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The Changing Student Body at the University of Michigan Law School

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The Changing Student Body at the University of Michigan Law School

David L Chambers

NOTE added in 2019

In 1967, the University of Michigan Law School began an annual survey of selected classes of its alumni. The survey was administered by mail for forty consecutive years until 2006, when it was suspended upon the retirements of the survey's long-time co-directors, David L. Chambers and Terry K. Adams. In 2014, the survey was revived by Professor J. J. Prescott and has been continued annually thereafter online.

Most of the content of the memo that follows has been previously published in the article "Who We Were and Who We Are: How Michigan Law Students Have Changed Since the 1950s: Findings from 40 Years of Alumni Surveys." T. K. Adams, co-author. *Law Quad. Notes* 51, no. 1 (2009): 74-80, available through this website. The memo provides more detail about changing entry credentials and about the great expansion beginning in the 1970s in the numbers of women students and racial/ethnic minority students. It also provides information not in the article about the students' parents' occupations, about students' education prior to law school, and about their political views when they entered law school.

The accuracy of the statistics reported in this memo other than those that are also in the published article have never double-checked for accuracy. To verify the findings and for access to additional data from years after the Project was revived, qualified researchers may apply for access to the full Project dataset. For guidance, see

https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni_survey/alumni_survey_dataset.html)

For important background information on the Project, the reader is encouraged to read [The University of Michigan Law School Alumni Survey Project: Description, Scope and Limits](#) (2019), a seven-page memo available on this website.

https://repository.law.umich.edu/alumni_survey_scholarship/.

David Chambers

August 2019

David Chambers
File: alumpaper-studentbody.doc
December 30, 2009, edits 2019

The Changing Student Body at the University of Michigan Law School

The University of Michigan Alumni Survey includes information about all classes of graduates of the law school, from those who began in 1949 through those who began in 1998. We start with 1949. The entering class of 1949 started with 424 students. By graduation in 1952, the class had shrunk by 30 percent to 302, because at that time, Michigan, like many other schools, admitted substantially more students than it expected to graduate, with large numbers failing out after the first year or withdrawing in academic difficulty. Though the class had shrunk, it was nonetheless much larger, both at the beginning and at graduation, than the classes that had attended the law school a decade before, for the group who began in 1949 were part of the enormous bulge in college and postgraduate students in the United States that followed the end of World War II. (Once the post-war bulge passed, enrollment declined. There would not be another graduating law school class at Michigan as large as the class of 1952 until the class of 1963.) Many of the graduates of 1952 were veterans supported by the G.I. Bill. The presence of substantial numbers of veterans was just one of many ways that the student body of the 1950s differed from the student body a half century later. The most obvious and visible difference is, of course, that the graduates of the 1950s (and the 1960s as well, for that matter) were nearly all white and male.

In this memo, we will track the entry of women and minorities into the law school as well as several other changes. We begin with a change that was less visible but was highly significant for the school, a great rise in the entry credentials of the student body as reflected in scores on the Law School Admission Test and grades in college.

Rising Entry Credentials

For most of the nineteenth century, the only requirements the law school imposed for admission were that the applicant be at least 18 years of age and of “good moral character.”¹ Even graduation from high school was not required so long as the applicant passed an examination given by the faculty. In 1910, the age requirement was raised to 19, and soon thereafter a high school diploma plus a year of college was required, then two years of college, then three.² To be sure, throughout this period, many who entered the law school were college graduates even though it was not required, but it was not until the 1926-1927 school year that over half the students at the school held a bachelors degree, and it was not until after World War II that a bachelors degree was a prerequisite for admission.³ In 1953, a few years after adding the requirement of a college diploma, the School added a requirement that the applicant take the Law School Admissions Test and submit the score for consideration.

The first major change that occurred in the student body during the period of our study was a rise in the numerical entry credentials of the graduating students. In Table 1 on the next page we report some information about the LSAT scores and undergraduate grades of graduates by decades from the 1950s until early into the twenty-first century. As is apparent, the LSAT test scores that it took to secure admission rose greatly between the 1950s and the 1960s and then rose again between the 1960s and the 1970s. They’ve edged up slightly since during the 1980s. The undergraduate grades of the admitted classes also rose greatly beginning slightly later – a huge increase in the median undergraduate grade point in the 1970s and a smaller leap in the 1980s. The rise in undergraduate grade points is surely not entirely due to the law school’s demanding higher and higher undergraduate performance for admission. It is almost certainly also due to grade inflation at undergraduate institutions.

¹ Elizabeth G. Brown, *Legal Education at Michigan, 1859-1959*, at p. 716 (1969)

² *Id.* at 717-

³ *Id.* at

Table 1
 LSAT scores of entering students
 By Decade of graduation,
 Classes of 1952 - 2001

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
	n=1813	n=3007	n=3642	n=3715	n=3817	n=713
Mean LSAT percentile	71	81	89	91	91	92
Median LSAT percentile	74	84	94	95	95	95
Percent of class with a score in the top 10 percent of all LSAT test takers	22%	38%	68%	75%	76%	79%
Percent of class with a score in the top 20 percent of all LSAT test takers	47%	64%	83%	88%	89%	90%
Undergraduate final grade point average (mean)	2.92	2.87	3.34	3.54	3.50	3.58

File: sb16; printout student body 10 and 10A

The Entry of Women into the Law School.

In 1871, Sarah Killgore Wertman became the first woman to graduate from the law school. Small numbers of women attended the law school over the rest of the nineteenth century⁴ and the first half of the twentieth. As late as the class of 1964, however, only four of 305 graduates were women.⁵ Then, first slowly then more rapidly, women began applying to Michigan and other law schools in more substantial numbers. See Table 1. In each of the four graduating classes of 1967 through 1970, there were twelve to fourteen women, about 4 percent of the class. The class of 1971 had 25 women, 7 percent of the class. Every few years for the rest of the decade the numbers of women (and their proportion in the class) doubled. In the class of 1980, there were 100 women, 29 percent of the graduates.

REPLACE BY CHART?

[CONSIDER A CHART THAT SHOWS BOTH THE GROWTH AT MICHIGAN AND AT THE NATIONS' LAW SCHOOLS AS A WHOLE]

Table 1
Sex of Law Students,
By Decade of Graduation,
Classes of 1952 - 2001

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s ⁶
	n=1925	n=3049	n=3648	n=3715	n=3817	n=xxx
Men	98%	98%	85%	68%	60%	56%
Women	2%	2%	15%	32%	40%	44%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

File: sb01; classes of 2002 forward, Zearfoss

Michigan's experience in the enrollment of women closely tracks that of women at law schools in the nation as a whole. In the graduating classes of the 1950s and 1960s, when 2 percent of Michigan's graduates were women, between 3 and 4 percent of the nation's law students were women.⁷ The point in the late 1960s at which the number of women began to rise rapidly at Michigan is the same point at which it started to rise rapidly across the nation. In the first year classes that matriculated in 1967 at the nation's ABA-accredited law schools, 4.9 percent of the students were women; in the next year's first year class, 7.4 percent were women, an astonishing 51 percent rise in a single year. Most of the first-year students in these two

⁴ "Although by 1899-1900, there were 818 students enrolled in the Law School, the number of women enrolled to that time had never exceeded five in any one year." Brown, at 253.

⁵ File sb18.

⁶ Get figures for grads of 08 and 09

⁷ All national figures in this paragraph from ABA tables, see alumdoc/Chris-female stats

cohorts would have graduated in 1970 and 1971. At Michigan, 5.4 percent of graduates in the class of 1970 were women and 7.1 percent of 1971's graduates were women, the largest percentage ever at the school up to that time. Through the class of 1975, when women were 16 percent of the graduating class at Michigan and 16 percent of the roughly corresponding classes in the nation's law schools as a whole, Michigan stayed parallel with other schools. Thereafter, the proportion of graduates at both Michigan's and the nation's schools as a whole continued to grow, but Michigan at a slightly slower pace. In the ten graduating classes of the 1980s, 32 percent of Michigan's and 36 percent of the nation's law school graduates were women; in the 1990s, 40 percent of Michigan's and 43 percent of the nation's law school graduates were women.

Go to next page

The Entry of Racial and Ethnic Minorities Into the School

There are many ethnic minorities whose first entry into the school (and their pattern of matriculation over time) we are unable to trace. Neither we nor Elizabeth Brown's history of the law school count those who were themselves immigrants to the United States or those who considered themselves Italian-American or Polish-American or Greek-American or of any of the nationality or ethnic groups absorbed into the so-called American melting pot.

One group that would have been particularly interesting to have tracked are the Jewish graduates, for, whether viewed as members of an ethnic group or a religious group or both, they were discriminated against in admissions by many elite educational institutions until well into the twentieth century. Michigan hired its first Jewish faculty member in 1957, and many later members of the faculty, Jewish and non-Jewish, believe that that late date was due to overt discrimination. For one two-year period, the fifteen-year and five-year surveys conducted in 1983 and 1984, we did ask religion on the survey.⁸ We learned that in the classes of 1968 and 1969, 22 percent of the respondents identified their religious as Jewish. In the classes of 1978 and 1979, 19 percent so identified themselves. Those percentages are far higher than the proportion of Americans (and Michigan residents) who regard themselves as Jewish but we do not know, because no one else monitored it either, whether the percentage was higher or lower among American law schools as a whole.

The groups whose entry into the law school we have tracked are African-Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asian-Americans. Their matriculation in substantial numbers occurred at different points in time and we will discuss them each separately.

African-Americans at Michigan

As was the case with women, Michigan was one of the early law schools in the country to admit African-American students but also, as with women, Michigan had few African-American students before the 1970s. During the 1960s, in fact, despite the fact that ten percent of the state of Michigan's population was African-American, fewer than one half of one percent of the graduates were African-American, and in several classes, there were no African-American students at all. Indeed, in the class of 1967, there was not a single nonwhite student among the graduates. Then at the very end of the 1960s black students began attending Michigan in greater numbers. In the graduating class of 1970 there were 9 African-American students, in 1971 there were 10, in 1972, 19, and in 1973, 43. During the 1970s as a whole, 266 African-Americans graduated from the law school, in comparison to a total of 10 during the 1960s. Table 10-4

⁸ We abandoned the question after a few alums complained about it. One accused us of trying to track down the Jews.

displays the proportion of African-American students among the graduates in the decades within our study. Unlike the proportion of women among graduates, the proportion of African-Americans has remained fairly steady since the 1970s.

Table 10-4
African-American students at Michigan
by Decade of Graduation,
Classes of 1952 - 2001

	1952-1959	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000-2001	Total
Number of African-American graduates	24	11	262	235	326	44	388
Percent of graduating class	1.3%	0.4%	7.1%	6.3%	8.6%	6.1%	5.4%

File: race10. Get more recent years from Sarah Z.

The law school increased its enrollment of African-Americans in the late 1960s after a faculty decision to adopt a program of affirmative action. It began aggressively seeking African-American applicants and in considering their applications, the school admitted the most qualified students it could find (taking grades, LSAT scores and other factors into account) whom it thought would be able to succeed at the law school. Later, after the Supreme Court decided the *Bakke* case, the school stopped considering African-Americans in a separate pool from white students, but continued giving race great weight in picking among qualified applicants. Thus in each decade of graduates from 1970 through 2001, the mean and median LSAT scores and undergraduate grades of African-American students have been lower than those of whites, and while the gap in numerical credentials narrowed considerably over time, it remained significant throughout.⁹

As the table above displays, between 1970 and 2001, 866 African-Americans graduated from the law school. Of these 866, a considerably higher proportion in every decade were women than was the case among non-Hispanic white graduates and among those of other races. See Table 10-6. Looking at this table alone might lead a reader to conclude that the law school, in selecting among African-American applicants favored African-American women, but the fact is that, among African-American applicants to the school, women consistently accounted for a higher proportion of applicants than was the case among either Hispanic or non-Hispanic white applicants.

⁹ Race07c (means) and sb36 (medians)

Table 10-05
 Proportion of women among graduates,
 By race and decades,
 Classes of 1970-2000

	African-Americans		Non-Hispanic whites		All others	
	N=	Percent women	N=	Percent women	N=	Percent women
Graduates in the 1970s	261	27%	3348	14%	59	17%
Graduates in the 1980s	235	47%	3280	31%	212	34%
Graduates in the 1990s	336	51%	3037	38%	436	40%
Graduates in 2000-2001	44	57%	582	40%	98	47%

File: race09

Hispanic Students at Michigan

A substantial number of students from Central and South American countries during the first half of the twentieth century, some as LL.B. candidates, more as graduate students.¹⁰ From the file data gathered as part of the Alumni Survey, we can identify only three Hispanic J.D. students who graduated between 1952 and 1972. [We need to state the year when the law school began including Hispanic-American students within the affirmative-action admissions program.] There were between 4 and 6 Hispanic students in each graduating class between 1974 and 1977. The class of 1978 was the first with at least 10 Hispanic students and the classes from then through the 1980s averaged about at that level. During the 1990s the average number of Hispanic graduates in each class rose to about twenty. Over the 50 year period from 1952 through 1972, Michigan had 388 Hispanic J.D. graduates, of whom all but three graduated after 1972. Table 10-6 shows the numbers by decade.

Table 10-6
Hispanic students at Michigan
by Decade of Graduation,
Classes of 1952 - 2001

	1952-1959	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000-2001	Total
Number of Hispanic graduates	3	0	39	126	196	24	388
Percent of graduating class	0.2%	0.0%	1.1%	3.4%	5.2%	3.3%	2.3%

File: race10

Across the decades of our surveys, the numerical entry credentials of Hispanic students have, in general, fallen in between those of the African-American students and the white students, and again like the African-American students, the gap between entry credentials of Hispanic and white graduates narrowed over time, but never fully disappeared.¹¹ In the class of the 1970s and 1980s, for example, 13 percent of African-American graduates, 25 percent of Hispanic students, and 86 percent of white students had LSAT scores in the top 20 percent of national test-takers. In the classes between 1990 and 2001, 34 percent of African-American students, 51 percent of Hispanic students, and 97 percent of white students were in the top 20 percent.

¹⁰ In the early 1940s, the law school created a graduate program for foreign students. After that point, most foreign students at Michigan came as graduate students. Prior to that point, they attended as LL.B. candidates. Elizabeth Brown, 255. During the period between 1896 and 1958, 44 students from thirteen Latin American countries attended Michigan for at least one year. Elizabeth Brown, at 693.

¹¹ Race07c (means) and sb36 (medians).

Asian Students at Michigan

Michigan has a long history of students from Asian backgrounds, but early part of the long history is almost entirely of Asians who were citizens of another country. In the 19th century, for example, several Michigan graduates from the Philippines went on to hold important judgeships and other high public office at home. In the period between 1896 and 1958, 48 Asian students from 9 Asian countries attended the law school, 28 of them from China.¹² Within the fifty classes in our study, as Table 10-7 reveals, some Asian American students graduated with LL.B.'s from the law school in every decade. As was the case at many other American law schools in the eastern part of the United States, Asian American students first began to apply to Michigan in significant numbers in the early 1980s. Thirty-nine Asian-American students graduated between 1984 and 1989, 163 more during the 1990s, and 57 in the years 2000-2001.

Table 10-7
Asian-American students at Michigan
by Decade of Graduation,
Classes of 1952 - 2001

	1952- 1959	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000- 2001	Total
Number of Asian-American graduates	25	12	10	54	163	57	321
Percent of graduating classes	1.3%	0.4%	0.3%	1.4%	4.3%	7.9%	1.9%

File: race10

Asian-Americans have not been treated as eligible at Michigan for special consideration in admissions and have, in general, arrived at Michigan with close to the same numerical entry credentials as white students.¹³ Asian-Americans and Whites were also similar in the status of the occupations of their parents. Roughly the same proportion of whites and Asian graduates had mothers who were homemakers and mothers who were professionals; more white students than Asians had fathers who were attorneys, but more Asians than whites had fathers who were teachers or professors. Whites were more likely than Asian Americans to have fathers who were business executives or managers but also more likely to have fathers who were blue-collar or clerical workers.

¹² E. Brown at 693.

¹³ In the 1970s and 1980s, 78 percent of both white and Asian-American graduates of the law school had scored in the top 10 percent of national test-takers on the LSAT; in the 1990s and early 2000s, 82 percent of Asian-Americans and 86 percent of white graduates did so.

Native-American Students at Michigan

Table 10-8
Native American students at Michigan
by Decade of Graduation,
Classes of 1952 - 2001

	1952- 1959	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000- 2001	Total
Number of Native-American graduates	1	1	4	21	53	13	93
Percent of graduating classes	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.6%	1.4%	1.8%	0.6%

File: race10

Age at Start of Law School

In addition to the entry of women and minority students, another, less noticed change occurred in the composition of the law school's student body: it got older. As Table 10-7 reveals, within the years included in our study the 1960s was the decade when the mean age of starting students was at its lowest, but across the whole period from the fifties to the early 2000s, there has been a steady decline in the proportion of students who entered law school at age 21 or below. And since the 1960s, there has been a steady growth of the proportion who were 24 or older. Across the entire period, the mean age of entering students grew by about a year and a half.

Table 10-9
Age at Start of Law School,
By Decade of Graduation,
Classes of 1952 - 2001

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
	n=1365	n=2224	n=2788	n=2519	n=2347	n=399
21 or under	25%	20%	18%	7%	4%	3%
22 or 23	42%	60%	58%	64%	55%	48%
24 or 25	23%	13%	13%	15%	23%	27%
Over 25	10%	7%	12%	15%	18%	22%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Average age	22.9	22.6	23.0	23.6	24.0	24.4

File: sb06e; printout SB 4

Combining Sex, Race, and Age

Putting together the information about sex, race, and age provides an interesting perspective on the changing face of the law school student body. In the classes graduating in the 1960s, 95 percent of law students were white and male, and of the males, two-thirds were 22 or younger when they began law school. By the graduating classes of early 2000s, fewer than half of all law students were white men (48 percent) and of these men, only 24 percent were 22 or younger. Thus, over this period, Michigan's student body became much more heterogeneous. (See printout SB8).

PRINT CHART HERE FROM LAW QUAD NOTES ARTICLE.

OTHER PATTERNS OF CHANGE (OR CONTINUITY) IN THE STUDENT BODY

The States where Students Came From

In the earliest years after the law school was founded in 1859, a majority of its students were residents of Michigan when they began law school. Within a few years, however, and for the rest of the century, every class was composed of more students from outside Michigan than from within.¹⁴ Indeed in all but a few classes, fewer than forty percent of students came from Michigan. After World War I, the proportion of students from Michigan rose above fifty percent again, and from the 1920s through the 1940s, roughly half of all students were Michigan residents.

For the later classes within our survey years, our best evidence about the graduates' state of residence comes from information provided on their law school applications about their parents' current state of residence.¹⁵ Table 10-10 tells the overall story, decade by decade, since 1950, drawing on the data from the Alumni Survey.

Table 10-10
State of Parents' Residence at Time of Entering Law School,
by Decade 1952 – 2001

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
	n=1738	n=1540	N=981	n=3398	n=3763	n=713
Michigan	43%	38%	45%	48%	38%	29%
Upper Midwest (other than Michigan)*	25%	29%	19%	17%	15%	13%
Everywhere else	32%	33%	36%	35%	47%	58%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

* Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin file:sb02d; 2002-2009 from Zearfoss

As the Table reveals, the proportion of students whose parents lived in Michigan grew from 38 to 48 percent between the 1960s and the 1980s, but then declined substantially during the 1990s and the early 2000s. In the first-year class that started in the summer and fall of 2009, the latest class for which I have information from the admissions office, only 21 percent of the

¹⁴ Elizabeth G. Brown, *Legal Education at the University of Michigan, 1859-1959*, at pages 687-699. All the information in this paragraph comes from Brown's monograph.

¹⁵ This was the case for all years of the 15, 25, 35, and 45 year classes. For the 5 year classes from 1989 through 2001, we asked a direct question on the survey.

students were from Michigan. What explains the drop in the proportion of students who come from Michigan? [Discuss with Sarah Zearfoss. Write her. Possibilities: instate tuition now not such a bargain; higher numerical admission standards mean fewer Michigan residents meet the qualification.]

In the law school's first hundred years, the considerable majority of students who were not from Michigan were from other states in the Upper Midwest (that is, from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin).¹⁶ As Table 10-4 reveals, even in the period of the 1950s and 1960s, nearly as many students came from those four states as came from all the remaining states in the country. Since then, the student body has become increasingly diverse in its geographic origins. In recent decades the largest numbers of those not from the Midwest have in most years come from the New York area (New York, Connecticut, and New Jersey). Since the 1980s, unsurprisingly, an increasing number have come from the west coast (California, Oregon, Washington). Minority students as a group have been less likely than whites to have been Michigan residents at the point of entry.¹⁷ In the classes from 1970 through 2001, the parents of 44 percent of white students but only 32 percent of the parents of African-American students, 28 percent of Asian students and 19 percent of Hispanic students lived in Michigan. (28 percent of Hispanic students and 20 percent of Asian students came from either California or Texas.)

¹⁶ See Elizabeth Brown. In the first century, a great many of Michigan's students also came from Missouri and Pennsylvania.

¹⁷ See race10a.

The Occupations of our Graduates' Parents

About the only indication we have of the economic or class backgrounds of our students comes from questions on the application form for admissions about the occupations of their parents. Of these questions, the question about the fathers' occupation is the more revealing. See Table 10-11 below.

As Table 10-11 reveals, throughout the years of our surveys, the substantial majority of our students have been the children of men who were professionals or managers. Indeed, consistently over the period between one in six and one in eight of the fathers of our graduates have been attorneys. Conversely, few of the fathers have been blue collar or clerical workers. One of the few areas of change across time has been an increase in the proportion of fathers who were teachers or professors and a decrease in the proportion who were business owners, executives or managers..

Table 10-11
Occupations of Law Students' Fathers,
By Decade of Graduation,
Classes of 1966 – 2001

	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000-01
	N=918	n=2693	n=2549	n=2240	n=382
Homemaker	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Attorney	16%	10%	12%	14%	13%
Educator	2%	4%	9%	12%	12%
Other professional (doctor, accountant, etc.)	17%	20%	15%	14%	14%
Blue collar, clerical	13%	22%	20%	17%	18%
Bus. Owner, executive, manager	48%	36%	32%	25%	25%
Other	4%	8%	13%	18%	19%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

File: sb03a

Much more change has occurred over time in the occupations of our graduates' mothers. In the 1960s the great majority of the mothers worked as homemakers. As table 10-12 displays, that proportion has been in steady decline ever since. What has grown most over time is the proportion of mothers working as educators and as business owners or managers. A small number of the graduates' mothers have been attorneys, none whatever in the 1950s, 2 percent since the 1990s.

Table 10-12
Occupations of Law Students' Mothers,
by Decade of Graduation,
Classes of 1966 – 2001

	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000-01
	n=918	n=2636	n=2576	n=2281	n=386
Homemaker	68%	55%	40%	25%	19%
Attorney	0%	0%	1%	2%	2%
Educator	5%	10%	16%	20%	22%
Other professional (doctor, accountant, etc.)	9%	9%	7%	12%	12%
Blue collar, clerical	11%	18%	21%	18%	16%
Bus. Owner, executive, manager	5%	5%	7%	10%	12%
Other	4%	4%	4%	12%	18%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

File: sb03a

The women who entered the law school beginning in the late 1960s and enrolling in increasing numbers in the succeeding decades, have come, in general, from the same socio-economic backgrounds as their male classmates, though in each decade slightly more of the women than the men had mothers who worked outside the home. By contrast, the African-American and Hispanic students who entered the law school throughout this same period have tended to be somewhat different from whites in their economic backgrounds. As Table 10-13 reveals, grouping together the graduates of the classes of 1970-2000 as a whole, African-American and Hispanic graduates much less frequently than white (and Asian-American) graduates had homemaker mothers and much more frequently had mothers who worked as educators or in blue collar or clerical jobs. In the same manner, the fathers of our African-American and Hispanic graduates more frequently than the fathers of white graduates worked in blue collar or clerical jobs and less frequently worked as professionals or as business owners or managers.

Table 10-13
Occupations of Parents of Graduates,
by race/ethnicity
graduating classes of 1970-2000

	African- American graduates n=423	Asian- American graduates n=139	Hispanic graduates n=212	White graduates n=7068
Mothers' Occupations				
Homemaker	19%	37%	27%	41%
Attorney	1%	0%	2%	1%
Educator	22%	10%	14%	15%
Other professional	11%	15%	12%	9%
Pink collar or clerical	29%	12%	30%	18%
Business owner/manager	11%	11%	8%	7%
All other	7%	15%	7%	9%
	100%	100%	100%	100%
	n=395	n=138	n=207	n=7054
Fathers' Occupations				
Homemakers	0%	0%	0%	0%
Attorney	6%	3%	3%	13%
Educator	7%	15%	9%	8%
Other professional	11%	23%	14%	17%
Blue collar/clerical	38%	8%	39%	18%
Business owner/manager	22%	18%	18%	32%
All other	15%	33%	16%	13%
	100%	100%	100%	100%

File: race06b

Experiences before Law School

1. Undergraduate institutions

Unsurprisingly, in all decades since the law school's founding, the undergraduate institution that had been attended by the largest number of graduates was Michigan itself. Within the time of our survey, in the classes between 1952 and 1959, 35 percent of the graduates had also received their undergraduate degrees from Michigan.¹⁸ And while Michigan's undergraduate school has remained the largest "feeder" to the law school, the proportion of the law school graduates who have been Michigan undergraduates has declined in every succeeding decade. By the 1990s, the proportion was 19 percent; in the 2000s, it was X.

We did not code, by name, the other undergraduate institutions from which our students graduated; rather we recorded simply whether they attended another public institution in Michigan, a public institution elsewhere in the United States, an Ivy League (or what was once known as the Seven Sisters) institution, or some other private institution. Across time, as the proportion of University of Michigan undergraduates among the students at the law school has declined, the numbers from other Michigan public colleges (like Michigan State and Wayne State) also declined (from around 12 percent in the 1950s to around 7 percent in the 1990s), but the numbers from other public institutions in the rest of the country has increased substantially (from about 12 percent in the 1950s and 1960s to 25 percent in the 1990s).¹⁹ Among private institutions, the proportion of law students who have attended Ivy League (or Seven Sister) institutions has remained fairly stable over time, averaging 14 percent over the period of our surveys, but the proportion who attended other private institutions has increased (from about 29 percent in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, to about 37 percent in the 1990s and XX percent in the early 2000s).

2. Undergraduate Majors

Since the classes of the 1960s roughly 30 percent of each decades' graduates majored during college in the a subject in the humanities and another 30 percent in the social sciences (not including economics which we coded together with business).²⁰ The proportions have remained remarkably consistent over time. In the 1960s, another roughly 30 percent majored in economics or business, but this percentage has fallen over time (down to 16 percent in the 1990s), while there has been a modest rise in the proportion who majored in the natural sciences or other subjects. Part of the decline in the proportion majoring in business can be explained by the increasing proportion of women among the graduates, for consistently through the decades, a

¹⁸ Sb01h

¹⁹ Id.

²⁰ Sb01h

higher proportion of women than men have majored in humanities or the social sciences while a higher proportion of men than women majored in the economics or business.

3. Jobs between college and law school

Accompanying the increasing age at entry into law school has been a notable increase in the numbers of students arriving with substantial work experiences before coming to law school. As Table 10-14 shows, in the 1960s the huge majority of the students – 83 percent -- came to law school without having held a job (for more than a summer) after undergraduate school. In every decade thereafter, the proportion of students with work experience increased. In the most recently surveyed classes, only about half the students arrived at the law school without having held a post-undergraduate job.

Table 7
Jobs held for at least a year
between Undergraduate School and Law School,
By Decade 1966 – 2001

	1966-1969	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000-2001
	n=1352	n=3475	n=3350	n=1231	n=189
None	83%	69%	65%	59%	52%
Paralegal	0%	1%	4%	8%	9%
White collar or managerial	4%	7%	14%	15%	11%
Blue collar	1%	2%	3%	4%	7%
Military or other public service	8%	9%	1%	3%	2%
Other	4%	12%	14%	11%	20%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

File: sb01h

Among the students who held jobs after college, the nature of the jobs has also changed. Most notable has been the growth in the proportion of students who have previously worked as legal assistants or paralegals. Thus, the law school now has many students who arrive with first-hand experience of some sector of the profession. It also has an increased number of students who've worked in blue collar or clerical positions. Another sort of valuable work experience has, however, notably declined: military service, which was significant in the classes of the 60s and the 70s, but dropped hugely by 1980s and remained very low thereafter.

Attending graduate school before law school

The pattern with regard to attending graduate school before law school has been somewhat different. The percentage of entering students with prior graduate school training rose during the 1960s and 1970s and 1980s then fell off sharply thereafter. One aspect of the decline is that in recent decades, the law school began to encourage students to pursue graduate degrees during law school in joint programs with other schools within the University. Thus, during the 1990s a fair number of students (we don't have the exact numbers) pursued graduate degree in both law and some other subject, usually economics or business. Get figures

Table 8
Attendance at Graduate School before Law School,
By Decade 1952 – 2001

	1950s	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000-01
	n=1464	n=2225	n=2792	n=2508	n=2362	n=412
Yes, attended graduate school	3%	5%	7%	13%	8%	1%

File: sb01h

Political Attitudes at the beginning of Law School

For the final 30 years of our survey, we asked two questions about political views, one question about the alums' current views and one about the views they held at the time of entry into law school. Our question about attitudes when in law school was: "Think back on your political attitudes when you began law school. How would you characterize now the attitudes you had then?" Respondents were asked to circle a number between 1, which we labeled "extremely liberal/left" and 7, which we labeled "extremely conservative/ right." Table 8 displays the recollected political views, across the decades of classes.

Table 9
Political views at the start of law school,
By Decade of Graduation,
Classes of 1972 - 2001

	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000-01
	n=1964	n=2459	n=2331	n=406
Quite liberal (category 1 or 2 of 7)	42%	37%	38%	40%
Slightly liberal (category 3)	27%	24%	22%	26%
Middle of the road (category 4)	13%	13%	14%	13%
Slightly conservative (category 5)	11%	15%	14%	13%
Quite Conservative (categories 6 -7)	7%	10%	12%	8%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Average political view	3.05	3.30	3.32	3.15

File: sb01h

As can be seen in the table, the recalled political attitudes of our students has remained fairly consistent since the 1970s, with far more of our students in every decade remembering themselves as liberal rather than conservative. Indeed, in every decade, the numbers who recalled themselves as quite liberal (categories 1 and 2) have always exceeded the numbers recalling themselves as quite conservative (categories 6 and 7) by at least three to one.

The consistency through time of the remembered political attitudes masks one change that was in fact occurring. Over these decades the political attitudes of male students became somewhat more conservative, but the overall "liberalness" of the student body was sustained by the generally more liberal views of the growing numbers of women in the student body. In every decade, our women graduates recall themselves as much more liberal during law school (and, for that matter, depict themselves as much more liberal at the time of our survey) than the men do. In

the classes of the 1990s, for example, 48 percent of women graduates recalled themselves as having been quite liberal when they arrived at law school and only 17 percent recalled themselves as conservatives. By contrast, among the men, 32 percent recall themselves as extremely or quite liberal and 33 percent recall themselves as conservative. (file: sb06f)

Like the women in comparison to men, African-American graduates throughout the period of our survey have recalled being more liberal during law school than white graduates recall themselves. Asked to recall their political attitudes when they started law school, more African-Americans than whites recalled themselves as having been quite liberal²¹ – 53 percent of African-Americans as opposed to 39 percent of whites – and far fewer African-Americans than whites recalled themselves as having been conservative²² – 7 percent of African-Americans as opposed to 24 percent of whites. Hispanic and Asian-American graduates have recalled political attitudes closely similar to whites.²³

Age when decided to go to law school

For the last 27 years of the survey, we asked the 5-year and 15-year graduates, “Approximately how old were you when you first decided that you wanted to go to law school (or decided that you wanted to be a lawyer)?” and left a blank for the respondents to fill in the age.

Table 10
Age when first decided to attend law school
(or to become a lawyer)
By Decade of Graduation,
Classes of 1972 - 2001

	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000-01
	n=2426	n=2585	n=1812	n=399
12 years old or younger	12%	13%	13%	16%
13 to 17 years old	20%	22%	18%	13%
18 to 21 years old	48%	41%	39%	37%
22 years old or older	21%	23%	30%	33%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Mean age when decided	18.8	18.8	19.2	19.3

File: sb32e

²¹ Scoring themselves as a 1 or 2 on a scale of 7 ranging from “extremely liberal/left” to “extremely conservative/right.” See race06, race06a (printouts race6,7).

²² Scoring themselves as a 5, 6 or 7 on a scale of 7.

²³ In the classes of 1970-2001, 43 percent of Hispanic students recalled themselves as quite liberal when they began law school (categories 1 or 2 of 7) and 25 percent recalled themselves as conservative (categories 5, 6, or 7). Compare figures for whites and African-Americans in the immediately preceding section.

As table 10 reveals, among each decade of graduates, two-thirds of our graduates didn't decide they wanted to go to law school or become a lawyer until they were at least 18 year old. Among our students, which ones more frequently made the decision at an earlier age. Unsurprisingly, in all decades, those whose fathers were lawyers tended to have decided earlier than others. ($p < .01$, Run sb32e) On the other hand, children of other professionals or businessmen chose law school no earlier than those whose fathers were blue-collar or clerical workers. In all decades after the 1970s, black graduates reported planning on law school earlier than graduates of other races did. ($p < .01$, Run sb32e). The story for women is interesting and more complex. In the graduating classes of the 1970s and 1980s, the first decades with large number of women students, women tended to have decided on law school later than men ($p < .01$, run sb32e), which may well be due to the fact that when they were in grade school and, for many, high school, few women were entering the profession at all. On the other hand, and less obviously explicable, by the graduating classes of the 1990s and later, women had, on average, decided to become lawyers at earlier age than men ($p < .01$, run sb32e.)

Long-Term Career Plans at Start of Law School

We asked our alums to recall their long-term career plans when they started law school, giving them a wide variety of choices, including “no plan” at all. The results are in Table 9

Table 9
Long-term career plans at *beginning* of law school,
by decade of graduation,
classes of 1966-2001

	1960s	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s
	n=950	n=2485	n=2514	n=2295	n=401
No plan	47%	40%	29%	25%	26%
Large law firm ²⁴	12%	11%	15%	24%	18%
Smaller firm	23%	24%	23%	12%	12%
Government, politics	8%	8%	14%	13%	16%
Legal services, public interest	2%	8%	10%	14%	16%
Corporate counsel or business	7%	4%	4%	6%	7%
Other	3%	3%	5%	6%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

File: plan01a3; printout plan2

Across all the years of our surveying, the most common single career plan at entry to law school was no plan at all.²⁵ About a third of the 8645 graduates who have responded to this question report having had no long-term career plan when they began law school. For those who do have a plan, private practice is by far the most frequently cited aspiration, although in no decade do more than forty percent of our graduates report having planned a career in private practice when they began law school. After private practice, the most frequently remembered plans were in government or in legal services, public defender or public interest work. Since the classes of 1980s, at least a quarter of our alumni recall beginning law school with such a career

²⁴ In the surveys of the classes of the 1960s, we asked about a plan to work in a firm of 15 or more lawyers. Later, we changed to asking about a plan to work in a firm of 50 or more lawyers.

²⁵ For the graduates of the 1960s and 1970s, our source of information about their career plans is from the respondents to the 15 year survey. For later graduates, the source of information was their response to the 5 year survey. It is possible that the comparatively high percentage of respondents from the 60s and 70s who say they had no career plan is in part attributable to graduates who, having been out of law school longer when surveyed, had forgotten that they did in fact have a longterm plan at the start of law school.

plan. Interestingly, as the table shows, the public service settings are the only settings in which there has been a general growth over time in the proportion of graduates citing them as their initial career plan. This increase might possibly be due to a change in applicants to law school in general, but it is equally likely to be due to deliberate efforts by Michigan law school to favor in the admissions process those who displayed interest or experience in public service.

CONCLUDING NOTE

The statistical summary we've given necessarily fails to convey sufficiently the huge variety of backgrounds among the students. Here is an excerpt from a memorandum Sarah Zierfoss, Director of Admissions, sent to the faculty in the fall of 2009 about that year's entering first-year class:

We have 3 Fulbrights, 7 AmeriCorps and 4 Peace Corps volunteers, 6 Teach for America alumni, a Truman Scholar, and 7 military veterans. We have a reactor systems engineer for the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission; the assistant director of operations for the Detroit Shock (WNBA); a Notre Dame tight end; a seasonal wilderness ranger and a wildland firefighter for the USFS; someone with top-secret clearance at NSA, and someone who did intelligence for the US army; a police officer; a political and legislative analyst for the Israeli Embassy; 5 DOJ antitrust paralegals; and someone who had never been in a motorized vehicle until she got on a plane to the US seeking political asylum. Finally, the following get my nomination for best combination of life experiences: the person who was a life coach for teens & young adults with autism and Asperger's, as well as an Arabic linguist for the US Army; the person who was "VP of Jamming," for the Amateur Rock Guitarist Organization as well as a patent examiner for the USPTO; and the person with a diploma from Le Cordon Bleu and work experience as an EMT.