safety of Chemicals

Sarah A. Vogel

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Sarah A. Vogel : Is It Safe?: BPA and the Struggle to Define the Safety of Chemicals before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Is It Safe?: BPA and the Struggle to Define the Safety of Chemicals*:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Oh, I get it now! By A particular reader Vogel is the first writer who has been to explain the risks of BPA - and similar chemicals - in a way that makes sense to a liberal arts major. I have always wondered why, if these chemicals are so dangerous, they are still being used. Vogel provides a clear and

thoughtful examination of just how complicated the "safety" debate really is. One of the best books that I have ever read about the politics of public health.² of 5 people found the following review helpful. A much needed review of how we "become" safe and unsafe By S. Ferguson Vogel has compiled a collection of material on toxicity testing, environmental research, and the political machinations of defining toxicity. The argument is compelling and relates to all manner of topics that question how we know what we know. In this case, the author argues that political debates over chemicals and health are as the byproduct of testing and defining what a toxic is, at what levels, and at what duration. We have no "objective" understanding of what can be treated as hazardous since powerful interests will attempt to limit the application of environmental and health science research. The result for the rest of us is a myopic sense of the risks we encounter as we progress through our daily lives. With over 80,000 known chemicals being used in the United States at any given time, only a fraction of a fraction are actually determined to be known toxins. The rest are safe until proven otherwise. This should be a concern for all of us and a call to action to challenge the status quo.

We are all just a little bit plastic. Traces of bisphenol A or BPA, a chemical used in plastics production, are widely detected in our bodies and environment. Is this chemical, and its presence in the human body, safe? What is meant by safety? Who defines it, and according to what information? *Is It Safe?* narrates how the meaning of the safety of industrial chemicals has been historically produced by breakthroughs in environmental health research, which in turn trigger contests among trade associations, lawyers, politicians, and citizen activists to set new regulatory standards. Drawing on archival research and extensive interviews, author Sarah Vogel explores the roots of the contemporary debate over the safety of BPA, and the concerns presented by its estrogen-like effects even at low doses. Ultimately, she contends that science alone cannot resolve the political and economic conflicts at play in the definition of safety. To strike a sustainable balance between the interests of commerce and public health requires recognition that powerful interests will always try to shape the criteria for defining safety, and that the agenda for environmental health research should be protected from capture by any single interest group.

About the Author Sarah Vogel is Managing Director of the Health program at the Environmental Defense Fund