policies. Perhaps most interesting to disaster researchers is the finding that those who were most likely to subscribe to “societal breakdown” themes were most prone to support punitive policies for non-evacuees. This is interesting given the news media framing of non-evacuees as unwilling to leave, and of those who remained as black and prone to crime; these frames were broadly inaccurate, with the news media failing to note that many people did not have the means by which to evacuate. Atkeson and Maestas thereby provide a fascinating case of public perceptions about a social phenomenon being shaped by the news media, and how media distortions actually matter.

_Catastrophic Politics_ is a well-written, carefully reasoned book that will lead the reader to a careful consideration of the excellent theoretical base on which this book is built. Unlike many data-rich studies, Atkeson and Maestas take great care to describe their methods and the substantive meanings of the findings derived from their sophisticated methods.

What shortcomings there may be to this study are minor, and can be addressed by the authors and others as this field is further developed. It would be useful to relate the findings to existing sociological knowledge about community organization in disasters. It would also have been promising to code TV stories on Katrina with stories in national newspapers such as the _New York Times_, which is read carefully by policy elites, and the more popular _USA Today_. Comparing TV with print might have important differences in framing. And a stronger discussion of the news media’s tendency to adopt factually incorrect story frames, such as the discredited looting/disorder myth, would have been useful.

These are less critiques than they are fascinating avenues for building on this very important research. This book stands out as a sober, careful, and remarkably revealing study that should be required reading for any social scientist interested in understanding public attitudes toward disasters and the institutions entrusted to address them. It makes an important contribution to political science, and to interdisciplinary studies of disasters.

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ASHLEY GROSSE
_YouGov_

_Pathways to Polling_ provides an engaging account of the early days of the polling industry and its roots in academia. Fried weaves together a fascinating history of the early networks of people and organizations, government
agencies, academics, and news media and polling operations. Adopting a historical institutionalist lens, she makes the assertion that “quantitative means of understanding public opinion changed political and civic relations” (133). While the book is admirably free of grandiose and overstated claims, the thrust of her argument—never stated explicitly—is that the institution of public opinion research has come to represent one of the core components of contemporary American democracy. The manner in which it became an embedded institution is the subject of her rich narrative, and the book provides explanations for both the impetus for the emergence of quantitative public opinion polling in the first place and its survival through key periods of challenge and crisis.

In keeping with the historical institutionalist approach, the book situates the beginnings of the public opinion enterprise in a critical conjunctural moment. Individual entrepreneurs—most prominently George Gallup, Elmo Roper, and Archibald Crossley—began to be interested in the extension of market research techniques into political questions (quoting Sarah Igo’s fine 2007 book, Fried tells us that the line between market research and social and political questions was “porous”). Fascinatingly, Gallup had a PhD in social psychology, Roper worked for a jewelry manufacturer, and Crossley was in market research. At the same time, the monumentally influential Paul Lazarsfeld was exploring the utility of quantitative public opinion techniques for academic purposes. And this was taking place against the backdrop of the continued progressive push for more scientific/objective and less partisan/subjective bases for public action. The Depression and its aftermath provided an arena in which government agencies—notably the Department of Agriculture—were eager to use the latest tools for garnering information to guide policy. Finally, the outbreak of World War II intensified the need to monitor and quantify public opinion for a host of reasons that are explored in the book.

The critical juncture, and the path-dependent processes that it unleashed, led to the emergence of networks that connected academics, market researchers (later public opinion researchers), and governmental agencies. The blurred boundaries were spanned by a common set of interests and, most importantly, a common methodology. Fried notes on several occasions the aspirations of some of the key figures in the story—especially Gallup—for the place and role that this tool might occupy in a modern, progressive society.

Fried argues that polling and survey research gathered strength and shape because of moments of crisis that required methodologists to defend its value against critics. The crisis that occupies most of the work and anchors this portion of the argument is the “failure” of 1948. After Dewey did not beat Truman in the presidential election (and certainly not by the 5- to 15-percent margin predicted by George Gallup), the legitimacy of the nascent polling industry was severely challenged. The fall from grace threatened to be all the more dramatic given the spectacular success it had enjoyed in predicting the 1936 Landon/Roosevelt election, a performance that had thrust the new techniques
into prominence in the first place. In the face of crisis, it was this web of relationships that helped pollsters survive and flourish; Fried argues that this had as much to do with the disorganization and fragmentation of critics as it did with the robustness of the new institution itself. Indeed, one of the most interesting conclusions of the book is that, despite a certain continued unease and dissatisfaction with the place that public opinion polling occupies in modern democratic life, there is not and has never been a sustained, coordinated, and coherent critique that seriously challenges that role.

Like other works of new historical institutionalism, the approach tends to emphasize the unique and *sui generis* nature of the case under study. Thus, it tends to de-emphasize and underplay commonalities and shared characteristics with other cases. Although the book is about the emergence of quantitative public opinion polling in America, one wonders exactly how uniquely American is the story that is told by Fried. Her work suggests that the institution of public opinion research is a part of the maturing of American society and democracy, but this leaves out the question of exogenous influences and broader international trends. One of her influential figures, Lazarsfeld, was of course trained in Europe and explicitly saw his work as integrating both American and European research traditions (along with Marie Jahoda and Hans Zeisel, he had founded the Wirtschaftspychologische Forschungsstelle in Vienna around 1930). The fascination with the construct of “public opinion” itself was as much part of the French revolutionary tradition as it was of American capitalism. Positivism, the philosophical and academic program that nurtured the application of quantitative scientific techniques to understanding mass opinion, was born in the Europe of Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim. Finally, the psychology and sociology of “the crowd” was one of the hottest topics in post–World War I Europe (see, for example, the work of Gustave Le Bon).

None of this diminishes Fried’s fine book. While it would be extremely interesting to compare the American experience with that of other democratic countries and to disentangle the uniqueness of that experience from the commonalities that it shares with other cases, that may be for another work. The book’s strength lies in its balanced and considered claims, in its fine scholarship, and in its illumination of a fascinating aspect of the democratization of American life in the twentieth century. Whether the emergence of the polling industry represents the application of a set of techniques, the development of a tool, or the creation of an institution central to democracy, scholars of all methodological persuasions will find much to admire in Fried’s account. As the future of public opinion research is once again challenged by societal and technological developments, Fried convinces the reader that the industry is deeply embedded in political life and is here to stay.

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