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Experiencing Crisis: Constructing Sequence in Series of Crises

There is considerable evidence that a succession of crises or disasters affecting the same group of people has much greater negative consequences than does a single incidence. On the other hand, a series of crises are also more likely to result in policy learning and more effective policy than is a single episode which can be dismissed as idiosyncratic. However, the construction of the “series” of crises is not innocent, but is socially constructed and contested. Is the current financial crisis part of a series including the 1930s Depression, or instead simply a deeper episode of cyclical downturns? This paper draws on past research on a series of crises in Hong Kong in the 1950s that produced the public housing program, and an ongoing series of crises affecting beef producers in Canada, including the 2003 outbreak of mad cow disease