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Assessing Changes in Perceived Confidence in the Courts and Legal System in America: An
Analysis of Data from the General Social Survey

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ABSTRACT

Confidence in the courts and legal system holds important implications for public compliance of the law and likelihood of usage of legal resources. However, it is unclear how perceived confidence has changed over time and whether there are racial and ethnic differences. We examine this issue by using data from the General Social Survey (GSS) from 1998, 2008, and 2018. We find that there is an increase in confidence between 1998 and 2008 and a decrease from 2008 to 2018. All racial groups examined in this study exhibit similar trends and do not have statistically significant differences in rates of confidence.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This study will address the following two research questions: (1) Have there been significant changes in public confidence in the legal system over the past two decades?; and (2) Have there been racial and ethnic differences in changes in perceived confidence in the legal system? The analysis of these questions is valuable to the field because recognizing the trends in levels of confidence the public has in the legal system is essential for ensuring the foundations of our democracy and keeping crime rates low. A lack of confidence in the system can lead to legal cynicism, which is the belief that the justice system is illegitimate and unfair (Kirk & Matsuda, 2011). Perceptions such as these can cause the public to be less likely to call the police or comply with the system and its agents (Gau, 2015). It's also important to understand current perceptions so there can be an understanding of what occurrences have happened in the past two decades that have contributed to the overall opinions of the public. If perceptions have improved, it would be beneficial to analyze what changes in the system or society have transpired so that an effort can be made to maintain high levels of confidence in the legal system. Studying the public's opinion on the system becomes more valuable when considering possible racial and ethnic differences. Discrepancies in the perceptions between racial groups can illuminate the need for the legal system to be modified in ways that may enhance confidence among the public, reduce disparities, and build positive relationships between members of the legal system and minority communities.

Many studies have explored how the public views the criminal justice system, especially towards the police. One study found that 72% of Americans believe that the police department in their community is doing an excellent or good job in protecting people from crime (Morin & Stepler, 2016). Many of these studies also analyze the differences in opinion by racial and ethnic groups. In the aforementioned study, 75% of white Americans say that their local police do an excellent job compared to 33% of black Americans who share the same view (Morin & Stepler, 2016). Another study found that only 56% of black Americans said they had at least a fair amount of confidence in police officers to act in the best interests of the public compared to 84% of white Americans and 74% of Hispanic Americans (Gilberstadt, 2020). However, only a few studies have compared the differences in perceptions of policing over time and there has been limited attention to public opinion about the broader legal system, which is the focus of the present research. One study compared the confidence in police officers from 2018, 2020, and 2021 and found that it declined over time from 78% of Americans saying they have a fair amount of confidence to 69% (Kennedy et al., 2022). This study will be contributing to the field by analyzing the changes in perceptions of the courts and legal system over the last two decades.

There are many potential answers to what kind of changes in perceptions have occurred. If opinions were to have improved, it could be due to an increase in diversity in the system (Farrell et al., 2009). More representation in government organizations can lead people to view the system as fair (Farrell et al., 2009). The increased rate of exonerations in the past two decades could also improve perceptions since people may believe that the system is now gaining the ability to correctly recognize guilt and innocence. However, perceptions could have also worsened in the past two decades. People may now be aware of how frequently the system incorrectly imprisons individuals, especially black Americans. This can lead people to believe

that the system is illegitimate and biased. These same negative perceptions can be held by the public towards mass incarceration and the disparities in which people of color are imprisoned compared to white Americans.

Major events like the highly publicized police killings of individuals such as Michael Brown and Eric Garner could also lead to disapproval and a lack of confidence. This loss of trust is especially likely for the minority communities that the police are harming (Morin & Stepler, 2016). The improvement of technology and the widespread use of social media platforms in the past two decades could also contribute to negative perceptions. A study investigating the link between media and opinions on the justice system theorizes that the firm negative opinions their participants had towards the police might be influenced by the media (Boda & Szabo, 2011). The ability for users to easily post and view pictures, videos, and text posts of any encounter they may have with the criminal justice system has led to large scale conversations on police misconduct and fostered negative perceptions.

The last potential answer is the possibility that perceptions have not significantly changed in the past two decades. The disparities mentioned in previous arguments such as police misconduct and perceived unfairness with court and imprisonment decisions are issues that have existed within minority communities for far longer than the past two decades (Anderson, 2019) (Sharara & Wool, 2021). These problems may exist as norms within many communities, which might make overall opinions towards the system stay consistent overtime.

The research questions will be addressed using data from the General Social Survey (GSS) that provides information at multiple points over the past several decades about the level of confidence people have in the courts and legal system. The GSS will be used to summarize the nature of changes in public perceptions of courts and the legal system during the 2000s and

2010s, both overall and disaggregated by race and ethnicity, and to examine whether any observed changes in perceptions persist after controlling for other factors. This paper will include a literature review in Chapter 2 that summarizes main theoretical arguments and hypothesizes answers. Chapter 3 will explain the data and methods used in this study. Chapter 4 will examine the results and Chapter 5 will include the concluding discussion.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Representative Bureaucracy and Public Opinion

Representative bureaucracy theory attempts to outline how diversity in government organizations can affect advancing the interests of disadvantaged groups (Farrell et al., 2009). As summarized by Farrell, this theory includes two components: passive and active representation. With passive representation, an organization increases its demographic characteristics to mirror the population it serves. This passive representation will then lead to active representation. Active representation entails bureaucrats engaging in policy-making behavior that advances the interests of particular demographic groups. This theory is based on the rationale that a bureaucrat's demographic shapes their pre-organizational socialization experiences, values, and policy-relevant decisions that advance the interests of people within the same demographic group (Webeck & Lee, 2022).

Representative bureaucracy theory can explain why increasing diversity within the system can improve public opinions. The system has slowly become more diverse over time. By 2016, 13.7% of full-time federal law enforcement officers were female compared to 14.5% in

2020 (Brooks, 2022). In 2013, 27% of officers were racial or ethnic minorities compared to 23% in 2000 (Morin et al., 2017). As the Representative bureaucracy theory states, the more a certain demographic increases in an organization, the more policy is passed to advance the interests of that group (Webeck & Lee, 2022). Just like the logic of the theory, there may be an underlying belief within the public that the representative's demographic will lead to more decisions being made in their favor. In that way, minority demographics in public may view the system as more trustworthy as they see more representation in the system. Consistent with this logic, one study found that black defendants have a decreased likelihood of being imprisoned in districts with increased representation of black prosecutors (Farrell et al., 2009). Since black defendants are more likely to be sentenced to prison than white defendants, this shows that diversity in the system can result in more racially equitable sentences. Citizens noticing this change could have an improved opinion of the system overall.

Legal Cynicism and Public Opinion

Changes in legal cynicism also may contribute to shifts in perceived confidence in the legal system. Legal cynicism is a part of legal socialization that concerns itself with negative perceptions of the legal system. This theory is defined by a perception of the legal system and its agents as being illegitimate, unresponsive, and poorly equipped to ensure public safety (Kirk & Matsuda, 2011). Legal cynicism also occurs when community residents perceive law enforcement agents as being disrespectful, unfair, and biased in their interactions (Gau, 2015). Certain events in the past two decades may have increased legal cynicism among communities

and worsened perceptions of the legal system such as shifts in exonerations, police misconduct, and technology.

Shifts in Indicators of Fairness: Exonerations

The increased rate of exonerations that has occurred during the past few decades also may be relevant to understanding changes in perceived confidence in the legal system, though the direction of this impact is ambiguous. The rate of exonerations from 1989 through 1999 ranged from 11 to 40 a year. From 2000 to 2010, the numbers have increased from a range of 45 to 66 a year (Gross & Shaffer, 2012). Seeing such a drastic increase could lead some people to alter their confidence in the legal system. On the one hand, more exonerations may lead Americans to believe that the system is improving because it is gaining the ability to recognize and free innocent people. On the other hand, the increased rate of exonerations could have worsened perceptions by leading people to believe that the system is incapable of incarcerating the correct people. In fact, one study found that a majority of respondents believed that wrongful convictions happen frequently enough to justify major changes (Zalman, 2012). These pessimistic perceptions could be felt more strongly by Black Americans than White Americans. Black Americans make up over half of the 3,200 exonerations listed in the National Registry of Exonerations, which means that innocent Black Americans are seven times more likely than white Americans to be falsely convicted of serious crimes (Gross et al., 2022). This increased rate of exonerations could make black Americans feel that the system is increasingly unfair, leading them to exhibit decreased confidence in the legal system.

Police Misconduct

Perceptions of the legal system also may have worsened in recent years because of highly publicized police killings and misconduct. Notable police killings such as Michael Brown, Eric Garner, and Tamir Rice triggered protests all across America (Parker et al., 2020). Killings by police and subsequent findings of police misconduct could lead to distrust and disapproval toward the police and broader legal system. Further, these negative perceptions might be felt more strongly by Black Americans and communities of color (Sharara & Wool, 2021). Consistent with this notion, a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center found that just 33% of Black Americans believe that police in their community are doing a good or excellent job in using the right amount of force in a situation compared to 75% of white Americans (Morin & Stepler, 2016).

Shifts in Technology

The growth of social media during the 2000s and 2010s may have also had negative effects on opinions towards the criminal justice system. Photos, videos, and text posts are now easily accessible for anyone to post and read on a multitude of social media platforms that did not exist before the 2000s. People can now post anecdotal stories of bad experiences they have had with actors of the criminal justice system like the police. These types of posts only worsened after the high-profile police killings of unarmed citizens during the 2010s. Once the Black Lives Matter movement solidified itself online, people have been posting photos and videos of any police misconduct they have witnessed (Novich & Zduniak, 2021). The abundant amount of social

media posts of wrongdoings in the criminal justice system can negatively influence people's opinions, regardless of if it's true.

Historically Rooted Disparities

With the above arguments in mind, this study hypothesizes that despite the considerable social changes that could have shifted public perceptions of confidence in the legal system, it is likely that opinions on the legal system have not changed significantly during the past two decades. Majority groups such as White Americans have traditionally received more favorable outcomes within the legal system and expressed considerable confidence in it, so despite the aforementioned social changes, opinions may be largely unaffected by those changes (Kovera, 2019). On the other hand, police misconduct and inequities in the legal system outcomes have long been rooted in the experience of Black Americans (Nodjimbadem, 2017). During the past two decades, the rate of incarceration has remained exceptionally high after the substantial increases observed during the 1980s and 1990s, placing American near the top world-wide in per capita imprisonment of its population (Carson, 2020). Additionally, there are substantial disparities in imprisonment by race. Black Americans are incarcerated in state prisons at five times the rate of White Americans. Latinx individuals are incarcerated in state prisons at a rate that is 1.3 times the incarceration rate of White Americans (Nellis, 2021). These disparities have persisted for decades and may have contributed to entrenched legal cynicism, especially among racial minorities (Alexander, 2010), who have long believed that the legal system is biased or untrustworthy because of their higher rate of incarceration. Consistent with this notion, one study found that black Americans and Hispanics have had little change in views towards the police

since the 1970s (Ekins, 2016). Only 40% of African Americans and 59% of Hispanics had a favorable view in 2015 compared to 43% in the 1970s. The negative opinions of minority communities may not change because they have faced mistreatment by the criminal justice system for generations. Majority communities have been witnessing this mistreatment for the same amount of time and have not changed their opinions about the courts and legal system either. The same aforementioned study found that in 2015, 68% of white Americans had a favorable opinion of the police compared to 67% in the 1970s (Ekins, 2016). Majority communities tend to be disinterested, misinformed, or neglectful of the issues minority communities face with the criminal justice system, which means that their opinions may not change significantly even in the context of the notable shifts in relevant factors summarized above.

Summary

As summarized in the table below, public opinions about the courts and legal system could have improved or diminished for many reasons in the past two decades. Representative bureaucracy concerning racial diversity in the system could lead people to believe that the system is more fair. Exonerations can either improve opinions by leading people to believe that the system is gaining the ability to recognize innocent individuals or worsen opinions by exposing itself as being unable to incarcerate the correct people. These negative sentiments might be held more strongly by the African American community as they are being exonerated at a higher rate than white Americans. Police misconduct in the past two decades such as the police killings of Tamir Rice and Eric Garner could lead to distrust and disapproval. The advancement

of technology in the past two decades could worsen opinions of the system because of the overwhelming amount of negative posting and messaging on the system on social media platforms.

Summary of potential impacts of recent social and legal changes on public perceptions of the courts and legal system

Theoretical Arguments	Improving Public Opinion	Diminishing Public Opinion
Representative Bureaucracy	✓	
Exonerations	✓	✓
Police Misconduct		✓
Shifts in Technology		✓

Notwithstanding the plausibility of the hypothesized arguments about change, this study hypothesizes that there has been no significant change in the opinions of the criminal justice system in the past two decades because of the entrenched nature of disparities in treatment by the courts and legal system, which are historically rooted and normalized in American society.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Data

The research questions in this paper are addressed using data from the General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS was initiated in 1972 and functions as a nationally representative survey

of adults 18 and older in the United States (NORC, 2021). This survey collects data on contemporary American society with a standard core of demographic, behavioral, attitudinal, and special interest questions. The goal of the GSS is to monitor and assess trends in opinions, attitudes, and behaviors and make this high-quality data easily accessible for researchers to examine the structure and functioning of society (NORC, 2021). This study uses GSS data from 1998, 2008, and 2018, which coincides with the years in which the American public was surveyed about their confidence in the legal system.

Measures

The dependent variable in the study captures public perceptions about the legal system by asking: “How much confidence do you have in courts and the legal system?” The answers range from “complete confidence,” “a great amount of confidence,” “some confidence,” “very little confidence,” and “no confidence at all.” To more clearly gauge changes in public confidence over the time period studied, the original measure was collapsed into a binary indicator that contrasts respondents who express confidence (some, a great amount, or complete confidence) in the courts and legal system (coded 1) with those who have very little or no confidence at all (coded 0).

Several independent variables were included in the study. One key variable is the year of the survey, which is represented by a series of binary indicators that distinguishes between those surveyed in 1998 (the reference period), 2008, and 2018, respectively. Race is another key variable, as its inclusion enables the assessment of race-specific patterns. For the full period

studies, the GSS measured race without reference to ethnicity, distinguishing between Blacks, Whites, and persons who identify with other racial groups (e.g., Asian, Pacific Islander). In the main analysis, the study measures race by integrating binary indicators that contrast these three groups. The GSS integrated more detailed measures of race-ethnicity in 2000, so the study also considered a more elaborate measurement of race-ethnicity that contrasted non-Latino Whites, non-Latino Blacks, Latinos, and those who identify with other racial-ethnic backgrounds. The results reported below were not sensitive to the different ways in which race could be measured, so only the findings contrasting Whites, Blacks, and other race respondents are presented.

The study also incorporated several control variables, which may be related to individual differences in public opinion about the legal system and may have changed over time. These include measures of gender, education, income, political conservatism, the type of community in which the respondent lives, and region. Table 1 provides a listing of the variables that were included, along with a description of how they were measured.

Table 1 Variables and Measures

Variable	Measure
Year	Categorical variable of the years 1998, 2008, 2018
Race	Categorical variable that distinguishes between White, Black, and Other
Gender	Binary variable that contrasts males (coded 1) and females (coded 0)
Age	Continuous variable of the respondent's age in years
Marital Status	Binary variable contrasting respondents who are married (coded 1) with those who are (coded 0)
Educational Attainment	Continuous variable of education attainment that ranges from 1 (less than high school) to 4 (college graduate)
Region	Binary indicator that contrasts respondents who live in the Southern region (coded 1) vs other regions (coded 0)
Conservatism	Scale that varies from 1-7 of extremely liberal to extremely conservative
Court Performance	Categorical variable contrasting those who think the courts are either too harsh, not harsh enough, and just about right
Class	Continuous measure that indicates the subjective class position of respondents, ranging from lower class to upper class
Family income	Continuous measure of family income adjusted for inflation

Methods

To address the research questions examined, the study assessed univariate, bivariate, and multivariable analyses. First, descriptive statistics that illuminate the univariate distributions of the study variables will be presented. Second, the study will present bivariate estimates of whether confidence in the courts and legal system has changed over the three periods (i.e., 1998, 2008, and 2018) examined. Third, the study will present results from two multivariable logistic regression models, one that examines whether any observed changes in public confidence in the legal system persist when other factors are held constant, and another that examines whether changes in confidence in the legal system over the period differed significantly by race.

Table 2 Sample Description

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
<i>Year</i>				
1998	0.328316	0.469683	0	1
2008	0.359818	0.480031	0	1
2018	0.311866	0.463336	0	1
<i>Confidence in Court</i>				
Confidence in Court	0.721036	0.448568	0	1
<i>Court Performance</i>				
About right	0.171509	0.377019	0	1
Too harsh	0.689885	0.462622	0	1
Not harsh	0.138607	0.345596	0	1
<i>Race</i>				
White	0.773189	0.418843	0	1
Black	0.141057	0.348141	0	1
Other	0.085754	0.28005	0	1
<i>Gender</i>				
Gender	0.449073	0.497487	0	1
<i>Age</i>				
Age	46.80994	17.01336	18	89
<i>Marital Status</i>				
Marital Status	0.463773	0.498773	0	1
<i>Educational Attainment</i>				
Educational Attainment	2.541827	0.886257	1	4

Class	2.424221	0.681859	1	4
realinc	33304.65	31626.29	227	146153.7
Conservatism	4.097305	1.436683	1	7
Region	0.378019	0.484977	0	1

Chapter 4

Results

The descriptive statistics for the study are shown in Table 1. There were 2,857 respondents included in the study across the three periods. Overall, 72% have at least some confidence in the courts and legal system. About 28% of respondents have very little or no confidence. The sample consisted of 77% white, 14% black, and 8% other respondents. Descriptive statistics for the other variables, age, gender, and marital status also are shown in Table 1.

The two questions examined in this study are whether perceptions have changed over time and whether that has differed by race. Table 3 shows initial results relevant to those two questions by examining the proportion of GSS respondents in each period who express confidence in the courts and legal system, both overall and by race. As the table shows, confidence increased by about 8 percentage points between 1998 and 2008, but it declined by about 7 percentage points from 2008 to 2018. Interestingly, the same pattern of increasing confidence during the 2000s and decreasing confidence in the 2010s was evident across each race group examined. While Blacks exhibit less confidence and other race respondents more confidence than Whites, all three groups reveal similar trends across the period. This suggests a nuanced answer to both research questions considered, as perceived confidence in the courts and legal system did change over the period, overall and for each race groups, but in contrasting ways between 1998 and 2008 (a period of increasing confidence) and between 2008 and 2018 (a period of declining confidence).

The logistic regression model results displayed in Table 4 provide a more rigorous assessment of the study research questions and hypotheses by integrating other variables shown to be related to public opinion about the legal system in prior research, and which may have changed over time. Two multivariable logistic regression models are presented, the first of which includes all of the independent variables and the second of which adds product terms between survey year and the race indicators to evaluate whether observed trends in public opinion about the legal system differ significantly across race groups.

The results in Model 1 reveal that, net of the other factors considered, respondents in 2008 were significantly more likely to be confident in the courts and legal system than in 1998 (the reference period). The coefficient for survey year 2018 is not statistically significant, indicating that those interviewed in 2018 had similar levels of confidence in the legal system than those interviewed in 1998. However, supplementary analysis that contrasted 2018 with 2008 revealed a significant decrease between 2008 and 2018 in levels of confidence in the courts and legal system. Thus, overall, perceptions in the legal system have changed, but in more complex ways than anticipated: there was a significant increase in confidence between 1998 and 2008, and a significant decrease in confidence between 2008 and 2018.

Table 3 Proportion Confident in Courts and Legal System

	1998	2008	2018
All adults	0.683	0.768	0.706
Sample Size	983	1028	891
White			
Adults	0.692	0.763	0.739
Sample Size	758	805	646
Black			
Adults	0.606	0.712	0.523
Sample Size	117	139	147

Other			
Adults	0.714	0.904	0.755
Sample Size	63	84	98

Model 2 in Table 4 addresses the question of whether levels of confidence in the courts and legal system varied significantly by race. The table reveals that black respondents were significantly less likely to be confident than white. Respondents in the "Other" category were more confident. However, there is no evidence of statistically significant differences in trends of confidence across different racial groups. While there were differences in confidence in racial groups, the trends over time are similar, as revealed by the statistically insignificant coefficients for the race-year product terms.

Table 4 Multivariable analysis of changes in confidence in the courts and legal system among U.S. adults 18 and older, 1998-2018.

	Model 1		Model 2	
	<i>b</i>	(SE)	<i>b</i>	(SE)
<i>Year</i>				
	2008	0.52 (0.117)	0.463 (0.129)	
	2018	0.19 (0.123)	0.265 (0.14)	
<i>Race</i>				
	Black	-0.332* (0.137)	-0.191* (0.233)	
	Other	0.434 (0.202)	0.2 (0.354)	
Gender		-0.181* (0.098)	-0.185* (0.098)	
Age		-0.0003* (0.002*)	-0.0001* (0.002*)	
Marital Status		0.003* (0.102)	0.005 (0.103)	
Educational Attainment		0.087 (0.058)	0.091 (0.059)	
Class		0.217 (0.084)	0.21 (0.083)	
Conservatism		0.053 (0.035*)	0.052 (0.035*)	
Region		-0.081* (0.101)	-0.073* (0.101)	
<i>Court Performance</i>				
	too harsh	-0.928* (0.158)	-0.922* (0.158)	
	not harsh enough	-1.372* (0.198)	-1.354* (0.198)	

*p<0.05 (two-tailed test)

Chapter 5

Conclusion

This study addressed two research questions: Have there been significant changes in the perception of the fairness of the legal system in the past two decades? Have there been racial and ethnic differences in changes in perceptions of the fairness of the legal system? There were three main expectations for the results of these questions. Perceptions could have improved because of increasing diversity and exonerations. However, perceptions could have also worsened because of police misconduct, changes in disparities, and shifts in technology. Similarly, because of the long-standing history of disparities towards African Americans and relative advantages in the legal system experienced by White Americans, it is possible that there was no change.

This study addressed those two research questions on 2,857 adult respondents who were asked about their confidence in the courts and legal system over three time periods. Contrary to expectations, the descriptive results showed that the three racial groups experienced similar trends in levels of confidence in the legal system. This was evident in bivariate analysis of changes in confidence by survey period and was confirmed in multivariable logistic regression analysis. For all three racial groups examined, the results indicate a significant increase in confidence in the courts and legal system between 1998 and 2008 and a significant decrease between 2008 and 2018. Thus, the results are inconsistent with the hypothesis of no anticipated change due to persistent race-stratified experiences with the legal system. Additionally, the divergent trends observed across the two periods (i.e., the 2000s and 2010s) do not cleanly fit

with any of the simple explanations offered for how social changes between 1998 and 2018 may have either increased or decreased confidence in the legal system. Instead, the observed changes were more nuanced than anticipated.

While the present study cannot provide definitive evidence for why confidence in the legal system has exhibited the divergent changes observed during the 2000s and 2010s, the results may reflect more nuanced considerations of societal changes within the two time periods demarcated by the data. The increase in confidence between 1998 and 2008 could be a result of increasing diversity in the system. Racial and ethnic minorities comprised 22.7% of police officers in 2000 compared to 17% in 1990 (Hickman & Reaves, 2003). An increase in exonerations could also lead people to have more confidence in the fairness of the courts and legal system. There was a rapid increase of 11 to 40 exonerations per year from 1989 through 1999 that could still be felt through this time period (Gross & Shaffer, 2012). The rate of exonerations increased from 2000 through 2010 and stabilized at the range of 45 to 66 (Gross & Shaffer, 2012).

The decrease in confidence between 2008 and 2018 could also be a result of major events that ensued during this period. Many high profile police killings happened in this time period such as the killing of Michael Brown in 2014 (Editors, 2020). Social media may have played a role in the decrease of confidence during the 2010s as well. Social media platforms such as YouTube and Facebook emerged during the 2000s, but become ubiquitous during the 2010s and played a big role in the sharing of police misconduct (Nodjimbadem, 2017) and other known forms of injustice that occurred in the legal system, which may have exposed people to unfair aspects of the system that they would be unknowledgeable about otherwise and contributed to growing legal cynicism.

Additional research is needed to better understand the trends observed in this study. It would be especially valuable, for instance, to integrate direct measures of legal cynicism and individual exposure to social media platforms. Additionally, research that integrated community-level measures of police killings, racial composition, and measures of court and imprisonment outcomes and their racial inequity, would add significantly to our understanding of why public confidence in the courts and legal system increased during the 2000s and declined during the 2010s. Finally, this study prompts the question of whether the observed decreases in public confidence in the legal system during the 2010s has continued beyond 2018, which may be assessed as new data become available in the GSS.

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ACADEMIC VITA

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Graceanne Carpenter

EDUCATION

Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA — *Bachelor of Arts: Criminology*

2019-2023

- Abington Honors College 2019-2021
- Schreyer Honors College 2021-Present
- Thesis in progress: “Assessing Changes in Perceived Fairness of the Legal System: An Analysis of Data from the General Social Survey”

WORK EXPERIENCE

Berkey Creamery, State College, PA — *Customer Service Associate*

05/2022 - PRESENT

- Worked at a cash register
- Interacted with customers and addressed their questions and concerns

Weis, State College, PA — *Customer Service Associate*

09/2021 - 07/2022

- Worked at a cash register and managed self-checkout lanes
- Counted money drawers for the managers
- Interacted with customers and addressed their questions and concerns

Wawa, Royersford, PA — *Customer Service Associate*

06/2021 - 08/2021

- Fulfilled food orders in a fast paced environment
- Interacted with customers

Amazon Prime, Plymouth Meeting, PA — *Online Shopper*

06/2021 - 08/2021

- I picked and packed customers' Whole Foods grocery shopping orders

LEADERSHIP

Pennsylvania State University Abington Election Committee — *President*

Spring 2021

- Delegated tasks to subcommittee heads
- Planned and lead meetings
- Wrote and sent out announcement emails to the student body
- Corresponded with university officials, professors, and students
- Vetted the applications of students who were running and acted as a first form of contact for any questions or concerns

AWARDS

Penn State Abington Honors Program Award

2021

I received this award for successfully completing the requirements of the Abington Honors Program. The requirements were at least a 3.3 cumulative GPA for four semesters as well as the required honors courses.