

. Top Stories in Opinion

When Love of a Model Transcends the Facts

Pygmalion syndrome: Some modelers succumb to falling in love with their model, even if it proves to be in error.

Aug. 7, 2014 3:32 p.m. ET

The [July 21 letters](#) regarding computer modeling and the objectivity of the process illustrate a fundamental, if not human, problem. It is the Pygmalion syndrome. In the process of trying to replicate nature or some process therein, computer modelers spend many hours of close-quarter working with the model of their creation. Some modelers succumb to falling in love with their model, even if it proves to be in error.

For example, even the U.N.'s IPCC refers to its climate-model runs as "scenarios," not predictions. Twenty-plus years ago Prof. Chris Folland said, "The data doesn't matter. We're not basing our recommendations on the data. We're basing them on the climate models." This illustrates that allure of the model can blind one to reality.

Charles Battig