formed themselves into more traditional unions. The Erdman Act, with its emphasis on mediation and arbitration under federal auspices, also represented this new direction.

*Good, Reliable, White Men* adds to our understanding of railroad labor unions in this crucial era. Taillon successfully challenges the idea that the brotherhoods were conservative; instead, he shows that they continued a sustained tradition of working-class activism. Scholars may disagree with some of his conclusions, but this book will raise questions and prompt a re-thinking of earlier scholarship which tended to ignore railroad brotherhoods. It also adds one more piece to the puzzle of the origins and legacy of progressivism.

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## *The Averaged American*
### *Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public*
By Sarah E. Igo

(Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007. Pp. x, 398. Illustrations, notes, index. Clothbound, $35.00; paperbound, $18.95.)

Why do average Americans love surveys, hate surveys, praise them, condemn them, or ignore them? What explains Americans' fascination with numbers and with the measurement of their own and others' opinions, behaviors, and circumstances? *The Averaged American* embeds its intriguing answers to such questions in a rich historical context. Author Sarah Igo, who teaches history at the University of Pennsylvania, weaves her analysis of the evolution of survey research around three landmark American survey enterprises.

First, and arguably most importantly, are the 1929 and 1937 Middletown studies by Robert and Helen Lynd that made the state of Indiana famous among social scientists everywhere. Middletown, depicted as the archetypical American town, was in reality, Muncie, Indiana. The second milestone enterprise concerns the development of scientific polling methods in the mid-1930s, spearheaded by pollsters George Gallup and Elmo Roper, whose companies measured white Americans' traits, opinions, and behaviors over and over again. The initial purpose was to help merchants advertise their wares more efficiently. The statistical mean of their survey data then became the "average" American—the "mass public," to whom business people, politicians, and their fellow citizens would cater. The 1948 and 1953 Kinsey

Reports about sexual behaviors of white American populations were the third milestone. The surveys revealed that many presumed sexual aberrations were more common than people had hitherto believed. They fell within average limits. Strangely, from a scholarly perspective, all of these landmark social scientific endeavors excluded significant minorities from their population samples.

Igo uses these milestones in the history of survey development to describe how polls were organized and conducted and how the findings portrayed average Americans, as glimpsed through the lens of surveys, then reflected by pundits, and finally absorbed by publics. Not surprisingly, photographing the public, so-to-speak, through questioning selected individuals yielded images that were quite at odds with less scientific previous assessments.

Igo's analyses of the data are insightful, well-argued, and fascinating. She explains why people accept surveys as facts, making survey findings the yardstick by which they judge themselves and their environment. Average becomes equated to standard, normal, and typical. People become willing, and even eager, to merge their identities into the reported norms. Spiral effects ensue, so that accepted standards shape subsequent surveys and the analyses that they evoke.

Beyond her examination of the evolution of surveys, Igo also records some of the publicized vocal reactions to polls that either pleased or offended portions of the public. It is refreshing to learn that many people have not shied away from talking back to pollsters in solo efforts or in large choruses. Those who are not intimidated by the aura of precision conveyed by numbers have challenged the scientific merit of the survey enterprise, its ethics, as well as the soundness of the findings.

Ultimately, Igo leaves her readers with the distinct impression that the "averaged American" is a phony concoction and that there is no unified mass public. That verdict is not particularly scary. Americans are used to exposés that demolish prior truths. What is scary is the symbolic power of this manufactured, disembodied vision of average Americans and uniform mass publics that conceals the rich diversity of America. Too many people, including social scientists, continue to react to these images as if they were real. Their imprint on American culture remains profound even though they have been partially counterbalanced by subsequent surveys of various minority populations.

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