Josiah Kim

Professor Zorn

PLSC 476

06 May 2021

<div align="center">What Can Law Schools do to Increase Post-Graduate Success?</div>

Overview and Hypothesis

Law schools hold a reputation of being prestigious institutions in American culture. Hollywood, for decades, has consistently upheld this reputation through their characterization of law schools and lawyers. We see law schools as accepting only those individuals who are the brightest of the bright and teaching impossible-to-understand material. Time and time again, lawyers are depicted as symbols of unshakable justice and individuals with overwhelming wealth. All of this is what most of us believe to be true.

From the perspective of an outsider like myself, law school and the job of a lawyer is largely a black box. However, understandably, it seems like more and more people around me are lured to this mysterious institution. This raises the question: what would it take for an individual such as me to become successful as a lawyer post-graduation? Furthermore, what can law schools do to increase the chances of their students being successful post-graduation?

We know that an individual's undergraduate grade point average is a significant predictor for law school grade point average. However, using other variables as predictors for both full-time long-term employment post-law school and first-time bar passage rate, we can see what kinds of people become are destined to become successful lawyers.

My general theory is that law schools who accept more high-achieving individuals will have higher post-graduation success rates. More specifically, I expect schools who have high 75th

percentile undergraduate grade point averages and 75th percentile LSAT scores to have more students succeeding post-law school. I define success in terms of first-time bar passage rates and full-time long-term employment rates.

Data and Measurement

For this analysis, I draw from four datasets sourced from a single database, Analytix by AccessLex[1]. All the datasets are measured at the school-level. For the purpose of this analysis, the datasets are merged.

The first dataset is *enrollment* which provides the demographical information of the student body. The next dataset I employ is *admissions* which provides admissions information about the student body. The third dataset is *employment* providing employment information about the students, post-law school. The last dataset is *bar* which tells us about the students' bar exam performance.

My main outcome variables of interest are the rate at which students pass the bar exam the on the first try (*firsttimepassagerate*) and the long-term full-time employment rates (*ltftrate*). These are my measures of post-law school success. Some independent variables I am interested in are undergraduate grade point averages (uggpa25, uggpa50, uggpa75), LSAT scores (lsat25, lsat50, lsat 75), ethnicity (*hispanicjd*, *amindianjd*, *asianjd*, *blackjd*, *nathawjd*, *twoormorejd*, *minorityjd*, *whitejd*), and sex (*menjd*, *womenjd*). We will focus on the year, 2019, for our analysis.

Analysis and Findings

Figure 1 affirms some preliminary assumptions. We see "prestigious" schools such as Yale and Stanford accepting the students with some of the best undergraduate grade point averages. This

---

tells us that one of the factors that deem these schools prestigious may be that they are difficult to gain admission into.
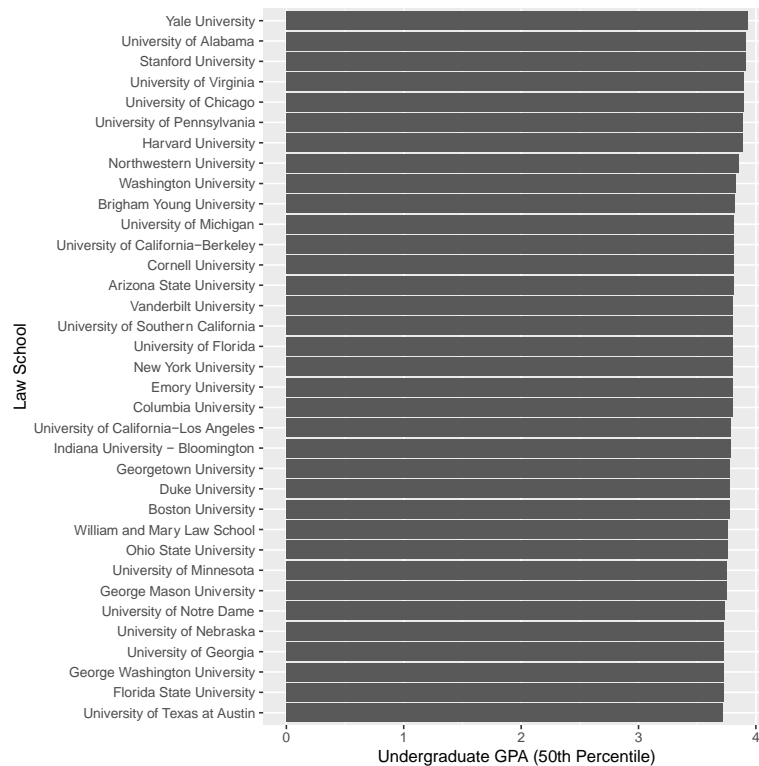

Figure 1. Top 35 Law Schools with the Highest 50th Percentile Undergraduate GPAs

Figure 2 depicts a similar story in the fact that, again, "prestigious" schools accept students with the highest LSAT scores. We do not see much difference in the ranking which tell us that there may be a strong linear correlation between these two variables.
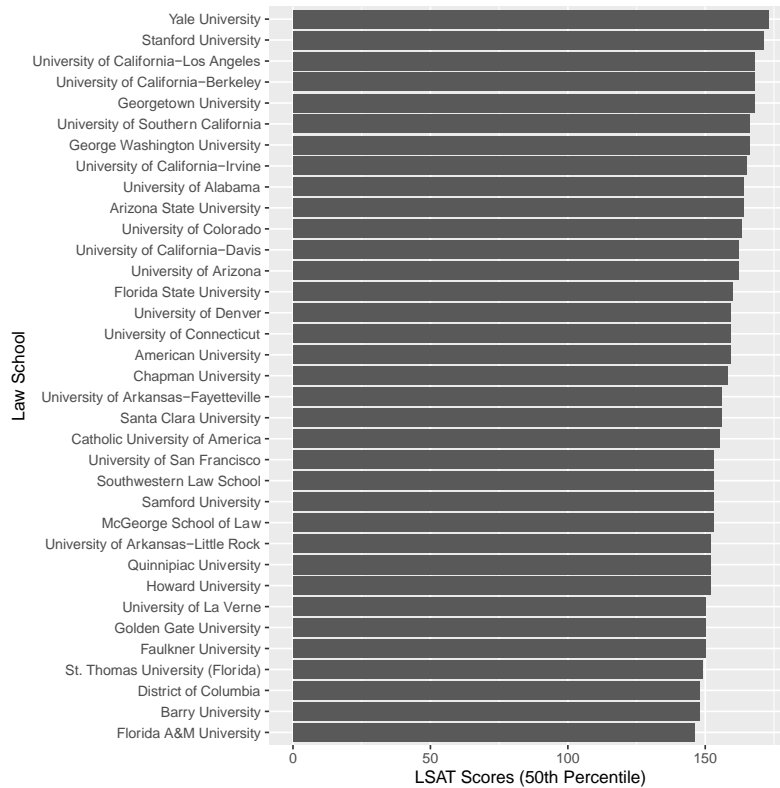
Figure 2. Top 35 Law Schools with the Highest 50th Percentile LSAT Scores

Figure 3 affirms the intuition that undergraduate GPA and LSAT scores may have a

linear association. With a pearson's r correlation test, we can confirm that there is a strong,

positive linear association between these two variables (*r = 0.86916*). Furthermore, this

relationship is statistically significant (*p < 0.05*). Schools with strong undergraduate GPA

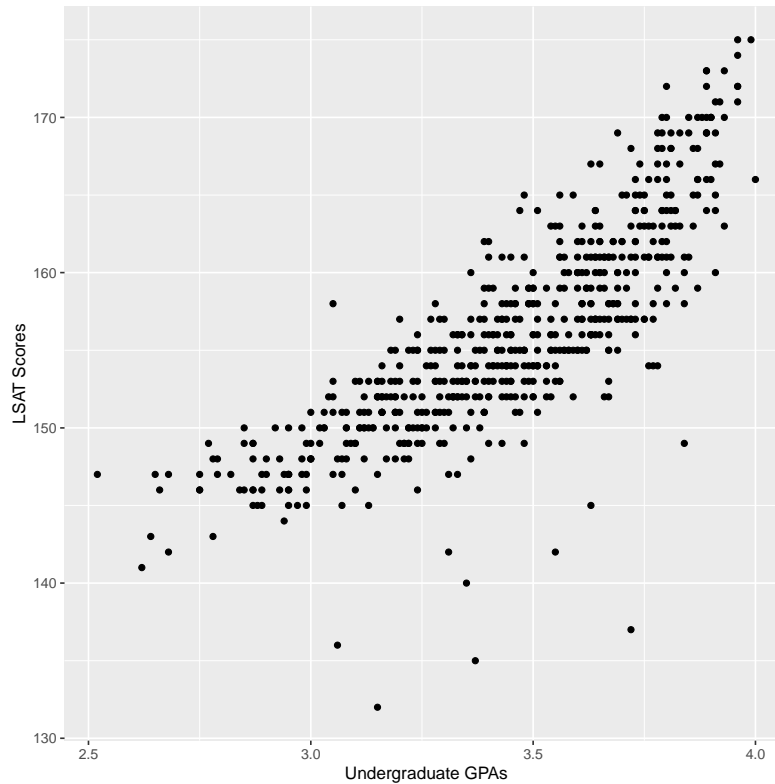averages can expect to have students with high scores on the LSAT.

Figure 3. Undergraduate GPAs and LSAT Scores

Now that we have seen a single correlation between two likely independent variables, it is necessary to explore the correlation between all the variables to affirm more assumptions and find new associations. Figure 4 shows the strength of the linear correlations between all the variables.

Our main outcome variables of interest are on the right side of the matrix. Undergraduate GPA and LSAT scores seem highly correlated with our outcome variables which affirm our assumptions. The matrix also tells us that there is a strong positive association between white law school students and Asian law school students, and our two outcome variables. Furthermore, in general, men are associated stronger with our outcome variables than women.

Figure 4 also tells us that there is a strong negative association between Hispanic law school students and the rate in which the bar exam is passed on the first try and full-time long-

term employment rates. This negative relationship is also true, though not as strong, for students who are Native American/Hawaiian, black and American Indian.
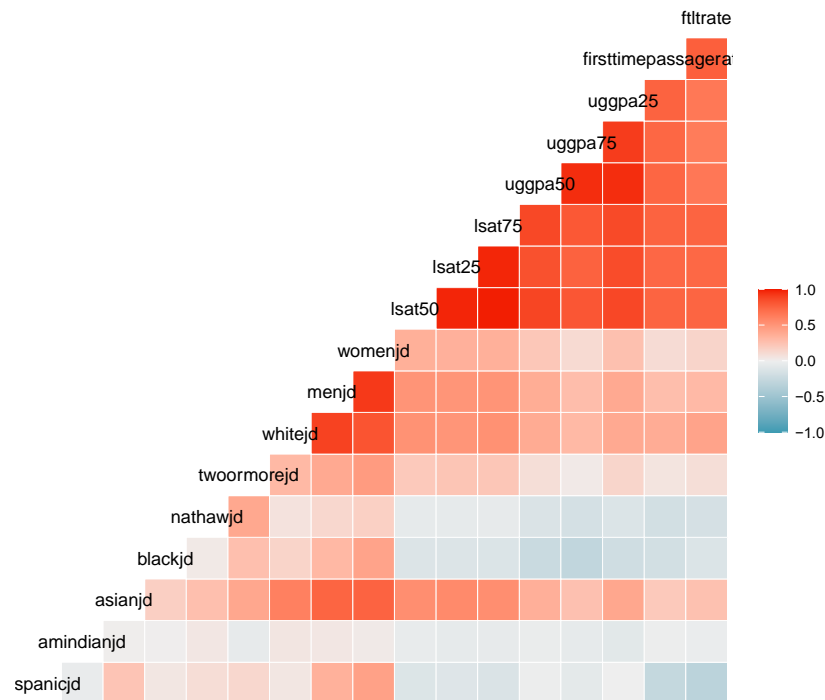

Figure 4. Correlation Matrix

We want to focus now more on our outcome variables of interest. Figure 5 shows us some clear similarities compared to figure 1 and figure 2. We still see our "prestigious" schools at the top placing almost 80 percent of their graduating class in full-time long-term employment positions.

We also see some schools that were previously not regarded as "prestigious" making their way to the top. For example, University of Colorado is not seen in figures 1 and 2; however, they placed close to 80 percent of their graduating class in full-time long-term employment positions.
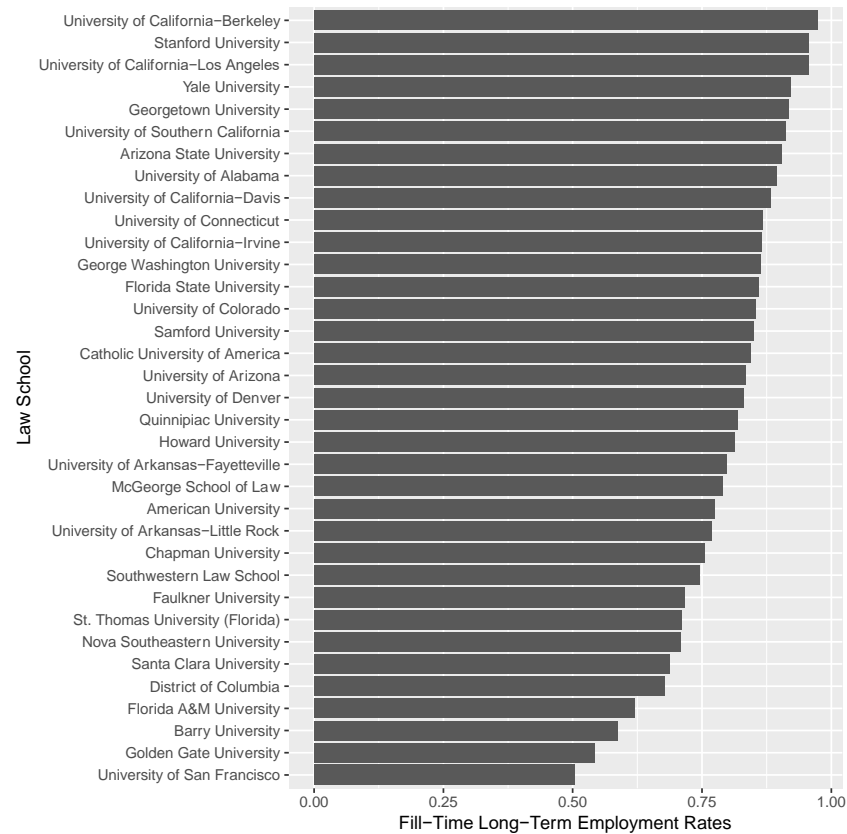
Figure 5. Top 35 Law Schools with the Highest Full-Time Long-Term Employment Rates

Figure 6 depicts a similar story as well. We see our previously-deemed "prestigious"

schools at the top having 90 percent of their graduates who take the bar exam passing on the first

try. Then, schools not seen in figures 1 and 2 also make their way to the top. Again, University

of Colorado has over 78 percent of their graduates who take the bar exam passing on the first try.
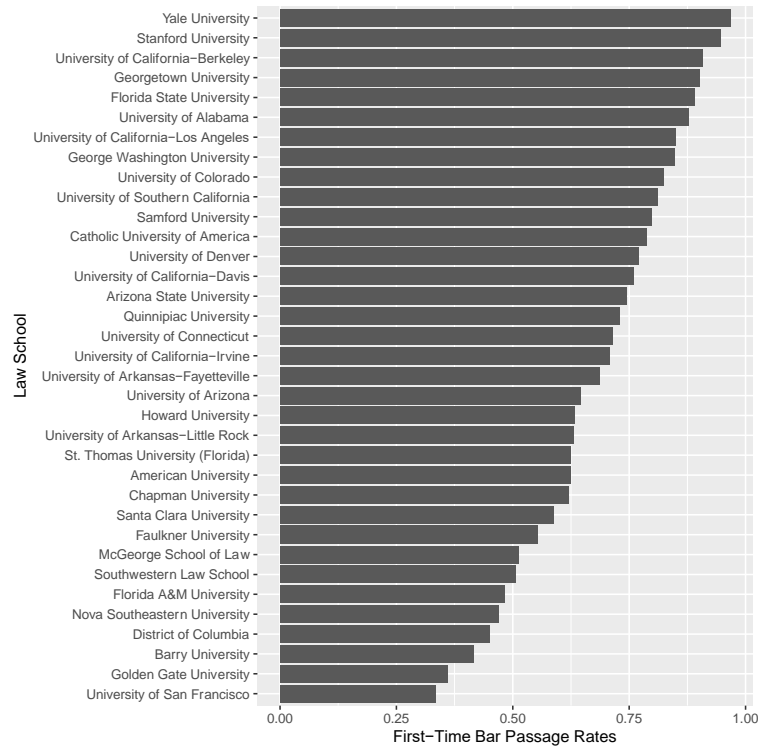
Figure 6. Top 35 Law Schools with the Highest First-Time Bar Passage Rates

Predictors	enrAdmempBar2019$ftltrate			enrAdmempBar2019$firsttimepassagerate		
	Estimates	CI	p	Estimates	CI	p
(Intercept)	-133.55	-199.08 – -68.03	**<0.001**	-378.02	-532.79 – -223.25	**<0.001**
enrAdmempBar2019$lsat50	1.04	-0.51 – 2.58	0.188	1.43	-2.22 – 5.08	0.441
enrAdmempBar2019$lsat75	0.13	-1.36 – 1.62	0.863	1.03	-2.49 – 4.54	0.566
enrAdmempBar2019$lsat25	0.15	-0.84 – 1.14	0.764	-0.29	-2.63 – 2.04	0.806
enrAdmempBar2019$uggpa50	-18.77	-48.38 – 10.83	0.212	-87.81	-157.74 – -17.89	**0.014**
enrAdmempBar2019$uggpa75	13.85	-12.11 – 39.81	0.294	65.00	3.68 – 126.32	**0.038**
enrAdmempBar2019$uggpa25	7.70	-9.05 – 24.44	0.366	78.47	38.92 – 118.02	**<0.001**
enrAdmempBar2019$menjd	0.01	-0.01 – 0.04	0.238	0.06	0.00 – 0.11	**0.044**
enrAdmempBar2019$womenjd	0.00	-0.02 – 0.02	0.900	-0.02	-0.07 – 0.04	0.505
enrAdmempBar2019$hispanicjd	-0.03	-0.05 – -0.02	**<0.001**	-0.06	-0.10 – -0.02	**0.001**
enrAdmempBar2019$amindianjd	0.02	-0.22 – 0.26	0.873	0.29	-0.27 – 0.85	0.306
enrAdmempBar2019$asianjd	-0.06	-0.11 – -0.01	**0.017**	-0.18	-0.30 – -0.06	**0.002**
enrAdmempBar2019$blackjd	-0.01	-0.03 – 0.01	0.432	-0.02	-0.07 – 0.04	0.491
enrAdmempBar2019$twoormorejd	0.01	-0.06 – 0.07	0.819	0.00	-0.15 – 0.16	0.959
enrAdmempBar2019$nathawjd	-0.55	-1.37 – 0.27	0.189	-0.82	-2.76 – 1.12	0.404
Observations	198			198		
R^2 / R^2 adjusted	0.651 / 0.625			0.707 / 0.685		

Figure 7. Multivariate Analysis of the Main Outcome Variables

Summary

We looked at two outcome variables as possible indicators for post-law school success which include first-time bar passage rates and full-time long-term employment rates. Figure 6 shows which independent variables are the best predictors for post-law school success.

There are six statistically significant predictors for first-time bar passage rates. Four of which are related to undergraduate GPA. If a school increases their 75th percentile undergraduate admissions GPA by one unit, they can expect a 65 percent increase in first-time bar passage rates. Furthermore, a one-unit increase in a school's 25th percentile undergraduate admissions GPA could increase the chances of first-time bar passage by 78.47 percent. Surprisingly, increasing the 50th percentile undergraduate GPA would expect a decrease in first-time bar passage rates by 87.81 percent. When it comes to predicting the rate of placing post-graduates in full-time long-term positions, there are not significant predictors in terms of undergraduate GPA and LSAT scores.

What we can gather from figure 6 is that first-time bar passage rates are easily predicted by undergraduate GPA. By increasing the 25th or 75th percentile, a school can drastically improve their numbers in this regard. Furthermore, it is hard to tell by LSAT scores if students will pass their bar on the first try. First-time bar passage rates may be indicative of an individual's study habits which can be reflected by undergraduate GPA, not LSAT scores. Another piece of information we can gather is that full-time long-term employment is hard to predict with academic information.

For an individual looking at attending law school, this analysis can mean a few things. We saw that "prestigious" law schools are prestigious in the fact that they are difficult to get into (high undergraduate GPAs and high LSAT scores), but they also have high probabilities of post-

graduate success (first-time bar passage rates and full-time long-term employment rates). However, if the primary goal of an individual is to become a successful lawyer in terms of our two outcome variables, then there are many schools who are excellent in that regard that may not be deemed "prestigious."

Loosely extracting from figure 6, we can see that an individual may have a higher chance of passing their bar exam on the first try if they are in the 25th or 75th percentile for undergraduate GPA at the school they attend. Furthermore, being a male who is not Asian nor Hispanic may be a positive indicator as well. When it comes to full-time long-term employment, it is suggested that students who are not Asian nor Hispanic have the slight advantage as well.

My hypothesis can partially be rejected. For the success indicator of first-time bar passage, the 75th percentile of undergraduate GPA was a significant predictor. However, it was not a significant predictor for full-time long-term employment post-graduation.