

2021

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Recommended Citation

Azizova, Z. T., Kim, J., & Mendez, J. P. (2021). Anticipatory Socialization and Forms of Capital in Pre-Law Students' Intent to Pursue a Juris Doctorate. *Journal of Access, Retention, and Inclusion in Higher Education*, 4(1). Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.wcupa.edu/jarihe/vol4/iss1/8>

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Anticipatory Socialization and Forms of Capital in Pre-Law Students' Intent to Pursue a Juris Doctorate

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Abstract

This study employs student survey data and statistical analysis to reveal whether demographics, forms of capital, and anticipatory socialization factors determine pre-law students' intent to pursue a law degree and their perceptions of LSAT scores as an indicator of admissibility. Descriptive statistics show that 72 percent of the respondents were concerned about financial debt and 68 percent of respondents were concerned about their chances of being admitted. Female and racial/ethnic students held negative perceptions about their LSAT scores. Regression analysis shows that six factors held associations with the respondents' intent to pursue a law degree and perceptions of LSAT scores. We discuss our findings in the context of the increased calls for diversification of legal profession and law school enrollments and concerns about a continuous reliance on LSAT scores in admission decisions.

Keywords: access; legal education; academic and social capital; diversity in legal education.

Introduction

Former assistant deputy secretary for the U.S. Department of Labor, Wilcher (2004) compares access to law schools with a road to empowerment and social uplift, citing the societal need for more lawyers of colors. Wilcher asserts, "Those seeking 'to make a difference' can benefit from having a law degree when seeking positions as counsel for congressional committees, the White House and executive branch agencies or for comparable positions in state and local governments" (p.124). However, diversity remains a national challenge for law schools (Kuris, 2020). While some evidence suggests that demographic shifts already occurred at the graduate level (Okahana, Zhou, & Gao, 2020),

law schools' enrollments and representations in the legal profession do not reflect these changes (Jaschik, 2020; LSAC, 2019; ABA, 2020).

According to the Law School Admission Council (LSAC) (2020), the total number of law school applicants increased by 25.9% in 2020, while the Caucasian/White applications are accountable for the most of that increase (LSAC, 2020). The enrollment in law schools has slightly increased in 2020 as well (ABA, 2020). Yet, the enrollment among students of color remains low, with the biggest drop in 2019 for Blacks in the fourth consecutive years (ABA, 2019; 2020). While the number of female applicants has been outgrowing the number of male applicants (54% in 2020 compared to 44% in Fall 2019), the admission rates for male applicants remain to be higher (72% in 2020 compared to 69% in Fall 2019). Moreover, only about nine percent of law students come from first-generation college student backgrounds with a parent who had a high school diploma or less, and about 35% of law students come from high-income families (i.e., the highest percentage by family income compared to all other graduate degrees) (AccessLex Institute, 2018; 2020). In general, these data trends preserve the stereotype that law education is for the affluent White men.

The purpose of our research was to gain more insights from the pre-law students into issues of access to law schools to determine kinds of student perceptions and forms of capital that predicted their intent to pursue a law degree. Two research questions guided this study:

Research Question 1: How do student perceptions and forms of social and academic capital predict students' likelihood of pursuing a law degree?

Research Question 2: How do student perceptions and forms of social and academic capital predict students' perceptions of the LSAT?

We conceptualized that certain perceptions and forms of social and academic capital had associations with the access to law schools. The access was measured by (1) the prospective students' intent to apply to and enroll in a law school and by (2) the prospective students' perceptions of the LSAT as a gatekeeper to a law school. The findings of the current study contribute to the literature about access to legal education and provide implications for law schools.

Conceptual Framework

Two theories, such as anticipatory socialization to professional education (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001) and academic capital formation (ACF) (St. John, Hu, & Fisher, 2011), guided our conceptualization of the six factors that predicted the access outcomes. The anticipatory socialization to professional and/or graduate education (Weidman, Twale, & Stein, 2001) assumes that prospective students have certain predispositions making them admissible to a professional degree as well as develop certain preconceived ideas about "behavioral, attitudinal, and cognitive expectations" held for a student seeking admissions (p. 25). The ACF theory emphasizes that various forms of capital remain to be a significant determinant of student predispositions and preconceived

ideas, explaining between-group (i.e., race/ethnicity, or socioeconomic status) differences and opportunity gaps in postsecondary education. In other words, merging two theoretical orientations, we saw that "normative behaviors and acceptable emotions" in anticipation of admissibility to a law school (Weidman et al., 2001, p. 25) and various forms of capital to which some student populations had access to (St. John, 2006) would determine the prospective students' perceptions of the LSAT and their intent to apply to and enroll in a law school.

Thus, we proposed the following six factors. Within the dimension of anticipatory graduate and professional socialization, pre-law students would hold: (1) perceptions of the value of law education (i.e., to make more money, to enjoy one of the most prestigious professional occupations), (2) perceptions of purposes of law education, and (3) concerns over an anticipated lack of social and emotional support. Students' various forms of capital included (4) finances (i.e., law school debt expectations), (5) academic capital (undergraduate co-curricular involvement), and (6) social capital (undergraduate social interactions and socialization agents).

Students' Perceptions

Scholarly literature pertaining to the trends of law school enrollment and admission has a historical track of focusing solely on the issues of affirmative actions and the effects of affirmative actions on law school outcomes (i.e., academic performance, completion, or passing the bar) (Chambers, Clydesdale, Kidder, & Lempert, 2004; Garces, 2013; Johnson & Onwuachi-Willig, 2005; Sander, 2004). The literature lacks any specific studies that examine qualitatively or quantitatively other factors affecting access to law schools and legal education. Three broad factors pertaining to prospective students' perceptions may take a central position during the anticipatory stage of graduate and professional socialization. These are about the perceived value of legal education, perceived purposes and outcomes of legal education, and anticipated need for emotional and social support during the studies.

Value of Legal Education

The financial reality associated with the costs of legal education encompasses a myriad of perceptions that potential law students have, which centers on college debt and perceptions of limited employment prospects after graduation from a law school. These considerations may take a central position during the anticipatory stage of students' graduate and professional socialization. The gloomy prospect of employment after graduation is being currently cited as a prominent cause for the declining enrollment (Kassidelis, 2015; Liu, 2014; National Law Journal, 2015). Addressing *the broken economic model*, Brian (2012) summarizes reports on the decline of post-graduation employment from 76.9% in 2007 to 68.4% in 2008. Yet, according to the recent statistics by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (n.d.), the legal profession has the most positive job outlook because of the projected four percent increase in job openings for lawyers. However, prospective law students remain skeptical about potential employment after graduation and an economic value of a law degree (Florida Times-Union,

2014). A report from the U.S. Department of Education (AccessLex Institute, 2018) indicates that the increase from 17 to 48% of law school graduates who believed that the legal profession and studies were not worth the cost.

Perceived Challenges and Outcomes of Legal Education

Focusing solely on the perceived monetary value of the legal profession would be misleading in understanding what individuals expect from legal education. Henderson (2003) argues that the purpose of today's law schools is "to teach a heterogenous group of people, who come from widely different backgrounds and with widely different goals, to think like lawyers" (p. 52). Indeed, some literature supports that there is a variation of perceptions about purposes and outcomes of law education. For example, in the recent survey conducted by the Association of American Law Schools (AALS) and Gallup, undergraduate students, who were interested in pursuing a law degree, expressed their passion for an advocacy work for social change and usefulness to the society (Whitford, 2018). Individuals' interests in entering legal profession not only in the private sector but also in government services or other capacities is documented elsewhere as well (Henderson, 2003). On the other hand, perceived challenges and concerns may revolve around notions of law school selectivity and fear of failure (Soonpaa, 2003) as well as degrees of difficulties of studying and succeeding in law schools, given the perceived competitive nature of law schools (Sheehy & Horan, 2004). The student sample in Whiteford's study (2018) also reported high costs and potential debt as the greatest deterrents to enrollment in law schools, which we address as a form of capital that impacts application and enrollment in law schools in the following sections.

Anticipated Need for a Social and Emotional Support

Students' sense of belonging at the undergraduate and graduate levels is one of the well-documented aspects of student experiences and success. In general, graduate students are more prone to emotional burnout and high levels of stress (Boren, 2013; Rigg, Day, & Adler, 2013). Having access to social support networks has been reported to be a powerful force driving graduate student success (Jairam & Kahl, 2012; Pifer & Baker, 2016). Our study addressed aimed to test whether a perceived need for a social support was present among the pre-law students who anticipated their pursuit of a law degree.

Forms of Capital

Three additional factors capture the role of finances as well as forms of academic and social capital in students' likelihood to pursue a graduate and professional education.

Financial Factors

Tangential student concerns over the amount of debt and costs of attending are typically cited as the significant reasons for the declining enrollment in law schools (The National Law Journal, 2015). While the economic return of a law degree remains high (USGAO, 2009; Simkovic & McIntire, 2014), costs associated with attending law school have steadily increased (ABA, 2020). The average tuition and fees for a resident student at a public law school stood at \$24,220 in 2011, which had a steady increase and reached to \$32,130 in 2020 (ABA, 2020). Moreover, approximately 86% of law students revealed that they carried student debt prior to

law school enrollment (LSSE, 2014). Other studies found that debt accrued through undergraduate education negatively influenced students' decision to pursue a graduate or professional degree (Choy, 2000; Heller, 2001; Millett, 2003; Zhang, 2010). Not surprisingly, the availability of financial aid becomes a significant predictor of enrollment in a first-choice graduate or professional program (Millett, 2003).

Academic Capital

Students' educational backgrounds reflect the role of academic capital acquired through undergraduate experiences, campus engagement, and academic achievements. For example, research from the 90s shows that interdisciplinary courses and social sciences at the undergraduate level had significant positive effects on LSAT scores (Astin, 1993). The evidence from the 2000s is yet limited or underreported regarding the impact of the undergraduate coursework (Mayhew et al., 2000). Moreover, undergraduate experiences at institutions with a strong emphasis on scholarship and faculty's scholarly orientation also yielded a positive correlation with LSAT scores (Astin, 1993), but this relationship calls for researchers' attention these days. Other research reports a positive effect of participation in undergraduate research on students' decisions to pursue graduate education (Hathaway, Nagda, & Gregerman, 2002). Attendance at either an HBCU or PWI can be an additional factor explaining variability between White and racial/ethnic students in decisions to pursue a law degree (Mayhew et al., 2016). Some evidence suggests that, compared to PWIs, HBCUs may have a stronger indirect effect on career choices and aspirations for Black students (Mayhew et al., 2016). This indirect effect is attributable to more supportive educational environments at HBCUs (Watson, Terrell, Wright, & Associates, 2002).

Social Capital

Early socialization to a legal career generates cultural capital through various impacts of socializing agents and support groups on educational aspirations, expectations, and attitudes of racial and ethnic prospective students (Cheng & Stark; 2002; St. John et al., 2006). Cultural capital takes the form of various opportunities for exposure to legal careers, professional jargon, professional role models, and information about legal education and law schools.

To summarize, we hypothesized that the anticipatory socialization factors and various forms of capital had significant associations with the access outcomes of this study. How each factor contributes to the access outcomes would shed light on how to better support students to be prepared for the application, admissions, and successful transitions to law schools.

Research Methods

The data for the study come from a survey developed by the researchers based on the literature reviewed in the conceptual framework section. The survey was distributed to the full-time undergraduate students who identified as being on a pre-law track at two research universities, an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)-main campus and Predominately White Institution (PWI)-main campus. The PWI was a large research institution in the Midwest with a student population of 23,000, with 72% of students from the White racial background.

Their pre-law tracking program was housed within the College of Arts and Sciences (total enrollment of 4,664 undergraduate students). While the college kept track of students who were interested in law degrees and had a formal advisor who oversaw these students, the institution did not have a pre-law major or minor per se. We also included students from an emerging HSI from the Southeast with a student enrollment of 64,000 students, with 51% students from the White racial background. Their pre-law track generally originated from two separate colleges: College of Sciences (total enrollment of 10,700 undergraduate students) and College of Health and Public Affairs (total enrollment of 8,550 undergraduate students). We distributed the surveys via Qualtrics by emailing the students through their advisor at the PWI and through their respective academic departments at the HSI. The overall number of undergraduate students on pre-law tracks was 500 at the PWI and 328 at the HSI. Among these students, 125 students (23 and 101 students, respectively) responded and completed the survey.

Female participants constituted 62.6 % of the sample. In terms of the racial demographics, Whites made up 57 % of the population, followed by Blacks (13%), Hispanics, non-White (11%), Native Americans (4%), and Asians (2%). The participant sample was from the diverse household income levels: students who were from the family income below \$75,000 comprised more than half of the sample, including 15% representing a household making \$20,000 or less; meanwhile, six percent of the students reported family income higher than \$200,000. Eleven percent and 13% of the students were from the household income levels of \$150,000 to \$199,000 and \$100,000 to \$149,999, respectively. Finally, while 68% of the sample was first-generation students, 12% of the students in our sample had parents working in the legal profession.

Variables and Analysis

The variables of interest in this study were measures of anticipatory socialization (i.e., perceived value of legal education, perceived purposes and outcomes of legal education, and anticipated need for emotional and social support during the studies) and capitals (i.e., role of finances, academic capital, and social capital). The six variables were created based on the literature reviewed in the conceptual framework section. *Social capital* was defined as one's undergraduate social interactions and agents, measured with 6 items (e.g., I know what to expect in law school from my academic adviser/s in my undergraduate education); *Academic capital* captures undergraduate co-curricular involvement using 6 items (e.g., During my undergraduate years, I was involved in student leadership organization/s on campus); One's *perceived purposes and outcomes of legal education* was measured using 7 items including "I want to pursue a law degree to make a difference in addressing the challenges in today's society." *Financial capital* (2 items) measured how one expects debt that would accrue from graduating from a law school. The *anticipated need for emotional and social support* is a factor measured by 4 items regarding where and how students find their support when it comes to their law education. Finally, the *perceived value of legal education* (5 items) asked students what outcomes they envision from a law degree (See Table 1).

Because multiple items were employed to capture the six underlying variables, called factors, we employed factor analysis which extracts maximum common variance from all items and puts them into a common score. As each factor should be associated with a specified subset of measured items based on the pre-established theory, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (Kim & Mueller, 1978; Bryant & Yarnold, 1995)¹. We obtained factor scores for the six factors as an index of all items and included them as independent variables in the main analysis. For each factor, we calculated Cronbach’s alpha in order to check the reliability. All factors had a coefficient of .60 or higher, suggesting that there is acceptable or relatively high internal consistency.

Table 1.
Definition and Items of Anticipatory Socialization and Capital Measures

Measures	Definition & Items	Cronbach α
Social Capital	Undergraduate social interactions and agents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have developed a strong social peer support during my undergraduate years. - My undergraduate coursework prepared me well for a law school. - I know what to expect in law school from my undergraduate peers. - I know what to expect in law school from my academic adviser/s in my undergraduate education. - I know what to expect in law school from role models among law professionals. - During my undergraduate years, I had a faculty adviser who was scholarly productive (i.e., published peer-reviewed articles, books, book chapters, other manuscripts, conferences presentations, posters). 	.748
Academic Capital	Undergraduate co-curricular involvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - During my undergraduate years, I presented at scholarly conferences and/or co-authored a publication with a faculty - During my undergraduate years, I was involved in student leadership organization/s on campus (i.e., Student Governance Organization, etc.) - During my undergraduate years, I was a member of A Greek Letter Organization - During my undergraduate years, I participated in service-learning or other civic engagement activities - During my undergraduate years, I was involved in other student organization/s 	.662

	- During my undergraduate years, I was involved in student activism on campus	
Perceived purposes and Outcomes of Legal Education	- I believe that legal education will be difficult and challenging - I want to pursue a law degree to make a difference in addressing the challenges in today's society - I want to pursue a law degree to enter government service - During my undergraduate years, I had an assigned pre-law adviser - When applying to a law school, the amount of debt that I am accruing was/is my concern - When applying to a law school, uncertainty that I will be admitted was/is my concern - When applying to a law school, uncertainty about employment prospects after graduation was/is my concern	.628
Financial	Law School Debt Expectations	.679
	- I expect to be at least \$100,000 in debt after graduating from law school - I expect to be in debt after law school graduation	
Anticipated need for emotional and social support	- I know what to expect from law school from social media - I know what to expect from law school from pop cultural references - Lack of sense of belonging and integration to a law school was my concern - Not having enough social and emotional support from significant others was my concern	.683
Perceived value of legal education	- I feel like I have adequate funding to attend law school - I want to pursue law degree to make more money that I have previously had - I want to pursue law degree because it is one of the prestigious professional occupations - I want to pursue law degree to go into private practice - Persisting to law school graduation was my concern	.602

Our dependent variables of the access outcomes were twofold: students' intent to pursue a law degree and their perceptions of LSAT score. For the former, we measured: i. whether or not a student intends to apply to a law school, and ii. if they will enroll conditionally on being admitted to a law school. For the latter, we measure i. whether or not students were concerned about taking the LSAT, ii. whether or not they were concerned about their LSAT scores not being high, iii. whether or not students saw the LSAT to properly represent one's ability, and iv. what score they perceived to be admissible to law schools, particularly at the margin of 140 and 150 or higher, respectively. All outcome variables are measured as binary (1=yes, 0=no). See Table I for the definition and descriptive statistics of the variables.

The purpose of the study was to test how students' perceptions and forms of social and academic capital predict students' likelihood of pursuing a law degree as well as their perceptions of the LSAT. Yet, it was important to control for observable characteristics of the

students such as demographic and academic backgrounds (e.g., gender, family income and parental occupations, first-generation status, undergraduate major) that can influence both social and academic capital as well as one’s intentions to pursue law degrees, in order to infer the relationships more accurately between the capitals and students’ intent to pursue a law degree and their perceptions of LSAT scores. Therefore, we employed regression model to estimate the relationship between dependent variables and the independent variables consisted of six variables. Because the dependent variables are in binary (dichotomous) format, we employed a logistic regression model in this structure:

$$Pr(Y_i = 1) = \frac{\exp(\alpha_i + \beta_1 F1_i + \beta_2 F2_i + \beta_3 F3_i + \beta_4 F4_i + \beta_5 F5_i + \beta_6 F6_i + \beta_7 X_i + \epsilon)}{1 + \exp(\alpha_i + \beta_1 F1_i + \beta_2 F2_i + \beta_3 F3_i + \beta_4 F4_i + \beta_5 F5_i + \beta_6 F6_i + \beta_7 X_i + \epsilon)}$$

where β_1 through β_6 captures the association between each dimension of anticipatory socialization and capital and the probability of selecting the outcome, Y_i equals to 1, controlling for the vector of individual characteristics X_i . The coefficients are reported in odd ratios, which represent the probability of one responding “yes” with the variables that capture his/her intent to pursue a law degree and perceptions of LSAT scores (Long & Freese, 2001).

Limitations

The data came from only two institutions and the sample size was quite small. While we acknowledge that these points limit our ability to generalize the findings, we argue that the purpose of this study was to explore and empirically test the relationships between the capitals and students’ perceptions of access to law schools. Further replications are warranted.

Findings

The majority of the pre-law students indicated that they would apply to a law school (N=98, 79.67%) and attend a law school, if admitted (N=107, 86.99%). Nearly all of the participants (82%) had not taken the LSAT at the time of the survey distribution. Additionally, 58.4% of the sample responded that they thought that the LSAT was not a good proxy for one’s ability to study in a law school. About 75% of the students were concerned about taking the LSAT, and nearly half of the students were concerned about their LSAT scores (Table 2).

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variables	N (%)	Definition
Intention to apply	98 (79.67%)	One is very likely to apply to a law school (vs. considering, neutral, indecisive, and not likely)
Intention to attend	107 (86.99%)	If admitted, one is very likely to enroll in a law degree program
Concerns for taking LSAT	76 (75.25%)	One strongly agrees that he/she is concerned about taking the LSAT
Concerns for LSAT scores	50 (49.50%)	One strongly agrees that he/she feels unprepared for achieving a good score on the LSAT

LSAT scores not representing ability	59 (58.42%)	One strongly agrees that he/she believes LSAT does not represent adequately his/her academic potential to pursue a law degree
LSAT scores: 140-50	55 (55%)	One strongly agrees that achieving a score of 140-150 on the LSAT to be admissible to a law school of his/her choice
LSAT scores: 150 or higher	84 (83.17%)	One strongly agrees that achieving a score of 150 or higher on the LSAT to be admissible to a law school of his/her choice
Covariates		
Female	77 (62.6%)	One's indication of sex
household income: \$ 75,000 or higher	52 (42.3%)	Self-reported household income level
Minority	42 (33.6%)	One's reported race is Black of Hispanic non-white
first-generation	85 (68%)	Highest level of education of either parent is associate degree or lower
parents in legal professions	15 (12%)	One of the parents is a legal professional
UG major: liberal arts/humanities	23 (18.4%)	Undergraduate major is in liberal arts or humanities (vs. other majors)

While we employed the factor scores as an independent variable of our analysis, it is worth noting several descriptive findings within the items that constructed each factor. First, we found that over 55% of the students agreed that undergraduate education provided them with a strong social peer support system and coursework for the law school preparation. During the undergraduate study, 71.2% of students participated in some student organizations, about 24% participated in student activism, and 43.9% participated in service-learning or civic engagement. Students who participated in any scholarly conferences or publication during undergraduate were at 12.3%. About 40% of the students were motivated to pursue a law degree to make an impact in the society and work in government service.

The majority of students (87%) perceived law education to be difficult and challenging and 72% of the respondents have some degree of concern about finances/debt, while 68% and 43% of the students reported that admissions and uncertainty about employment prospects after graduation challenged their decisions to pursue a law degree. Consistent with the national trends, financial concern was significant among the students. Specifically, 80% of students strongly agreed with the statement that "I will be in debt after law education, with an expected debt amount minimum \$100,000" and 68% of students expressed concerns for persisting in law school. Only 8.94% and 12.20% of students strongly agreed or agreed with the statement that they had an adequate funding to attend law school. For these students, monetary gains and job prestige were not necessarily the motivation for pursuing a legal career.

Anticipatory Socialization, Capitals, and Intent

Columns A and B in Table 3 show the association between the six factors of anticipatory socialization and capitals and students' intent to apply to and attend a law school, respectively. We found that the perceived purposes and outcomes of law education to be positively correlated with the intent to apply to a law school: the odds of a student intending to apply to a law school was about 2.66 times higher for a one standard deviation increase in the factor. Students who anticipated a higher level of need for emotional and social support during the studies had lower odds of considering law school application by 12.2% (Odd Ratio=0.38). However, when students were provided with the condition that they were accepted to a law school, there were no differences based on the socialization and capitals in terms of the intent to matriculate and attend the school. No differences were found in the intent among the students with different demographic and academic backgrounds in our sample.

Anticipatory Socialization, Capitals, and Perceptions of the LSAT

The logistic regression results suggested that the six factors were significant predictors of students' concerns and perceptions regarding the LSAT (Table 3). In particular, students who reported a higher level of "perceived purposes and outcomes of legal education" and "perceived value of legal education" were more likely to express concern about taking the LSAT and earning adequate scores. These students also held negative perceptions about the LSAT as a way to evaluate one's ability to study law. In particular, a one standard deviation increase in these factors was associated with an increase in the odds of having concerns for taking the LSAT by 4.34 and 12.11, respectively (Column C). Students who had a higher score on the perceived purposes and outcomes of legal education were 2.17 times more likely to be concerned about their LSAT scores (Column D) and 2.87 times more likely to consider that LSAT scores were not adequate to capture one's ability. One's perceived value of legal education was also positively related to the negative perception of the LSAT to represent one's ability (Odd Ratios=2.32) (Column E). Moreover, academic and financial capitals were also significant predictors for the higher odds of concerning for taking the LSAT by 3.53 and 3.03 (Column C).

Table 3.*Anticipatory Socialization, Capitals, and Intentions for Law School Access*

	(A)	(B)	(C)	(D)	(E)	(F)	(G)
	Intention to apply	Intention to attend	Concerns for taking LSAT	Concerns for LSAT scores	LSAT scores not representing ability	LSAT scores: 140-150	LSAT scores: 150 or higher
Social Capital	1.572 (0.513)	0.893 (0.325)	0.707 (0.281)	0.642* (0.171)	0.949 (0.283)	2.410*** (0.806)	0.923 (0.347)
Academic Capital	1.324 (0.466)	0.831 (0.307)	3.533** (2.163)	1.207 (0.373)	1.045 (0.346)	0.934 (0.296)	1.918 (0.938)
Perceived purposes and outcomes of legal education	2.661*** (0.969)	1.590 (0.611)	4.335** (2.546)	2.174** (0.775)	2.871*** (1.149)	2.171** (0.859)	1.593 (0.717)
Financial Capital	0.788 (0.276)	0.831 (0.320)	3.033*** (1.295)	1.117 (0.351)	0.616 (0.215)	0.673 (0.246)	1.466 (0.597)
Anticipated need for emotional and social support	0.380** (0.147)	0.556 (0.205)	0.979 (0.435)	1.119 (0.312)	0.643 (0.204)	1.874** (0.585)	1.114 (0.444)
Perceived value of legal education	1.663 (0.668)	1.022 (0.481)	12.114*** (9.151)	1.170 (0.400)	2.315** (0.987)	0.801 (0.291)	3.156** (1.662)
Female	0.548 (0.344)	1.202 (0.796)	0.879 (0.619)	0.564 (0.300)	2.939* (1.631)	1.024 (0.558)	1.181 (0.792)
Household income: \$ 75,000 or higher	0.412 (0.262)	0.317 (0.232)	1.038 (0.800)	1.271 (0.672)	1.642 (0.916)	0.730 (0.406)	0.892 (0.619)
Minority	0.796 (0.504)	0.309 (0.225)	0.842 (0.593)	2.173 (1.116)	3.384** (1.902)	1.349 (0.724)	0.834 (0.547)
UG major: Liberal arts/humanities	2.054 (1.565)	2.567 (2.316)	0.173** (0.155)	1.260 (0.788)	0.951 (0.668)	1.167 (0.814)	1.149 (1.079)
First-generation	1.611 (0.980)	3.460* (2.250)	6.189** (4.845)	0.832 (0.408)	2.620* (1.419)	0.424 (0.223)	0.625 (0.430)
Parents in legal professions	0.263* (0.213)	0.593 (0.566)	0.106** (0.111)	1.153 (0.959)	0.625 (0.554)	7.344* (8.524)	0.916 (1.117)
N	115	115	96	96	96	95	96

Notes: Odd ratios reported; Standard errors in parentheses. *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Students' anticipatory socialization and capitals were related to the perceptions of the admissible scores. When it comes to the specific threshold scores, students who reported higher levels of social capital, perceived purposes and outcomes of legal education, as well as an anticipated need for emotional and social support were 1.87 to 2.41 times more likely to think that the LSAT of 140-150 was sufficient for admissions. Students who had a higher level of the perceived value of legal education were about 3.16 times more likely to respond that 150 or higher scores were required for the successful admission (Columns F and G).

Finally, we found several individual background characteristics to be correlated with students' concerns and perceptions of the LSAT. Students who were in liberal arts majors and had parents who were in legal professions were less likely to be concerned about the LSAT, whereas students who were first-generation were 6.19 times more likely to worry about the LSAT (Column C). Female and racial/ethnic students were about 3 times more likely to have a higher negative perspective towards the LSAT to represent one's ability, compared to their male and non-minority peers, respectively (Column E).

Discussions and Implications

We argued that anticipatory socialization and social and academic capital played important roles in the access outcomes in this study. The findings suggested that students ascribing higher ratings to the purposes and outcomes of legal education had stronger intentions to apply to a law school but were more concerned about taking the LSAT and interpreting their scores. Moreover, students who placed a higher value on legal education also demonstrated higher expectations for the LSAT requirements while casting more doubts about the test itself.

Future research is needed to examine how specific practices of socialization would impact students in terms of how they gather and process information to prepare for law school applications and test-taking. Pre-law programs and law schools might consider providing better guidance for students in explaining role of the LSAT, eliminating some concerns students might have, and increasing students' efficacy and intent to apply.

Another important finding is about the role of academic, financial, and social capitals on pre-law students' access to law school. In particular, we found that students who had a higher level of social capital and relied on their social peers to set expectations for further education tended to believe that the 'average level' (140-150) (e.g., Kaplan, n.d.) was enough for receiving an admission from a law school. This suggests the importance of social capital in terms of shaping one's expectations and strategies for law school applications and admissions accordingly. Interestingly, students who possessed a higher level of academic capital by participating in various undergraduate co-curricular activities tended to worry more about the LSAT. While this is somewhat contradictory to common expectations and discussions of self-selection of academically engaged students, research is needed to examine student engagement in co-curricular activities that are related to legal issues and role of these experiences in applicants' considerations to pursue a law degree. Finally, for students who were concerned about the debt after a law school, taking the LSAT was a significant concern despite the fact that their intent to apply and attend was not different from those who demonstrated less financial concerns. This may be due to the perceived costs for preparing for the test and potential impact of LSAT scores on financial aid in the form of scholarships. Schools might consider financial support for exams or revisit the role of the LSAT in their selections of students, particularly those who might lack financial capital.

Our analyses also highlighted interactions with the different demographic backgrounds. We found that female and racial/ethnic students had a negative perception of the LSAT as an indicator of one's ability to study in a law school, compared to their male and White counterparts. The LSAT remains the preeminent tool in determining admission, but it has not been without criticism. Scholars (Haddon & Post, 2008; Nussbaumer, 2006) argue that law schools over-rely on the LSAT to make admission decisions based on their concern for prestige, ranking, or institutional practice, and as a result, these approaches detrimentally impact diversity. On behalf of the Law School Admissions Council (LSAC), Pashley, Thornton, and Duffy (2005) admitted, "the Council is concerned that legal education may be placing too much emphasis on the LSAT, and by doing so maybe overlooking important additional admission criteria that could aid legal education in achieving its diversity goals" (p. 233). Law schools should consider whether their admissions, outreach, and communication strategies adequately reflect access to justice and student populations they desire to enroll (Anderson, 2009).

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