

Sociological journal assignment

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A BROKEN PUBLIC? AMERICANS RESPONSES TO THE GREAT RECESSION (A
Sociology Journal Article) ID Number: of (affiliation)

Location of University:

March 27, 2014

Introduction

The Great Recession was unprecedented in terms of its severity and complexity but it was not unexpected because the implosion of the home mortgage market was the product of free market forces, primary of which was the bursting of the real estate bubble. This is also a topic of great discussion among sociologists for its huge impact on American society that ruined lives, wiped out savings, and destroyed the careers of many people.

The sociology journal article chosen for this paper was written by Clem Brooks and Jeff Manza that was first published in the American Sociological Review in 2013 entitled “ A broken public? Americans responses to the Great Recession” under volume 78 issue no. 5 of the said prestigious journal.

Discussion

The main hypothesis of the two authors is to determine how economic factors can affect the public's support for certain government social programs, especially in the times of adverse economic conditions such as during the fairly recent so-called Great Recession that started in late 2007 due to the collapse of the sub-prime home mortgage market built on two esoteric financial instruments which are the collateralized debt obligations (CDO) and credit default swaps (CDS). The conventional wisdom for sociologists is that prior experience during the Great Depression in the 1930s showed how the general public supported the aims of the New Deal by Roosevelt.

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However, the Great Recession beginning in late 2007 and whose effects are still felt even now by a slow, uncertain, and mostly jobless economic recovery showed this is not the case any longer; past experience does not translate into similar future expectations of the same public support for government programs to help alleviate the financial crisis and transform Americas economy back into health, unlike in President Franklin D. Roosevelts time when there was good and overwhelming support for federal social initiatives to counter high unemployment.

The article title is specific enough to be clear to any reader interested in the sociological connections of economics and mass psychology, in terms of voter preferences during elections. It can be said there is a connection between policy initiatives and opinion trends which both move in cycles; during boom times, people prefer less government intrusion into their private lives but in times of economic downturns, people now choose to have more government intervention. This is the essence of what is called Macro Polity Theory or MPT (Brooks & Manza, 2013, p. 728).

The sociological theory used in the article is the social learning theory because the study respondents indicated economic factors, unlike before, no longer shaped their political opinion to government social programs under the Obama administration today. What this research study found out was people already have prior political opinions and previous biases to be swayed by any new government programs initiated by President Obama to mitigate the adverse effects of the Great Recession. Economic changes today have little impact on public opinion due to prior beliefs and biases, perhaps heightened by America having its first-ever black president and also the <https://assignbuster.com/sociological-journal-assignment/>

intense political partisanship and loyalties which had sometimes resulted into gridlock.

Conclusion

The political beliefs of an individual is formed largely by his social interactions and any government programs are accepted or rejected based on already formed personal opinions. The authors could have shortened their article a bit by eliminating some sections on discussions about the effects of economic conditions on the social psychology of economy-centered mechanics and processes of public preferences for government responsibilities. One key strength of the findings is the contrary conclusion regarding public attitudes and opinions during recessionary times by rejecting conventional wisdom about MPT; the authors cited too much data in their study.

Reference

Brooks, C. & Manza, J. (2013). A broken public? Americans responses to the Great Recession. *American Sociological Review*, 78(5), 727-748.