



# The Association between Education as an Occupation and Confidence in the United States Courts and Legal System



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## Introduction

- Public confidence in the U.S. justice system is vital for its successful functioning within society (Tyler and Rasinski, 1991).
- Factors impacting confidence in the U.S. justice system include race, socioeconomic class, education level, personal experience with the courts, and general trust in institutions (Brooks & Jeon-Slaughter, 2001; Benesh, 2006).
- The School-to-Prison pipeline (STPP) refers to the interaction between the education and carceral systems in which students are pushed out of school and into the juvenile justice system (Allen & White-Smith, 2014).
- The disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline for Black boys by teachers implicates them as perpetrators of the STPP (Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009).
- Current research lacks insight into how educators view the U.S. courts and judicial system. Analyzing how educators perceive the court system may reveal the degree to which educators are aware of the STPP and the harm it poses to the students they work with daily.

## Results

### Multivariate:

- Linear regression analyses showed that those within the education industry had significantly higher mean confidence in the courts than those working in the trades. In this model, the mean confidence among educators was 0.292 points higher than for those in the trades.
- Level of degree attainment confounds the relationship between industry and confidence in the courts. In this model, it was found that higher degree attainment was associated with significantly higher confidence in the courts.
- Race is a third interaction variable, with White respondents significantly more confident in the courts than Black respondents (Beta = 0.37021,  $p = 0.00793$ ) (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Mean Confidence Levels by Industry and Race



## Research Questions

- What is the association between education as an occupation and confidence in the U.S. courts and judicial system?
- How does an individual's level of degree attainment and race impact this relationship?

## Methods

### Sample:

- Adults working in the trades, legal, healthcare, or education industries were drawn from the 2018 General Social Survey (GSS) with a size of  $n = 2348$ .
- The GSS is a nationally representative survey of adults.

### Measures:

- Confidence in the U.S. courts and legal system was measured with the question "How much confidence do you have in [the] courts and the legal system?" ranging from 1 (no confidence at all) to 5 (complete confidence).
- A respondent's industry was determined using the 2007 North American Industry Classification System (NAICS).

## Discussion

- Educators having higher rather than lower comparative court confidence may indicate that they are not aware of the STPP in a way that decreases their confidence in the courts due to their close interactions with the victims of this system, as I initially predicted.
- Understanding the current evidence that education incompleteness is associated with higher rates of incarceration (Christle, Jolivet, & Nelson, 2005), it makes sense that those who have attained higher degree levels are confident in a court system that they have generally avoided negative contact with.
- Black respondents' lack of confidence in the courts may reflect the harm that the carceral system causes to Black communities. This affirms the existence of the STPP because it has been identified as disproportionately impacting Black male students.

## References

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