Confidence in American Education:  
A Longitudinal Analysis’ of Confidence Shifts Compared Across Social Class and Race

Introduction

It seems that, from Facebook memes to newspaper articles to books with snazzy titles (think: “The Life and Death of the Great American School System”) to presidential candidate platforms, the American education system is constantly under fire. In fact, I cannot recall a moment that my media consumption sent me any message regarding American education other than its status as sub par and failing. But how many Americans really believe this? Has this opinion changed at all over the course of American history? Was there ever a time when American citizens were pleased with the people running the education system? The goal of this paper is to take a deeper look into the American public’s opinion on our education system, specifically in terms of class and race, to understand how this opinion has changed and, hopefully, why it has changed.

While there is plenty of research documenting the general downward trend of confidence, trust, or satisfaction across all institutions, there is little that discusses how this trend might be different in regards to social classes and racial groups. Investigating if different social classes and racial groups exhibit different shifts in confidence in American institutions can deepen our
understanding of what shapes public opinion, and how it is used in political platforms or swayed by media. Additionally, investigating if there is a difference in social classes’ and racial groups’ confidence in education can better inform our perceptions of what works, and what doesn’t, in the education system and potentially lead to more effective reforms. When we can see how this has changed across social class and race, we can better understand social trends, social behaviors, and the needs of all tiers of society. Additionally, Bryk and Schneider conducted case study research with over 400 schools in Chicago and their corresponding communities, to examine the connection between social trust and school reform. They found that social trust between parents of the community and the professionals running the school was “essential for meaningful school improvement” (p. 114, 2011). Understanding the macro perspective of this social trust in schools can potentially complement these case studies for a deeper understanding of the connection between American citizens’ trust in their education system, and the education system itself.

**Literature Review**

**Confidence in American Institutions**

The Center for Political Studies has been measuring trust in government since 1958; Lipset and Schneider use these polls to analyze the fluctuation in trust and confidence in national institutions over time. Lipset and Schneider called the 1960s the “high water mark” for Americans’ general trust and confidence in national institutions (1983, “The Decline of
Confidence in American Institutions”). The authors noted that 1964 was when confidence levels started to dip and mistrust started to rise. “The 1964 presidential election was an unusually sharp ideological confrontation, with charges of extremism raised against the Republican candidate” (p. 380). Also happening in 1964 was the start of the Free Speech Movement at UC Berkeley and the beginning of the “student protest era”, as well as the much-contested Vietnam War, making it a time of particular unrest and unpredictability in the country (Lipset & Schneider, 1983, “The decline of confidence in American institutions”).

In 1966 the average proportion of the American people who had “a great deal” of confidence in the national institutions was 47.5 %. By 1967 it was down to 42% and by 1971, it was down to 28%. Confidence in Congress dropped from 42% of the population in 1966 to 23% in 1971; confidence in the Supreme Court was basically halved, going from 50% to 23% and education lost support as well, decreasing from 61% to 37% -- starting and ending at a confidence point higher than all other institutions (Lipset & Schneider, 1983, The Confidence Gap). After the stark decreases in confidence prior to 1971, the fluctuations became markedly less dramatic and more erratic, though the confidence did ultimately continue to decline. While the fluctuations of confidence levels mostly happened in tandem across institutions, there was never another upswing in confidence to counter the previous prominent loss and therefore give one the hope that this was all part of a cycle (Lipset & Schneider, 1983, The Confidence Gap).

When looking into possible explanations for the confidence trends, Lipset and Schneider found that there is a strong negative correlation between confidence in institutions and rising
unemployment, and a moderate negative correlation between confidence in institutions and rising inflation rates. They also found that major companies and government institutions were affected by both inflation and unemployment factors, but education and labor related institutions were affected by unemployment only (1983, *The Confidence Gap*). The conclusion: “A good deal of the decline in confidence can be attributed to adverse economic conditions” (p. 65, 1983, Lipset & Schneider, *The Confidence Gap*). This lends support to the idea that confidence fluctuations can be attributed to “national mood.”

*Shifts in Confidence in American Education*

Tom Loveless analyzed the public opinion shifts with a focus on education. He noticed that in the mid-1970s, when other institutions were losing the confidence more rapidly, even after the huge dips prior to 1971, education specifically was still doing reasonably well in the public’s eye – or at least better than most. This changed drastically when *A Nation at Risk* was published in 1983. After *ANAR* came on scene, the education institution was in the same boat as the rest of the nation’s institution: losing public approval again (Loveless, 1997).

Loveless looks to Max Weber and David Friedrichs to break down the legitimacy of social institutions to understand Americans’ opinion of education. Friedrichs made the claim in 1980 that America was in the midst of a legitimacy crisis, and based his perception of that legitimacy crisis on the public opinion polls which, between the 1960s and 1970s were showing a rise in mistrust in leaders and loss of faith in government (Friedrichs, 1980). To better show the
layers of what constituted a legitimacy crisis, Friedrichs divided legitimacy into three dimensions: perceptual, behavioral, and structural (Friedrichs, 1980, p. 344). Loveless uses the perceptual (people’s perceptions and the attitudes formed from them) and behavioral (what people actually do) dimensions of legitimacy to analyze the confidence ranking that American education has received.

According to opinion polls that Loveless examined, the American people lost confidence in education, and gave the national education system a “failing grade,” thus the education system has lost much perceptual legitimacy. However, in regards to what people actually do, the American people behave as if they are satisfied with the system: there have progressively been fewer and fewer students dropping out of schools, more students are enrolling in public school rather than private school, and government funding for the education system has increased (Loveless, 1997). All these signs show that the American people behave positively toward the education system, granting it behavioral legitimacy. Moving forward, we can examine both trends to determine if there actually is an education crisis. Perhaps this also indicates that behavioral legitimacy should inform public policy formation more than perceptual legitimacy.

Adding to the complication of the education systems’ perceptual versus behavioral legitimacy, Americans polled give different “grades” (which measure the basic idea of how well the institution is functioning, and how pleased the respondent is) to the national education system than they give to their own local schools. Consistently, the national school system received “low grades” of mainly Ds and Fs, with some Cs, while respondents scored their own local schools
with As and Bs, occasionally going lower to Cs (Loveless, 1997, p. 140). As of 2014, the “grades” given to local versus national schools were slightly less divided; for local schools, 38% of the respondents rated it as a B, while 31% rated them a C, and for schools nationally, 16% of people ranked them B while 51% of people ranked them a C (Phi Delta Kappa International, 2014). Loveless also mentioned that the more familiar people are with their schools, the higher their opinions of the school are (p. 140) which can be tied back to Bryk and Schneider’s assertion that the more social relation there is between a community and its schools, the better they feel about the school and the better the school will perform (2011). This also leads one to wonder what is informing the public’s opinion of the national education system. Despite the “grades” given to the education system, Lipset and Schnieder show that, when asked about confidence in national institutions, education was consistently ranked second, after medicine, from 1966 to 1981 (1983, *The Confidence Gap.* ) All of this shows that there is a disconnect between what the American people say they think of education at large and how they function toward the education system.

Loveless also pointed out that decline in confidence can be seen across all institutions, and that this simultaneous fluctuation across the board leads one to the conclusion that “forces beyond the institutions themselves...may be affecting how they are viewed by the public” (Loveless, 1997, p. 138). Loveless found that general public sentiment affects sentiment toward particular institutions through what Stimson called the “public mood:” a latent disposition on public matters (p. 136). Another possible contributor to this shift in public opinion across all
institutions is what Beckett called “media causality.” Loveless found support in Beckett’s work that supports “the idea that public attitudes are constructed through attention to authoritative cultural cues” (1997, p. 139.) The discrepancy between attitudes about local education system, to which respondents are directly exposed, and attitudes about the national education system, which must be informed by other methods, further supports the idea of media causality. Thus, as far as the nation’s press is considered an authoritative cue as to the state of events in America, what is being said about education in the media can quite possibly shape how Americans consuming that media think and feel about the topic.

Lipset and Schneider wanted to look into the influence of one’s educational background on their general confidence in institutions and found that neither education, nor occupational status, were indicators of how a respondent would rank their confidence in institutions. When broken out into their educational attainment groups, the percentages of respondents’ who had “high” confidence in institutions was about 30% within each group (i.e., 30% of those with only some high school education, 32% with a high school diploma, and 29% for those with a college degree responded they had high levels of confidence.) It is important to note the difference between this finding, and the research question I am investigating: while socioeconomic status is indeed not an indicator of one’s general confidence in institutions, we still do not know how different social groups’ confidence has changed over time. It is also important to distinguish Lipset and Schneider’s question of general confidence, or confidence across all institutions, and my focus on confidence in education.
Changes in Educational Opportunity Over Time: Social Class

Sean Reardon found that while the relationship between a parent’s education and a child’s academic achievement remained relatively stable, the relationship between a parent’s income and that child’s achievement has grown sharply: “Family income is now nearly as strong as parental education in predicting children’s achievement” (p. 109). Additionally, a difference in family income in 2011 is tied to a 30% - 60% larger difference in academic achievement than it was in the 1970s (p. 91). This is not sudden news, however; in the 1960s, the Federal Head Start program was launched as a way to address the link between family income (specifically poverty) and children’s development (2011, Sean Reardon).

Reardon posits that the achievement gaps seem to have grown because of stronger association between income and educational achievement (2011). What, then, are the possible causes for the stronger link between income and educational achievement? First, according to Kaushal, Magnuson, and Waldfogel, high-income families are able to invest more time and energy into their child’s formative years, taking them to summer camps, extracurricular activities, educational travel, music and art lessons (2011). Parents can actually organize the child’s life in a way that brings about the best intellectual and socioemotional development through solutions like suitable child care and the ability to take time off work; this is called “concerted cultivation” (Reardon, 2011, p. 104). Along with more time, high-income families are able to funnel more resources into their child’s academic and intellectual development. This
means they can pay for tutoring, after-school programs, extracurricular activities, books and other educational aides in the home, and much more (Reardon 2011). Meredith Phillips found that low socioeconomic status and high socioeconomic parents also have different parenting *styles*, in terms of time use; lower SES parents both talk and read to their children less than do high SES parents (2011).

Coleman and Hoffer describe that parents’ human capital directly effects their children’s educational outcome, but is only beneficial to that outcome if it can be transferred into social capital within the family (2011). Every family, regardless of social background, has human capital but families from lower classes are restricted to expending their human capital on work or outside the home, and therefore unable to transform any into social capital (Coleman & Hoffer, 2011).

Along with the link between income and education there have been significant shifts in educational mobility. Michael Hout and Alexander Janus chronicled a decrease in educational mobility since the 1930s (p. 165). Only 40% of men in the 2000s surpassed their father’s education, compared to 65% of men in the 1960s and 1970s. According to Hout & Janus, this can be attributed to the industrial growth and the expansion of education during the 1960s; when that expansion ceases more people become downwardly mobile rather than upwardly mobile in education (Hout & Janus, 2011). Hout and Janus attributed about half of the correlation between generations’ educational attainment to the American pattern of residential and school segregation (p. 166).
Changes in Educational Opportunity Over Time: Race

“Rising income inequality has been found to be associated with rising segregation at the neighborhood level…” (p. 255, Burdick-Will et. al., 2011). The dominant civil rights issues of 1968 were school integration and open housing” (p. 75, Edsall 1991). In 1965 and 1966, now that *Brown v. Board of Education* had declared segregation of schools unconstitutional, the Civil Rights Movement turned its focus to housing integration. Also at this time was the rise of the Black Revolution, sparking organizations like the Black Panthers and shouts of “Black Power”--and suddenly the white advocates of the Civil Rights Movement were overwhelmed by the black revolution and their support began to fade. In order to keep the votes of the white population in 1968, Nixon’s campaign left the open housing, busing, and integration issues up to the states (Edsall, 1991). Over time, this race-based residential segregation become practically synonymous with income segregation; minority and poor citizens are overrepresented in the neighborhoods considered disadvantaged (Burdick-Will et. al., 2011). In the 50’s and 60s black Americans had high rates of educational mobility and basically closed the educational attainment gap between their population and the white population (Hout & Janus, 2011). However, in the 1980s, the black population lost all the ground previously gained; white students were once again more dominant in education than were black students.

It is important to note, however, that Kaushal, Magnuson, and Waldfogel found that the gaps in school achievement between children of different incomes are already large by the time
of school entry, and show very few signs of decreasing (2011). Neighborhood effects on student’s academic achievement are worst when looking at a particularly disadvantaged neighborhood. African American children show the strongest evidence for these neighborhood effects, which can possibly be attributed to higher rates of single parenthood in black families, which leads to the conclusion that the more unstable a family is, the more it will feel negative neighborhood effects (p. 265, Burdick-Will et al., 2011).

Generally speaking, black students score lower on standardized testing than do white students, and have lower rates of bachelor or graduate degree attainment than white students (2011, Arum, Beattie & Ford). Despite this, the attainment gaps between black and white students are closing, black students are now almost as likely as white students to finish school, and they tend to have higher expectations and dreams for themselves than do their white counterparts (2011, Duncan & Murnane). And in 1976, black respondents were more optimistic about their own futures than were white respondents, and the black respondents also reported more prominent feelings of progress in their time than did their white peers. “Whites and blacks…differ on the trend [of national well being] perceived to be taking place” (p. 150, Lipset and Schneider, 1983, The Confidence Gap.)

Research Questions

It is apparent that Americans’ confidence in the national education institution has dropped over time, and that the structure of American education can benefit students very differently
depending on their social class or race. In this project, I used GSS data to determine if those two facts are linked. Specifically, my research questions are as follows:

*Research Question 1:* Is the trend of confidence lost among the lower social status population similar or dissimilar to the trend of confidence lost observed among the higher social status population?

*Research Question 2:* Is the trend of confidence lost among white respondents similar or dissimilar to the trend of confidence lost observed among black respondents?

*Research Question 3:* Is education noteworthy in the way its groups (based on education level and race) lost confidence, or are the trends the same in other institutions observed (congress, banks, and press)?

**Methodology**

The General Social Survey is the longest running project from NORC (the National Opinion Research Center) at University of Chicago. It was created in 1972 to monitor societal change and track trends in attitudes, behaviors, and attributes of American citizens, and has been administered every year from 1972 to 1994, excepting 1979, 1981, and 1992. After 1994, it was only administered in even numbered years. The survey is conducted via an in-person questionnaire, and the sample included anyone over the age of 18 living in a household in the United States (http://gss.norc.org/). Each of the variables that I have chosen for my analysis was asked in every year, or almost every year, that the survey was administered.
The variables I have chosen to analyze are: DEGREE (respondent’s highest level of education), RACE (respondent’s identified race), CONEDUC (respondent’s level of confidence in education system), CONFINAN (confidence in banks and financial institutions), CONPRESS (confidence in national press), and CONLEGIS (confidence in congress). The DEGREE variable, level of education, will serve as an indicator for social status for the purposes of this analysis. The confidence variable series are responses to the same question: “I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?” It is important to note that the wording of the question is regarding confidence in education as a whole; as Bryk and Schneider found, individuals are often more approving of their local educational institutions.

I chose to compare the confidence trends for education to those of financial institutions, press, and congress because I felt that would represent a wide array of American institutions and therefore would better show if the confidence trends in education are an isolated event, or if there is something to be said for “national mood.”

Data Analysis

The first goal was to determine if the trends seen in confidence in education were significantly different from the trends observed in confidence in the other institutions, in order to establish that the trends observed were education-specific or to know if they were more likely a result of national mood.
After creating line graphs to visualize the trends, I used SPSS to conduct an independent samples t-test for equality of means for social class and race for each institution.

Of the institutions that I examined—education, congress, financial institutions, and press—education was the only institution which showed a statistically significantly different pattern of responses between both sets of social groups (educational level and race). When I tested for a difference between more- and less-education groups for confidence in education, there was a two-tailed significance of .000; the same significance was found for confidence in education when comparing black and white samples. The only other instance of a statistically significant figure was confidence in congress, grouped by education level, which had a significance figure of .010.

While this, on its own, would not be enough to disregard the remaining institutions and assume that education was unique, the lack of statistically significant difference between the social groups’ confidence in other institutions paired with the observations of each institution’s trend of reported confidence from 1974 to 2010 shows that education alone has a significantly different response from different social groups. This suggests that there might be more to the changes in confidence in education than just “national mood.”

Figure 1.1
When comparing across groups based on level of education, the t-test for equality of means gave a two-tailed significance of .000, showing that there is a strong statistically significant difference between the confidence of respondents with a high school education or less and those with a college degree or more. This can be seen in Figure 1.1 by the way the lines representing “high school or less” and “college or more” do not overlap (though they do get close in 1982 and 1984). The trends are similar in how and when they change, but are not perfectly in sync and remain separate for a majority of the time observed.

Figure 1.2

The t-test for comparing white respondents’ confidence to black respondents’ found a two-tailed significance of .000, showing that there is a strong statistically significant difference between the two groups’ levels of confidence. Figure 1.2 shows consistent distance between the trend lines of the white and black respondents; again, while the confidence levels do change in similar ways, they are not identical or overlapping. It is also important to notice the distance between the trend lines; on average, white people were 12 percentage points lower than black people in terms of reported confidence. Figure
1.1 shows that less-education respondents were, on average, 5.8% points higher than more-educated respondents in terms of confidence in education.

**Figure 2.1**

Confidence in Congress: Social Class

The results of the t-test for different social classes’ confidence in congress showed a two-tailed significance level of .010, meaning that there is a significant difference between the more- and less-educated groups. This can also be seen in Figure 2.1, above; while the trend lines are very close together and move similarly, they do not overlap.

**Figure 2.2**

Confidence in Congress: Race
The t-test results for confidence in congress compared by race showed a two-tailed significance figure of .132, showing no statistically significant difference between the groups’ means. When paired with Figure 2.2, which shows the trend lines of black and white respondents overlapping and changing more or less in sync with one another up until 2008, it confirms that there is not enough difference between the two groups to compare them.

Figure 3.1

The two-tailed significance figure obtained from the t-test for confidence in financial institutions by social class was .655, showing no statistically significant difference between the average responses of low SES respondents and those of the high SES respondents. Paired with Figure 3.1, above, which shows the trend lines of the groups overlapping multiple times and rising and falling in sync with one another, the groups are not different enough from one another to compare them over time.
The significance found from the t-test for the mean of white respondents and the mean of black respondents is .740, or not statistically significantly different enough. The trend lines in Figure 3.2 also show no significant difference between the two groups and their changes in confidence over time. The exception would be the years 1990 – 1994 when the confidence of white respondents was much lower than that of black respondents. However, this difference was short lived and outside of those four years the trends of the groups continued to change in relative sync with one another.

Figure 4.1
The t-test for confidence in press grouped by education level presented a significance figure of .313, showing no statistically significant difference in two groups. Additionally, Figure 4.1 shows that while the trend lines of each group do not overlap as frequently as do the trend lines of groups in other institutions, they consistently are very close together, and the changes in levels of respondents with a great deal of confidence. Figure 4.2 (below) shows that when comparing black respondents to white respondents, the t-test for confidence in press according to race produced a significance figure of .295. Paired with Figure 4.2 (see below), this information tells us that white and black respondents did not report confidence levels different enough to really compare the two groups over time.

Figure 4.2

It is clear that, of the institutions I chose to research, education is the only institution where the confidence of its respondents is different enough between social classes and between races to warrant comparison. To do that comparison, I carried out independent t-tests for the difference in
two proportions for each set of data. For each of the four groups explored, I determined the difference between the proportion of people with “a great deal” of confidence in education 1974 and the proportion of people with “a great deal” of confidence in 2010. For those respondents with high school education or less, the result was $t = 5.57$, df (1), and was found significant at the $p = .05$ significance level. For the group of respondents with a college education or higher, the result was $t = 1.76$, df(1) and was also significant at the $p = .05$ significance level. According to these tests, less-educated respondents lost more confidence over time than did more-educated respondents. This is mirrored in Figure 1.1 above, which shows that the proportion of people who had a high school education or less and reported “a great deal” of confidence declined from 41.3% to 29.5%, or a total of 11.8 percentage points. For the college or more group, the decline was from 30.5% of the population in 1974 to 23.7% in 2010, a 6.8 percentage point drop. Respondents in the less-educated group lost more confidence than did those in the more-educated group, but consistently reported higher levels of confidence in education (See Figure 1.1).

For levels of confidence in education based on race, I did the same analysis: comparing the proportion of the population with “a great deal” of confidence in 1974 to the same in 2010. For white respondents, the difference between 1974 and 2010 resulted in $t = 7.3$, df (1), and was found significant at the $p = .05$ level. For black respondents the result was $t = 1.63$, df (1), and was also found significant at the $p = .05$ level. Again, this can be observed in Figure 2.1, where white respondents with “a great deal” of confidence was 38.1% in 1974 and declined to 23.8% in
2010, a drop of 14.3 percentage points. Black respondents’ confidence dropped from 50.4% to 39.8%, a drop of only 10.6 points. Not only did black respondents lose less confidence over time than their white counterparts, they also remained consistently more confident in the education system than did the white respondents (see Figure 1.2).

As stated above, Figures 1.1 and 1.2 show that there is more distance between the trend lines of confidence between black and white respondents than there is between confidence of less- and more-educated respondents. There is an average distance of 5.8 percentage points between more-educated respondents and less-educated respondents, with lower education people consistently reporting higher levels of confidence in education. The average distance between black and white respondents was 12 percentage points, with black respondents consistently having more confidence in the education system than white respondents. I did a t-test to measure the difference between each of these figures. For the class-based responses recorded in 2010, the proportion difference between less- and more-educated respondents was $t = 1.12$, df (1) and was found to be statistically significant. Also in 2010, the difference between white and black respondents with “a great deal” of confidence was $t = 4.2$, df (1), and was found to be statistically significant. Though both were considered statistically significant, both the average percentages and the difference in proportion showed that there was a larger difference between the confidence of white and black respondents than there was between less- and more-educated respondents.
Discussion

The findings acquired from the t-tests successfully address the research questions I posed before analyzing the data. For the first research question, inquiring if different social classes lost confidence differently, the findings show that, on average, less-educated respondents lost more confidence from 1974 to 2010 than did more-educated respondents – even though they also consistently had a higher level of confidence than high SES respondents. The second research question was concerned with the same phenomenon, but for race: did black and white people lose confidence in our education system differently? Again, the answer is yes. On average, white respondents lost more confidence than did black respondents from 1974 to 2010, though black respondents consistently had higher levels of confidence. The third research question was concerned with whether or not education was unique from other institutions regarding the way social classes reported confidence in it. The answer, again, was yes. There was no significant difference in the trends of “a great deal” of confidence across both education level and race among the other institutions (the only exception was a significant difference between more- and less-educated respondents and their confidence in congress, though this was a less-significant different than that found in confidence in education).

Particularly interesting was the finding that black respondents consistently have higher levels of confidence in the education institution, when the social narrative seems to be that black students are getting the short end of the stick in our schools. Black students have for years scored lower on standardized testing and tend to have lower rates of higher education attainment, so
why are they more confident in the education system than their white (statistically more successful by those measurements) counterparts?

This finding relates to what Lipset and Schneider found in 1976 about black citizen’s other attitudes regarding national matters: black respondents are, on average, more positive about their own personal futures than are white respondents, and are also more likely to report prominent feelings of progress within their lifetime (1983, *The Confidence Gap*). One possible explanation of this phenomenon is that the black population of America has had farther to go, in terms of progress, and therefore sees that progress clearly within their lifetime, whereas white people in the U.S. have always been the privileged social group and therefore cannot report “progress” when their lot is remaining much the same. This also begs the question: are schools serving black members of society better than we think they are, based on test scores? Or is the confidence of black families misplaced?

**Conclusion**

The limitations of this project are largely centered on the data that was available through the GSS. The first limitation is how the GSS records the race of respondents: the racial labels available in the GSS consisted only of “Black,” “White,” and “Other.” During the time periods analyzed, when black students were experience huge changes in their education system, Asian students were outperforming white students and seemed relatively unaffected by residential segregation (in regards to academic performance) and yet cannot be analyzed based on their
confidence in education because their racial category was unspecified. As a racial group that performed distinctively differently than both of the other major groups, it could have been telling to see the changes in their confidence in education. Another limitation worth noting is that caused by the wording of the question asked regarding confidence; the wording focuses on the leaders of the education institution, which can be an entirely separate question from how the institution functions on a more basic level. Additionally, this question allows for no explanation of the reasons for one’s confidence ranking.

For these reasons, it would beneficial to the field to more deeply research confidence in education based on racial categories outside of black and white. Because of the phenomenon of black positivity observed through the years of the analysis as well as that displayed in 1974, it would be beneficial to research the reasons for black confidence in education, and therefore better understand how education is serving them well in ways that sociologists, as of yet, have not been able to identify. Another area for further research would be Beckett’s idea of media causality, covered in the literature review, and researching this idea as a possible explanation for the differences between how social groups’ confidence levels changed over time and as the source of the polled national confidence.
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