

# Responsibility for the Crisis as a Function of Academic Major, Knowledge and Normative Beliefs

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## Overview of literature

- **Converse (1964)**: On average, there is a lack of sophistication and thus a lack of ideological coherence.
- **Michaud et al. (2009)**: political information is gearing ideological coherence.
- **Bourdieu (1979)**: opinions are specific to groups and driven by normative principles (habitus).
- **Howarth (2006)**: these principles are hegemonic or subversive social representations (questioning the social order).
- **Scheidegger et al. (2010)**: knowledge predicts divergent normative justice principles and attitudes as a function of academic majors.

## HYPOTHESES

1. According to the institution one belongs to (academic major), knowledge increases endorsement of polarized normative justice principles as well as political attitudes.
2. Justice principles are mediating the institution effect, moderated by knowledge, on the political attitude (attribution of responsibility of the economic crisis to the capitalist system).

## Method

**Population.** 193 students from Lausanne University

1. Business students (N = 90)
2. Social and political sciences students (N = 103)

## Knowledge

1. **Political sophistication** (Delli Carpini & Keeter, 1993)
2. Perceived **political Knowledge** (Bennett, 1997) ( $\alpha = .64$ )
3. **Economic sophistication**
4. Perceived **economic knowledge** ( $\alpha = .77$ )

## Normative Justice Principles

1. Fair Market Ideology (Jost & al., 2003) ( $\alpha = .84$ )
  2. Equalitarianism (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) ( $\alpha = .89$ )
- DV. = Attribution of responsibility for the economic crisis ( $\alpha = .84$ )

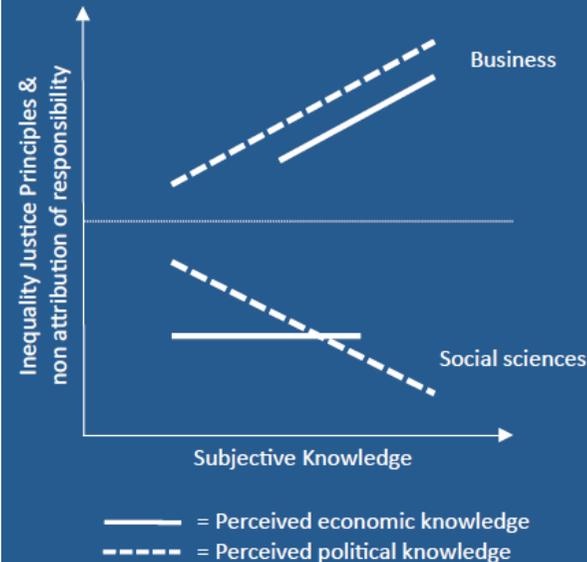
**Analyses.** Mediated moderations (Muller et al., 2005), controlling for identification to the major (+ age & gender)

## Check of moderators

Table 1. Anova on knowledge and identification as a function of academic major

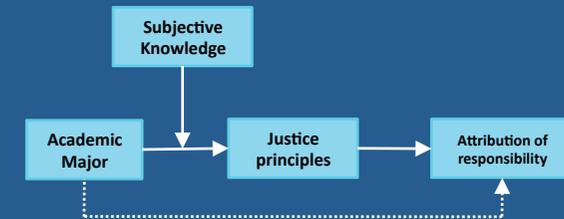
| Measure                  |  | F(1, 191) | $\eta_p^2$ | Social |      | Business |      |
|--------------------------|--|-----------|------------|--------|------|----------|------|
|                          |  |           |            | M      | SD   | M        | SD   |
| Political Knowledge      |  | .17       | < .01      | 3.62   | .65  | 3.58     | .73  |
| Political Sophistication |  | .01       | < .01      | 2.70   | 1.42 | 2.68     | 1.44 |
| Economic Knowledge       |  | 74.32***  | .28        | 2.87   | .77  | 3.76     | .65  |
| Economic Sophistication  |  | 29.01***  | .13        | 1.50   | .83  | 2.30     | 1.21 |
| Identification           |  | .01       | < .01      | 4.47   | .78  | 4.49     | .79  |

## Moderations



## Results

### Mediated moderations



## Discussion

1. **Business students had more economic sophistication and subjective knowledge** than social sciences students
2. **Identification** to the Majors was marginal and **did not change** the predicted results
3. **Social sciences students rejected more inequality principles** (Market & inequalitarianism) and **attributed more responsibility** to capitalism than Business students
4. **Political and economic sophistication were not moderators** of positioning toward the system
- 5a. Business students endorsed inequalitarian justice principles more and attributed less responsibility to capitalism when they had subjective **economic and political knowledge** (perceived).
- 5b. **Social Science students rejected** inequality principles (Market & inequalitarianism) and attributed more responsibility to capitalism **only** when they had subjective **political knowledge**.

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