



**THE SHIFTING OF AMERICAN SOCIETY'S  
LIFESTYLE DURING THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IN  
1929-1939**

**A FINAL PROJECT**

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement

For S-1 Degree in American Studies

In English Department, Faculty of Humanities

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**2020**

## **PRONOUNCEMENT**

I truthfully confirm that this project is purely written by myself without taking any result from other researchers in S-1,S-2, S-3, and diploma degree of any university. I also ascertain that I do not quote any material from other publication or someone`s work except from the references mentioned.

Semarang,22 Desember 2020

Andre Jamal Ardiansyah

## MOTTO AND DEDICATION

“Don’t complain. Be a good person in this wrong world and transform it.”

**(DebasishMridha)**

“If you can’t explain it simply, you don’t understand it well enough.”

**(Albert Einstein)**

*I dedicate this project to my family and  
everyone who supports me during my journey to  
complete this project  
Thank You.*

## **APPROVAL**

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## ABSTRACT

*In the 1920s, after experienced a long glorious era and became a powerful country that called as the Roaring Twenties, the United States experienced an economic crisis. The public calls it the Great Depression. This dark history lasted for 10 years, from 1929 to 1939 when the government office was led by Herbert Hoover.the United States experienced an economic crisis. The public calls it the Great Depression. This dark history lasted for 10 years, from 1929 to 1939. Thus, I attempt to discover analyze the shifting of American Society's lifestyle during those era. There are three aspectslifestyle which were analyzed; economy, social, and culture. I used the method of historical research to anlayze the data. The resultshows that there is a shifting American Society's lifestyle during the economic crisis in 1929-1939.*

*Keywords: The Great Depression, Roaring Twenties, American Society,Economy, Social, Culture,Shifting*



## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The Great Depression was a major blow to the American economy considering that throughout 1920 their economy was developing so rapidly, the economy grew massive, the country's wealth increased more than double so that the period was briefly referred to as "The Roaring Twenties".

A fast-growing economy is fueling massive speculation on the stock market. The stock index skyrocketed to its peak in August 1929. However, the nightmare of the United States began to come in September 1929, the stock prices slowly continued to fall. The peak occurred on October 24, 1929, when there was a massive release of shares. Nearly 13 million shares changed hands in one day. Stock indexes fell deeply in just a day. Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA) fell by 11 percent in a day. The event was called "Black Thursday" by the public. Five days later, on October 29, 1929, the crisis on the stock market reached its worst point. Sixteen million shares were sold in an atmosphere of extraordinary panic. This event is called "Black Tuesday" and it is one of the most memorable days in the history of the world economy.

After the economic crisis strikes the whole nation, there are many events that happened in America due to impacts of the national crisis economy and one of the major events is the shifting of American's social lifestyle. The economic crisis took place, people began to change lifestyles to stay afloat. These economic problems make people change their lifestyles to maintain physical, mental and, social conditions in positive conditions (Lisnawati, 2001). Society started to

realize that they need to change the way they live to survive in the crisis era, but they also realized that it was hard for them to make a shifting lifestyle of the roaring's era to the great depression's era and it is an arduous process. However, the process of the shifting lifestyle's society is alluring events.

This paper analyzes the events of American society's lifestyle before and after the Great Depression. The paper based on "The Great Crash, 1929" in 1952 and "The Affluent Society" in 1958 by John Kenneth Galbraith as the main source information. The purpose of this paper is to examine the process of American society's shifting lifestyle between the era. Furthermore, the process of the shifting lifestyle will be discussed divided into three aspects; economy, social, and culture.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **2.1 Economy**

An economy is an area of production, distribution, and trade, as well as the consumption of goods and services by different agents, the economy is defined as a social domain that emphasizes the practices, discourses, and material expressions associated with the production, use, and management of resources (James, Paul; with Magee, Liam; Scerri, Andy; Steger, Manfred B. (2015). *Urban Sustainability in Theory and Practice: Circles of Sustainability*. London: Routledge. p. 53.). Therefore, the economy is closely related to people's lives. The lifestyle of the community is formed because there are actions from the community itself, these actions are usually called economic actions, which are supported by motives and principles economic.

### **2.2 Social**

The shifting in society's lifestyle can be studied by sociology. Sociology is the study of human behavior. Sociology refers to social behavior, society, patterns of social relationships, social interaction, and culture that surrounds everyday life ("Sociology: A 21st Century Major" *Colgate University. American Sociological Association*. Retrieved 19 July 2017).is theory considers human behavior (actors) to form patterns of relationships between the environment and actors. Human behavior is welcomed by reactions from the environment which then influences the behavior afterward. Therefore, the relationship is from the actor to the environment, then back again to the actor. The environment, whether social or

physical where the behavior of the actor exists, influences the behavior of the actor. Environmental reactions can be positive, negative, or neutral. If positive, the actor will likely repeat his behavior in the future in a similar social situation. If negative, the actor will tend to change his behavior(Homans 1958:60) In social science, a social relation or social interaction is any relationship between two or more individuals. Social relations derived from individual agency form the basis of social structure and the basic object for analysis by social scientists. Fundamental inquiries into the nature of social relations feature in the work of sociologists such as Max Weber in his theory of social action. Social relationships are composed of both positive (affiliative) and negative (agonistic) interactions, representing opposing effects 6).

### **2.3 Cultural**

Culture is a lifestyle that develops in a group or society and passed on to the next generation. Culture affects many aspects of human life. Culture affects religion, politics, customs, language, buildings, clothes, even work of arts. However, culture can change due to several factors. Pitirim A. Sorokin in his ‘Social and Cultural Dynamics’ (1937, 1943) that life will always revolve. Every life will experience progress and setbacks. Pitirim Sorokin divides the causes of this progress and setback into three parts namely:

- a. Ideational culture (ideational culture) which emphasizes feelings or emotions and beliefs in the supernatural element.

- b. Idealistic culture which is the middle stage that emphasizes rationality and logic in creating an ideal society.
- c. Sensation culture (sensate culture) where sensation is a benchmark of reality and life goals.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODS**

Based on the problem which the writer formulated then to obtain the required data, the writer uses the method of historical research. This research takes events that are happened in the past. Research by method history is a study to make reconstruction of the past objectively and systematically with collect, evaluate, and explain and synthesize the evidence for uphold facts and be interesting precise conclusions (Moh. Nazir, 2009: 48). Historical research methods are very dependent on data in the past. Another opinion states Historical research methods are a set of rule principles systematic. The steps historical research according to NugrohoNotosusanto is an activity writing in the form of report results research (Nugroho Notosusanto,1984: 11).

## **4. DISCUSSION**

The writer will explain the economy, social and cultural conditions of American's lifestyles during the Roaring's era and the Great Depression's era. This discussion will be parted into three sections; the Roaring Twenties' era, the Great Depression's era, and the shifting process of the American's lifestyle during 1929-1939 in term of the economy, social, and cultural. The writer present events occurred during the Roaring Twenties based on "The Great Crash,1929" by John Kenneth Galbraith.

### **4.1 Roaring Twenties' Era**

The decade of the 1920s could be a decade that would be difficult for Americans to forget in their history. At this time, America was so dynamic, complex, and full of conflict. A series of conflicting values and contrasting changes and renewal occurred in the lives of its people, especially in the social and cultural fields. This was a transitional era of how they live, work, and interact, as well as changes in manners, behavior, morals, and personal identity (George Donelson,1995). Uniquely these various changes are carried by the middle-class young generation. The hubbub that occurred during the twenty decades made some historians label this decade with various titles, starting from Era of Wonderfull, The Jazz Age, and the most popular is The Roaring Twenties (Christine Siregar,2005). These changes and renewal cannot be separated

from the development of life American past, especially throughout the late 19th century and early 20th century.

#### **4.1.1 America's Economy in Roaring Twenties**

One of the factors that specifically caused the twentieth decade was the increase in industrialization which also significantly affected socio-economic changes. Samuel P. Hays described the period as the richest period in American history to see changes in American experience and habits in shaping the modern world. According to Hays, in this decade, it is seen that the process of human adaptation is moving towards a period of industrialization (Samuel Hays,1995). With the process of industrialization, there has been an increase in living standards and business competition which has led to human manipulation and electricity market. Industrialization also encouraged the view of pragmatism to achieve business prosperity. Thus the competition was strong and the government asked to leave the business competition and play in the field of public policy except in times of crisis.

Although at the opening of 1920 the US economy wavered (Moss, 1994:133), but since the economic recovery in 1922, this decade has brought the American people to an era of more established industrialization. National income per capita increased 30%, from \$ 520 to \$ 681,148 Unemployment fell from 4,270,000 people to around 2,000,000 in 1927 (Howard, 1980 :373).



Industrial cities rumbled with constant engine noise and the clink of technological progress. Various technological advances have provided a level of comfort in various areas of American life. Even the South and West are concentrating economy in agriculture and mining also helped with the discoveries of agricultural and mining machinery. Even housewives find it helpful and can save a lot of free time.

#### **4.1.2 The American Social Life during the Roaring Twenties**

The 1920s were an age of dramatic social and political change. For the first time, more Americans lived in cities than on farms. The nation's total wealth more than doubled between 1920 and 1929, and this economic growth swept many Americans into an affluent but unfamiliar "consumer society." People from coast to coast bought the same goods (thanks to nationwide advertising and the spread of chain stores), listened to the same music, did the same dances and even used the same slang. Many Americans were uncomfortable with this new, urban, sometimes racy "mass culture;" in fact, for many—even most—people in the United States, the 1920s brought more conflict than celebration. However, for a small handful of young people in the nation's big cities, the 1920s were roaring indeed.

### **4.1.3 The American Culture during the Roaring Twenties**

Speakeasies were illegal bars selling beer and liquor after paying off local police and government officials. They became popular in major cities and helped fund large-scale gangsters operations such as those of Lucky Luciano, Al Capone, Meyer Lansky, Bugs Moran, Moe Dalitz, Joseph Ardizzone, and Sam Maceo. They operated with connections to organized crime and liquor smuggling. While the U.S. Federal Government agents raided such establishments and arrested many of the small figures and smugglers, they rarely managed to get the big bosses; the business of running speakeasies was so lucrative that such establishments continued to flourish throughout the nation. In major cities, speakeasies could often be elaborate, offering food, live bands, and floor shows. Police were notoriously bribed by speakeasy operators to either leave them alone or at least give them advance notice of any planned raid (Michael Lerner,2007)

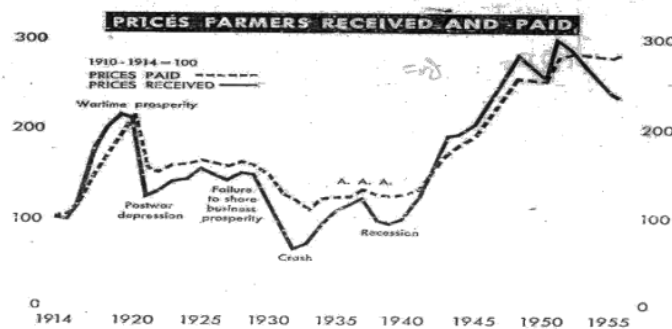
### **4.2 The Great Depression Era**

For several years, many parties expressed their opinions about the cause of the Great Depression. The fall in prices on the US stock market is considered to be the main cause, but some experts deny that opinion. Experts who study the history of the United States economy, argue that the collapse in the stock market,

is not the cause of depression, but this event that accelerated depression. “The Affluent Society” by John Kenneth Galbrath described The Great Depression that occurred in the United States is the culmination of several events that occurred during the era of prosperity in the United States.

#### 4.2.1 America’s Economy during the Great Depression

The crash that occurred in October 1929 had a long impact on the economic life of the people of the United States. The collapse of the stock market makes business activities hampered, industries difficult to develop, reduced stock purchases and investments in the United States. This condition automatically affects the banking system in the United States. In 1929 there were 659 closed banks, with deposits reaching \$ 250 million; in 1932, 1352 banks closed with a deposit of \$ 853 million; in 1931, a total of 2294 banks closed with deposits reaching \$ 1.7 billion; in 1932, 1456 banks closed with deposits approaching \$ 7.5 billion. (Link and Catton, 1973, p. 110).



Economic conditions of the United States Farmers 1914-1955  
(Bragdon and McCutchen, 1964).

#### **4.2.2 American Social Life In the Great Depression**

The Great Depression affected all aspects of social life in the United States. The first place to get a direct influence on depression is family and marriage. There is a shift in the role of the family, women who originally only stayed at home, even though there are those who work but earn less than men, as long as depression holds control of the household economy. Women and girls use the skills of their ancestors, such as cooking, gardening, sewing, making soap, and other household chores that can make money. While the husbands who lost their jobs, income, experienced a crisis of confidence. Many husbands are afflicted with humiliation because they can no longer play the role of the head of the family. Moreover, children (especially boys) no longer respect them. This situation further deprived them of their authority and eventually chose to leave home, drink alcohol, and some committed suicide because they felt unable to become the head of the family. (Current, 1987) Family harmony is almost non-existent, trivial matters can trigger big fights in the family.

### **4.2.3 American Culture in the Great Depression**

It is not only social and economic that is affected by depression, the cultural field is also experiencing the same thing. US artists and intellectuals are a group that in the twentieth century felt and examined that poverty in cities would spread, so some of them were not surprised by depression. The bad situation that happened to farmers, including tenant farmers and landowners, became the main theme of intellectuals and artists to express their disappointment with depression. Many of the works of photographers document poverty in the city and the lives of farmers. They prefer to go on an adventure to find victims of depression in remote villages rather than having to face the difficulties of their personal lives. These photographers include Walker Evans, Roy Stryker, Arthur Rothstein, Dorothea Lange, and so on. (Current, 1987).

### **4.3 The Shifting Lifestyle of American**

Shifting is used to describe something which is made up of parts that are continuously moving and changing position in relation to other parts. The writer uses “shifting” to elaborate the condition of society between the era. Country that experienced in the transitional era has an impact on the lives of its people.

Peoplerequired to make a lifestyle shift in order to survive. The shifting can be seen in term of economy, social and culture.

#### **4.3.1 The Shifting Economic of American**

The shifting economic is a shift in the structure of an economic system. This results in changes to societies, cultures, and everyday life on a global or national basis. The economic change caused by technology, politics, and progress is a regular feature of history. Besides the progress of modern technology, Roaring Twenties and Great Depressions are regular features of history that contributed greatly to the economic changes taking place in America. It happened when economic lifestyle American during Roaring Twenties which tend to spend more money for entertain, purchase good things and has a good number percapita altered that people prefer to spend their money for living because many factories closed and It creates the number of percapita break down also increase the percentage of the unemployed.

#### **4.3.2 The Shifting Social of American**

Social change refers to any significant alteration over time in behavior patterns and cultural values and norms. By “significant” shifting, sociologists mean changes yielding profound social consequences. The writer has opinion that

process of social change in two historical eras in American could see while fewer people live in village, harmonic family, men as the leader of the family, they move to cities and celebrate the Roaring's era also become consumer society which they do not recognize. However, when people enter to the Great Depression era, the behavior and social American change. Many people go back to the village because there are no factories employ them, women who just hast part become housewife, now they need to work to make her family survive and foods only they need to buy. This alteration of social lifestyle is appropriate with Homan's theory that human behavior (actors) to form patterns of relationships between the environment and actors.

#### **4.3.3 The Shifting Culture of American**

According to Pitirim's theory about "Social and cultural dynamics", life will always revolve. The writer describes ultural, social, and economic are unity major aspect in society. In the Roaring's era which economy on the highest number, society changes because people have more money, the culture of American in this era has a big event that Gang's era reign whole city in America. one of the biggest actors is Al Capone. The culture of drinking alcohol in the community rises dramatically. It happened for the last 10 years until America enter the Great Depressions era. The economy fell, the society changed, and the culture revolve.

People that have a culture of drinking alcohol time by time disappear, they prefer saving money for foods rather than alcohol. Cities are no longer a comfortable place to live because there is no place that helps people earn money, many people go to the village to search victim of that era and a better life.



## **5. CONCLUSION**

The shifting in American's Lifestyle during 1929-1939 was an instance of how a society in a country tries to survive when they cannot depend on government assistance. In term of the economy, the shift that seems significant in American is that they tend to spend their money to survive during the Great Depression rather than leisure needs. Meanwhile, in terms of the social shifting, there is a phenomenon where women who used to be only become housewives and have no right to work equal with men, they have to work to keep their family survive. In term of the culture, the shifting can be seen when American in the Roaring Twenties have a culture drinking an alcohol and party changed to prefer saving money for foods rather than alcohol. Cities are no longer a comfortable place to live because there is no place helps people earn money and many people go to the village to find a better life.

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