

Do I Belong at This Law School?

How Perceived Experiences of Bias, Stereotype Concerns, and Social Capital Influence

Law Students' Sense of Belonging

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Abstract

Recent research has shown the importance of sense of belonging in law students' performance and satisfaction outcomes, particularly for minoritized students (Green et al., forthcoming). However, what affects and supports students' sense of belonging? Using the 2018 Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) data, this dissertation examines the extent to which perceived experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, and various sources of social capital influence law students' sense of belonging at the intersection of race and gender. The results provided evidence that sense of belonging is patterned by race-gender, which is associated with students' actual experiences in school reflected in their perceived experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, and the usage of various sources of social capital for support. Moreover, this dissertation shows that the effects of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns on students' sense of belonging can be mitigated by tapping into various sources of social capital. These findings have important implications for our theoretical and practical understanding of how legal education is experienced by minoritized students and how to support them.

Keywords: belonging, social capital, bias, stereotype, law school

Introduction

When Justice Sotomayor joined the Supreme Court of the United States, much was made of her Latina heritage and her credentials as an ivy league graduate. There is no question that she is qualified to be where she is now, but how did she fare along the way? In a 2013 interview, Savannah Guthrie asked Justice Sotomayor, “Weren’t these intimidating situations?” Justice Sotomayor candidly replied, “Oh, gosh. I was filled with fear. When you come from a background like mine where you’re entering worlds that are so different than your own, you have to be afraid” (NBC, 2013). This fear experienced along her journey through Princeton, Yale Law School, and to the Supreme Court of the United States is one that echoes across the educational experiences of minoritized students.¹ Despite this fear, Justice Sotomayor persisted and is highly successful. But, how?

Sociology of education research has focused on students’ sense of belonging to understand the achievement and persistence of marginalized students in colleges and universities (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Sense of belonging is a dimension of perceived cohesion, the extent to which individuals feel “stuck to” a particular group (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Perception of cohesion is important for behavior (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). Empirically, sense of belonging is a promising construct that allows sociology and social psychology scholars to assess what factors (social, psychological, and academic) can further enhance students’

¹ In this dissertation, I use the term “minoritized students” in addition to minority students, marginalized students, and underrepresented students. The use of “minoritized” is intended to refer to the “process [action vs. noun] of student minoritization” (Benitez, 2010, p. 131) that reflects an understanding of “minority” status as that which is socially constructed in specific societal contexts (Stewart, 2013). For example, women are not minorities in legal education today, but they are one of many minoritized groups. These are groups that face social, political, economic, and educational barriers that constrict them. The groups I refer to as minoritized students in this project include white women, men of color, and women of color.

affiliation with their school (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Sense of belonging is linked to positive academic outcomes, such as increased academic motivation, engagement, intention to persist, and achievement (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007). Recently, a study using the Law School Survey of Student Engagement (LSSSE) data found that sense of belonging directly and significantly predicts law students educational satisfaction and academic performance (Green et al., forthcoming). However, the same study also revealed that law students from disadvantaged backgrounds reported weaker relationships with faculty, staff, and peers, which predicted a lower sense of belonging compared to their classmates from advantaged backgrounds.

In recent years, we have seen a demographic shift in law school enrollment, where there are more women and racially/ethnically minoritized students enrolled in the first year of law school than past generations (Dinovitzer et al., 2004). According to the American Bar Association (n.d.), in the Fall of 2018 there were more women enrolled in the first year of law school than men (20,366 women compared 17,977 men), and the number of racially/ethnically minoritized students enrolled in the first year had almost doubled from 1990 to 2010 (from 6,933 to 11,981). Moreover, between 2017 and 2019, more women of color enrolled in the first year of law school than men of color. Specifically, more than 60% of racially/ethnically minoritized students were women. These trends signal that the legal profession is welcoming more racial and gender² diversity, but these numbers come during a time where women of color have the highest probability of perceiving discrimination in the legal workplace (Nelson et al., 2019), and racial

² In my research, I use gender and sex interchangeably, but I recognize that sex and gender are distinct concepts. Gender is the performative aspect of one's behavior, which we use socially to signify our sex category assigned at birth – male or female. For example, stereotypes about women, the female sex, are cued by what one observes, gender.

and gender inequity persists (Kay, Alarie, & Adjei, 2016; Kay & Gorman, 2008, 2016; NALP, 2019; Noonan, Corcoran, & Courant, 2008; Payne-Pikus et al., 2010). Therefore, it is imperative to understand how to foster a sense of belonging to retain (Thomas, 2018) and support diversity in legal education.

Various studies indicate that different forms of social capital can enhance undergraduate students' sense of belonging (Attinasi, 1989; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Nuñez, 2009). There are a number of sources and forms of social capital as articulated by Stanton-Salazar (1997, 2001, 2004) and others. In this dissertation, social capital refers to the social relationships from which students can potentially derive institutional support, including resources of how to navigate the education environment and the job market (Stanton-Salazar & Dornnusch, 1995). Emotional and moral support is a form of social capital referring to the offering of affective support and encouragement in relations to schooling (Nuñez 2009; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Emotional and moral support, the quantity and quality of students' interactions with college faculty, positive cross-racial interactions with peers, engagement, impression of faculty's interest in students' development, class participation, community service, and academic and general interpersonal validation from faculty and staff are all positively associated with sense of belonging and academic adjustment (Astin, 1993; Hurtado et al., 2015; Hurtado, Laird, & Perorazio, 2003; Hurtado & Ponjuan 2005; Nuñez, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Stanton-Salazar, 2001).

Given the importance of students' sense of belonging in higher education and legal education, particularly for minoritized students, it is crucial to understand how to influence and cultivate law students' sense of belonging. Specifically, this dissertation investigates the extent to which perceived experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, and various sources of social capital

influence law students' sense of belonging at the intersection of race and gender. This dissertation is guided by the following research questions.

1. To what extent does sense of belonging vary by race-gender? What influence do perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns have on students' sense of belonging? And to what extent do perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns influence the relationship between race-gender and sense of belonging?
2. To what extent do perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns vary by race-gender?
3. What influence do various sources of social capital, specifically support from Student Affairs, having someone to confide in at the law school, quality of relationship with faculty, quality of relationship with other students, and support provided by student organizations, have on students' sense of belonging? And how do these sources of social capital influence the effects of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns on students' sense of belonging?

The studies from this dissertation — analyzing the influence of perceived experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, and various sources of social capital on students' sense of belonging — expands our understanding of how people like Justice Sotomayor, or others like her at the apex of their career, succeed in a highly competitive, white, male, and elite world found in higher education. This dissertation shows that the fear Justice Sotomayor experienced along her journey through Princeton, Yale Law School, and to the Supreme Court of the United States is systemically echoed by minoritized law students in these studies. Moreover, this dissertation shows how social capital through institutional agents, faculty, and peers can in fact help mitigate the effects of marginalizing perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns on sense of belonging.

Literature Review

While sociology and social psychology have long focused on sense of belonging in education, the issue has only been recently picked up by legal scholars. This section briefly reviews the empirical scholarship on law school diversity then reviews the literature on

race/ethnicity, gender, sense of belonging, and social capital. While scholars have explored diversity in law school (most are individual school case studies), none have connected their empirical examination with the literature on sense of belonging. This dissertation merges the various disciplines through an empirical examination of how race-gender, bias, stereotypes, and social capital affect law students' sense of belonging.

Diversity in Law School

Empirical scholarship focused on diversity in legal education consistently supports what critical scholars, qualitative sociologists, and linguistic anthropologists found and asserted – that minoritized students are experiencing law school differently from their mainstream classmates.

In the last two decades, studies of law students' experiences at various individual schools have mirrored each other. The results of the 2013 SCALE survey of 118 JD students at UC Berkeley Law School found that across the 2013 to 2015 classes, minoritized students' experiences were affected by stereotyping, implicit and explicit bias, and prejudice (Darling-Hammond & Holmquist, 2015). Black and Latinx students feared confirming stereotypes. This fear paralyzed them from seeking help – keeping them from admitting when they did not understand content reviewed in class. Moreover, women, Black, and Latinx students felt that faculty prejudged their academic abilities based on students' race or gender. Darling-Hammond and Holmquist argue these findings are important to address as “these fears of prejudgment might encourage fears of confirming stereotypes, which in turn might harm academic performance and silence students from pursuing clarification when necessary” (Darling-Hammond & Holmquist, 2015, p.8).

The findings at Berkeley mirrored those from studies at UCLA, Michigan, Florida, and other schools a decade before. At UCLA Law School, Rachel Moran conducted a survey of her

student body that examined law school experiences generally and as it related to diversity (Moran, 2000). She found that issues of race and gender were mostly ignored in the law school curriculum. In fact, she found that when students initiated conversations around diversity, they were dismissed as being “activists” rather than “intellectuals.” A survey of Michigan law students a year later, similarly, found that students of color described the school environment as one characterized by racial separation, racial conflict, and racial misunderstandings, which resulted in their disengagement from the learning process (Allen & Solorzano, 2001). At the University of Florida, a quantitative study found that many law students perceived that white males were the primary focus of classroom attention and legal knowledge (Dowd et al., 2003). A pilot daily diary study on law school engagement at an urban and elite law school revealed that students who reported events related to their social identity, such as race, negatively impacted their self-confidence in law school and sense of belonging (London et al., 2007). By the end of the first semester, this study found that minoritized students reported significantly lower levels of perceived competence, greater feelings of invisibility, isolation, and alienation.

The race and gender differences in student experiences also appeared at the University of California-Davis, which is considered to be a “kinder” law school (Cassman & Pruitt, 2005). A study there found that while law school is challenging for all students, systemic challenges and stresses were disproportionately experienced more by women and racially minoritized students than white and male students (Cassman & Pruitt, 2005). For example, women described the Socratic method using a language of intimidation and bias. In relation to in-class voluntary participation, students of color and women reported lower satisfaction with their own classroom participation than white and male students. In terms of the emotional labor of law school, law

school was more emotionally taxing for women than men, and for students of color than white students (Cassman & Pruitt, 2005).

Other past empirical research from various law schools found that women and students of color participated at lower rates than men and white students (Buckner, 2004). In fact, some students of color refused to participate as a defense mechanism in what they deemed as hostile environments in and outside of the classroom (Buckner, 2004). The findings of these studies, Buckner (2004) argues, suggest that the disengagement of students of color based on classroom environment can have debilitating effects on their academic outcomes. This lack of engagement, Buckner suggests, can be tied to feelings of isolation and alienation (Buckner, 2004). This dissertation will substantially contribute to this body of empirical scholarship on diversity in law school by examining survey data from 17 law schools across the U.S., instead of the individual school case study approach seen in this review.

Sense of Belonging

Students' perceptions of fitting in are linked to their ideologies of themselves as racial, ethnic, cultural, and gendered beings within society (Carter, 2005). The legacy of oppression³ and exclusion in higher education and in society is present in students' experiences, resulting in feeling like they do not belong (Yosso, 2005, 2013). In sociology, perceived cohesion is the extent to which individuals feel "stuck to" a particular group (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). Perceived cohesion is comprised of two dimensions: 1) an individual's sense of belonging to a particular group, and 2) their feelings of morale associated with the membership to the group (Bollen &

³ Collins describes oppression as "any unjust situation where, systemically and over a long period of time, one group denies other group access to the resources of society. Race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, age, and ethnicity among others constitute major forms of oppression in the United States" (2000).

Hoyle, 1990, p. 482). Sense of belonging is comprised of both cognitive and affective elements. At the cognitive level, judgments of belonging stems from the accumulation of information about their experiences within the group as a whole and with other group members. At the affective level, feelings reflect the individual's personal appraisal of their experiences within the groups as a whole and with other group members. Sense of belonging, therefore, provides information and motivation (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990).

In this dissertation, deriving from sociology and social psychology, sense of belonging is a "general inference" of a student's fit in their law school. It is a subjective psychological sense of identification with their school. In a society where stereotypes and biases are so pervasive, sense of belonging is helpful in understanding how certain forms of social and academic experiences affect marginalized students, especially as it relates to high performing students, transitioning into higher education, persistence, and performance (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Research show that students' sense of belonging is linked to positive academic outcomes, such as increased academic motivation, engagement, intention to persist, actual persistence, and achievement (Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007; Hausmann et al., 2009; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007). Moreover, peer support, social and academic interaction, perceived racial tension, relationships, friendships, campus climate, positive race-related interactions and experiences, and quality of peer relationships associated with diversity are found to influence students' sense of belonging (Carter, 1997; Cabrera et al., 1999; Freeman, Anderman, & Jensen, 2007; Green et al., forthcoming; Hurtado, Carter, & Spuler, 1996; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Hausmann et al., 2007; Locks et al., 2008; Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002; Pittman & Richmond, 2008; Nuñez, 2009; Murphy & Zirkel, 2015). The belonging literature in both sociology and social psychology predominately focuses on the undergraduate experience. However, there have

been limited studies on graduate education—focused on doctoral students at four universities (O’Meara et al., 2017)— and a surgical residency training program (Salles et al., 2013). This dissertation will add to the much-needed literature on sense of belonging in graduate and professional education.

Race and Gender

Race and gender are key dimensions of stratification in American society that dictate individuals’ judgement of and behavior towards others (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Feagin & Sikes, 1994; Fiske 1998; Glick & Fiske, 1999; Blair & Banaji, 1996; Omi & Winant, 1994; Ridgeway, 2009) and how individuals perceive themselves in particular contexts and environments (Murphy, Steele, & Gross, 2007; Steele, 2011)— including higher education.

Although sense of belonging is important to everyone, the nature and meaning of belonging in higher education are different for minoritized students who are targeted by racial and gender stereotypes—“faulty or inflexible generalization[s]” (Allport 1954). Notions of minoritized groups’ intellectual inferiority is pervasive in American society, often justifying low education and occupational expectation for students in the margins (Solorzano et al., 2000). As a result, stigmatized students find educational environments threatening to their social identities. Social psychology has established that stereotypes of minoritized individuals have a detrimental effect on performance and academic outcomes (e.g. Aronson et al. 1999; Spencer et al. 1999; Keller 2007; Major & Schmader 1998; Major et al. 1998; Crocker et al. 1998), because members of minoritized groups are afraid of conforming to the stereotypes (Keller 2007; Inzlicht & Ben-Zeev 2003; Steele et al. 2002; Wheeler & Petty 2001; Aronson et al. 1999; Spencer et al. 1999; Major & Schmader 1998; Major et al. 1998; Crocker et al. 1998; Steele & Aronson 1995). This phenomenon is called stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson 1995).

In addition to stereotypes, perception of experiences of bias also have a detrimental effect of minoritized populations. Members of minoritized groups, like women, people of color, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community continue to face discrimination in professional settings, from academia to legal workplaces (e.g. Deo, 2019; Fryer et al., 2013; Hull, 2005; Nelson et al., 2019; Quillian et al., 2017; Tilcsik, 2011). Perceived discrimination⁴ is based on self-reported experiences of discrimination by targets (Feagin and Sikes, 1994; Hirsh and Lyons, 2010; Nelson et al., 2019; Quillian, 2006). Self-reported experiences of discrimination are a measure of inequality (Nelson et al., 2019), and in this case a measure of education inequality.

Race and gender, as ascriptive status, are associated with perception of discrimination (Hirsh & Lyons, 2010). People of color and women are more likely to perceive personal and group discrimination (Major and Sawyer 2009; Nelson et al. 2019). However, women of color “face particular challenges because they are outsiders on the boundaries of both race and gender” from the dominant group in society (Nelson et al. 2019: 1053). In the legal profession, women of color have the highest probability of perceiving discrimination (Nelson et al. 2019; Collins 2009; Collins et al 2017). These perceptions of racial/ethnic discrimination are linked to greater psychological distress, poorer self-esteem, less academic motivation, lower academic

⁴ Scholars have noted that perceived discrimination is subject to two kinds of errors: not seeing discrimination that objectively exists and seeing it when it does not exist (Kaiser & Major, 2006; Nelson et al., 2019). Perceived discrimination is not to be a reflection of reality. However, from a personal and social justice perspective, I acknowledge that many marginalized law students often do not have the outlets or the time to express their experiences. Their self-reported experiences are real to them and the consequences, such as the loss of time and energy coping with experiences of bias, are real. Therefore, in their eyes, experiences of discrimination are not perceptions, but actual experiences. From a social science perspective, these self-reported experiences are known as perceived discrimination, and the concept should not be used in a way to dismiss or reinterpret students’ experiences and the real impact of these experiences on students’ lives.

achievement, and low engagement (Benner et al., 2018). Perceived discrimination has similar detrimental effects on adults (Pascoe & Richman, 2009; Schmitt et al., 2014).

Legal education prides itself of teaching students reason, logic, and objectivity. However, critical scholars have long argued that the legal profession grows out of and reproduces white male hegemony (Epstein, 1990, 2012; Kennedy & Carrington, 2004; Goodrich & Mills, 2001; Pierce, 1995; Bourdieu, 1990) and legal education propagates such expectations (Costello 2001, 2005; Mertz, 2007; Moore, 2008; Pan, 2015). From its history of exclusivity and elitism (Pan, 2017; Moore, 2008; Stevens, 1983) to its main methods of teaching through the Socratic and case methods (Moore, 2008; Mertz, 2007; Stevens, 1983), the culture of legal education is one that benefits male and white privilege (Moore, 2008; Guinier et al., 1997; Granfield & Koenig, 1992; Crenshaw, 1989). The law school culture is one of competition and conformity (Sturm & Guinier, 2007). Minoritized students are expected to excel in a society and institutions burdened by doubt, presumptions of incompetence, the subtleness of implicit bias, and the pervasive stereotypes that hijack their interactions with others. At the individual level, minoritized law students are juggling more than preparing for class. They must also actively engage with marginalizing biases in order to experience education mobility (Evan & Moore, 2015). Students' race and gender influence how they learn, interact, and grow in law school.

Intersectionality: raceXgender

Beyond race and gender, intersectional scholarship show that women of color are doubly burdened by the presumption of incompetence (Hendrix, 1998; Williams et al., 1999; D.L. Rubin, 2001; Lazos 2012; Collins & Bilge, 2016; Deo, 2019, 2020). The term raceXgender focuses on “the compound effects often caused by holding multiple devalued identity characteristics, namely at the intersection of race and gender” (Deo, 2019, p. 8). Unlike like white women and

men of color, women of color are doubly marginalized by race and gender (Deo, 2019; Nelson et al., 2019; Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012). Across the board as students and as faculty, women of color face a compounded burden that negatively impacts their experiences and place in higher education (Dukes & Victoria, 1989; Moses, 1997; Aguirre, 2000; Medina & Luna, 2000; Tuner, 2001; Allen et al., 2002; Sosnowski, 2002; Brayboy, 2003; Fries & McNinch, 2003; Johnson et al., 2012; Ong, 2005; Hamermesh & Parker, 2005; Pitman, 2010; Deo, 2019, 2020; Wilkins-Yel et al., 2019).

From Yung-Yi Diana Pan's qualitative sociological study on how the intersection of race and gender shapes the professional socialization of Asian American women and Latina law students (2017) to García's comment where she calls for more institutional and intentional support for Latinas in law school (2019), the need of more raceXgender research vibrates throughout various areas of scholarship on legal education. Women of color are underrepresented in leadership positions in law review (Peralta, 2015), they report being less satisfied in law school (Deo & Christensen, 2019), and they are graduating with extreme debt burdens of \$200,000 or more (Deo & Christensen, 2019). This dissertation will add to the literature on diversity in law school by examining law students' sense of belonging at the intersection of race and gender, thus bringing the voices of women of color to the forefront.

Social Capital

From cross-racial interactions with peers to quality of relationships, various studies indicate that different sources of social capital can enhance students' sense of belonging and academic adjustment (Attinasi, 1989; Astin, 1993; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Hurtado, Laird, & Perorazio, 2003; Hurtado & Ponjuan, 2005; Nuñez, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Hurtado et al., 2015; Murphy & Zirkel, 2015; Green et al., forthcoming). Social

capital refers to the social relationships from which students can potentially derive institutional support, including resources of how to navigate the education environment and the job market (Stanton-Salazar & Dornnusch, 1995). In Stanton-Salazar's conceptualization of a social capital analytical framework, he emphasizes the importance of accessing social capital through tangible institutional support and resources within schools (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Deriving from Bourdieu (1977, 1986) and Coleman (1988), social capital focuses on the quality of middle-class forms of social support in students' interpersonal network. Minoritized students often have to seek help and develop these networks "within a context of differential power relations and within social contexts that are culturally different from, if not alienating to, cultural outsiders" (Eisenstadt & Roniger, 1984; Stanton-Salazar, 1997). Stanton-Salazar argues that students can overcome exclusionary forces to gain valuable social capital in their "relationships with institutional agents, and the networks that weave these relationships" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p.8).

Institutional agents are "those individuals who have the capacity and commitment to transmit directly, or negotiate the transmission of, institutional resources and opportunities" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p.6). It is through these relationships that individuals gain "the resources, privileges, and support necessary to advance and maintain their economic and political position in society" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p.6). Educators, intervention program staff, and even informal mentors become institutional agents when they mobilize, directly provide resources, or connect students to other institutional actors to empower and support them (Stanton-Salazar, 2011). There are six key forms of institutional support, and for the purpose of the dissertation, I focus on emotional and moral support which refers to the offering of affective support and encouragement in relations to schooling (Stanton-Salazar, 2001; Nuñez, 2009).

Empirically, scholarship on inclusion in higher education found that social capital from institutional agents can in fact mitigate the effects of discrimination and bias on students' sense of belonging. Specifically, Hurtado et al. (2015) found that academic and general interpersonal validation mediated the impact of discrimination and bias on students' sense of belonging. They suggest that students are reading cues from faculty and staff about whether the educational environment is inclusive. Efforts made by concerned institutional agents can help students feel empowered—validated—which can fortify students against the effects of discriminatory experiences.

In addition to institutional agents, social capital is also found in the support provided by family, friends, peers, and community members (e.g. Barbatis, 2010). Personal networks provide students with not only access to material resources, they provide sociopsychological benefits, especially for those “thirsting for inclusion” (Coleman, 1988; Carter, 2005). Students with positive and strong relationships are more academically motivated, perform better, and are less likely to drop out (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Wentzel 1998; Kuh and Hu, 2001; Patrick, Ryan & Kaplan, 2007). Specifically, support and relationships are shown to positively affect motivation, attachment, well-being, adjustment, academic success, and belonging for minoritized students (Solberg & Villarreal, 1997; Choi, 2002; Schneider & Ward, 2003; Rodriguez, Mira, Myers, Morris, & Cardoza, 2003; Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Murphy & Zirkel, 2015; Green et al., forthcoming).

The success of socialization in law school entails, as Stanton-Salazar argues, learning to “decode the system and to participate in power, understood as learning how to engage socially those agents and participants in mainstream worlds and social settings who control or manage critical resources” (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p.33). In legal education, law students heavily rely on

family, law school peers, and, to a lesser degree, other friends outside of law school to support them through law school (Deo et al., 2009). Social support from family, faculty, and peers are found to bolster law students' sense of engagement (Gottfredson et al., 2008).

Identity-based organizations provide minoritized law students with a safe space to culturally bond and find social, cultural, emotional, and academic support in predominately white and male education institutions (Moore, 2008; Deo, 2013; Pan, 2017). A study of JD and LLM students at the University of Michigan Law School found that the vast majority of racially/ethnically minoritized students joined race/ethnic-specific student organizations. These students reported receiving strong support from their student organization memberships (Deo, 2013). Moreover, both white and nonwhite students alike who joined mainstream groups for networking purposes were pleasantly surprised to experience social support within these groups. Thus, demonstrating that both race/ethnic-specific student organizations and mainstream organizations are sources of support in law school. In addition to social, cultural, emotional, and academic support, Deo and Griffin (2011) found that law school organizational mentorship for students of color is positively associated with mentee's likelihood of retention.⁵

This dissertation will shed light on sense of belonging in legal education, specifically on how perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns influence sense of belonging, and on the mechanisms that exist in law school to help students contend with marginalizing experiences and concerns as they negotiate their sense of belonging at the intersection of race and gender.

⁵ Deo (2019) similarly found this to be true for women faculty of color in legal academia.

Methods

Data

The Law School Survey of Student Engagement questions measure various aspects of the student experience, including demographics, academic and intellectual experiences, mental activities, enriching education experiences, student satisfaction, time usage, law school environment, quality of relationships, career expectations, and educational and personal growth outcomes. In addition to these questions, belonging, experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, and personal and emotional support questions were added to the 2018 survey. The Mindsets in Legal Education team added four questions on sense of belonging. My questions on perceived experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, and personal and emotional support were sent to 25 U.S. law schools, where all but five of the schools were also given the sense of belonging questions. Only current JD students were surveyed, and the total analytical sample size is 2,527 across 17 law schools.⁶ See Table 1 for a summary of all the variables used in this study.

Measures

Main Dependent Variable

Belonging is a categorical variable measuring students' sense of belonging during the 2017-2018 school year. The dependent variable was created using two items in the 2018 survey ($\alpha=.92$) that assessed students' sense of belonging.⁷ Current JD students were asked to specify on a 6-point scale if they strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, agree, or strongly agree with the following two statements, "I feel like I belong at this law school" and "I

⁶ After cleaning the data, it was found that three schools did not provide LSAT scores for their students. These schools were excluded.

⁷ These are measures used by Green et al. (forthcoming).

fit well at this law school.” The two items were averaged to create a composite where higher numbers indicate greater sense of belonging. However, a categorical measure of belonging was found to be more favorable over the continuous measure because ordinary least squares regression models on the continuous measure of belonging failed to meet the assumptions of the model. Residuals were not distributed normally. The sense of belonging variable has three categories. The categories were chosen to differentiate and analyze students’ experiences between low, moderate, and high sense of belonging. In the full analytic sample, 15% of the respondents had a low sense of belonging, 54% had a moderate sense of belonging, and 31% had a high sense of belonging (see Table 1).

Perceived Experiences of Bias

To capture the various kinds of perceived experiences of bias in law school, I use two individual items that broadly ask about negative experiences based on ascriptive characteristics.⁸ Students were asked “I experienced not being taken seriously in a class because of my race/ethnicity, gender, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation” and “I have experienced bias, discrimination, or unfair treatment at my law school based on my race/ethnicity, gender, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation.” The experienced discrimination/bias and not taken seriously variables are binary and equals one if respondents agreed with the statements.⁹ In the total analytical sample, 13% of the respondents reported experiencing bias, discrimination, or unfair treatment at their law school based on my race/ethnicity, gender, gender identity, and/or sexual

⁸ This helps avoid the difficulty of subjective definitions of discrimination.

⁹ Perceived experiences of bias variables were run as categorical as well, and the findings are the same. For interpretation and simplicity, I decided to keep the variables binary.

orientation, and 16% reported experiencing not being taken seriously in a class because of my race/ethnicity, gender, gender identity, and/or sexual orientation (see Table 1).

Stereotype Concerns

Stereotype concerns are measured by two individual items that asked respondents to specify if they agreed with the following two statements: “In class, I worry that my professor underestimates my intelligence” and “Others in my school would be surprised to see me succeed.” The worry and surprised variables are binary and equals one if respondents agreed with the statements.¹⁰ In the full analytical sample, 26% of the respondents reported that in class, they worry about their professor underestimating their intelligence and 19% of the respondents reported that others in their school would be surprised to see them succeed (see Table 1).

Social Capital

Social capital refers to the social relationships from which students can potentially derive institutional support, including resources of how to navigate the education environment and the job market (Stranton-Salazar & Dornnusch, 1995). Emotional and moral support is a form of social capital referring to the offering of affective support and encouragement in relations to schooling (Nunez 2009; Stanton-Salazar, 2001). Five items are used to measure various forms of social capital, specifically emotional and moral support and social relationships: support from Student Affairs, having someone to confide in at the law school, support provided by student organizations, quality of relationship with faculty, and quality of relationship with other students.

¹⁰ Stereotype concern variables were run as categorical as well, and the findings are the same. For interpretation and simplicity, I decided to keep the variables binary.

All sources of social capital variables are dichotomous.¹¹ Students were asked to agree or disagree with the statement “There is someone at my law school that I can share my personal worries and fears,” to indicate “During the current school year, to what extent has student and advising services (e.g. student affairs staff, dean of students, diversity and inclusion officers, and others) provided personal support during difficult times?” and to select “During the current school year, which student organizations that you actively participated in provided personal support during difficult times?” The variable for having someone at the law school they confide in, one equals if respondents agreed with the statement. The student affairs support variable equals one if respondents indicated they received support. The student organization variable one equals if respondents noted they received support from any student organization they participated in.

The relationship questions are continuous variables that asked students to rate the quality of their relationships with faculty and other students on a scale of one, “unfriendly, unsupportive, sense of alienation” and seven, “friendly, supportive, sense of belonging.” The quality of relationship variables were made into dichotomous variables where one equals students who rated their relationships between five and seven. These are the five variables that measure sources of support or resources—social capital—for navigating law school and for building students’ interpersonal and/or professional networks. Additionally, demographic, enrollment status, past performance, and school controls are included in the analyses.

¹¹ Variables were run as categorical as well, and the findings are the same. For interpretation and simplicity, I decided to keep the variables dichotomous.

Race-Gender

The primary focus of this study is to examine the experiences of minoritized law students at the intersection of race and gender. Race/ethnicity and gender information were self-reported by students and by law schools. For students who did not indicate their race/ethnicity or gender, I substituted the race or gender reported to LSSSE by their law schools. This study specifically analyzes sense of belonging of white men, white women, men of color, and women of color.¹² In the full analytical sample, 33% of the respondents are white men, 37% are white women, 11 % are men of color, and 19% are women of color (see Table 1).

Controls

Demographic, past performance, enrollment status, and school controls measures are included. LSSSE explicitly asks students if they are first-generation college students, which is defined as neither parent/guardian holds a bachelor's degree. First-generation status is a dichotomous variable where respondents who are first-generation college students is set to one. In the sample, 31% of the respondents are first generation college students. I control for how life course can impact how students experience and navigate law school using age. Experiencing legal education while transitioning into a new country and education system brings its own set of needs and nuances. Therefore, I also control for whether or not students self-identified as international or a foreign national. Moreover, I control for past academic performance that can affect how students perceive their personal abilities to succeed in law school. Specifically, I

¹² I acknowledge that experiences at the intersection of race and gender are more nuanced than this broad grouping of race and gender. The sample size limits my ability to explore the specific experiences of various groups of men and women of color. It is critical and essential to do more research to understand the needs and experiences of Indigenous, Black, Asian, Latinx, and other women of color.

control for LSAT performance, The LSAT scores are provided by each individual law school and not self-reported by the respondents.

Experiences may also vary based on their enrollment status. I control for fulltime status because students in a part-time program will not be exposed to the same environments and dynamics as students who spend most of their time at the school. Most J.D. programs take 3 years to complete; however, for those in a part-time program, it may take longer. Therefore, I control for class status (1L, 2L, 3L, and 4L). Moreover, the first-year experience is one of the toughest students will endure; therefore, it is important to account for varying experiences across classes. Transfer student status is also controlled because transfer students have the added task of transiting into a new school a year after everyone else has settled into their schools.

Lastly, the focus of this dissertation is to examine individual-level effects. In order to protect the anonymity of the schools, no other information, such as geographic location, school size, and type of school (private versus public, online programs, and religious institutions), could not be provided by LSSSE. Therefore, there were not enough variables to use to control every possible school-level factor.¹³ However, LSSSE provided an arbitrary school identity number variables. The school variables absorb all unobserved characteristics of the schools. As a result,

¹³ I ran the models using three school-level covariates. From the school id variable, I created aggregated variables for school diversity and school selectivity. School diversity was measured by percentage of respondents in each school who reported being only white. School selectivity is measured by calculating the median LSAT score for each individual school. In addition to school diversity and school selectivity, each school is assigned an aggregated law school environment score by using LSSSE's law school environment scale. The five items used for the law school environment scores asked how much (very little, some, quite a bit, and very much) their law schools emphasized the following forms of support, contact, and help: "Providing the support you need to help you succeed academically," "Encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, sexual orientation, and racial or ethnic backgrounds," "Helping you cope with your non-academic responsibilities (work, family, etc.)," "Providing the support you need to thrive socially," and "Providing the financial counseling you need to afford your education." The higher the law school environment score, the more students perceived a supportive, encouraging, positive law school environment. The outcomes with these three school-level covariates were the same as the outcomes presented in this study with just the school id variables.

including the school dummy variables is the best approach for isolating individual-level factors with precision.

Analytic Strategy

Since the main outcome of interest — sense of belonging — is categorical, ordered logistic regression models¹⁴ are used to estimate students' sense of belonging.¹⁵ Given that respondents are from 17 law schools, concerns about inflated standard errors are addressed by using clustered standard errors for all models. Because the various forms of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns are dichotomous, binary logistic regressions are used to examine to what extent they vary by race-gender. Base and Full models are presented. Base Models only regress sense of belonging, perceived experiences of bias, or stereotype concerns on race-gender. Full Models include other independent variables of interest along with demographic, past performance, enrollment status, and school id controls. Average marginal effects (AMEs) are presented for each regressed model.¹⁶

For ease of interpretation predicted probabilities and average marginal effects are presented throughout the paper. Average marginal effects are estimated by calculating a marginal effect— the difference between the predicted probabilities for each group — for every

¹⁴ Proportional odds assumptions or parallel regression assumptions are tested for each model. Assumptions are not violated. Multinomial regression models replicated the same findings.

¹⁵ Various studies examining LSSSE data use continuous dependent variables and multilevel regression models. However, unlike studies that examine data from 25 schools to 67 schools, this study is examining respondents from 17 schools. A multilevel modeling approach can protect against inflated standard errors. However, Bryan and Jenkins (2016) caution against the use of multilevel modeling with smaller sample sizes, which in their case was fewer than 25 countries. They found that in instances with a large sample size of individuals within each country but a small number of countries, analysts can reliably estimate individual-level effects but the estimates of parameters summarizing country effects are likely to be unreliable. Therefore, it was best to use clustered standard errors to address the standard errors concern.

¹⁶ Only parts of the models are presented in this paper for practical purposes. The average marginal effects of the full ordered logistic regression models from this study are found in the Appendix.

observation in the sample, instead of fixing the other independent variables at means (Williams, 2012), and then averaging these effects (Long & Freese, 2014; Mize, 2019). For example, in this paper an AME can be interpreted as the effect of changing the value from not perceiving experiences of bias discrimination or unfair treatment to perceiving experiences of bias discrimination or unfair treatment on the probability of a low sense of belonging, holding all remaining variables at observed values. In other words, AMEs illustrate the difference between perceiving experiences of bias discrimination or unfair treatment and not perceiving experiences of bias discrimination or unfair treatment on students' sense of belonging. This method is helpful for comparing groups.

I proceed in three steps. First, after reviewing descriptive statistics (Table 2), I present overall AMEs and predicted probabilities for race-gender (Table 3 and Figure 1) and overall AMEs for perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns (Table 3). Comparing the magnitudes of these effects allows me to answer the first research question— to what extent does sense of belonging vary by race-gender? What influence do perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns have on students' sense of belonging? And to what extent do perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns influence the relationship between race-gender and sense of belonging? Second, I present overall AMEs and average predicted probabilities of race-gender (Table 4 and Figure 2). Comparing the magnitudes of these effects allows me to answer the second research question—to what extent do perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns vary by race-gender?

Third, I present overall AMEs for sources of social capital calculated from a series of ordered logistic regressions that include variables of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concern (Tables 5), along with controls. Additionally, to examine whether the various sources of

social capital influence the effect of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns on sense of belonging, an interaction term between each variable of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns and sources of social capital is added). The marginal effects (or, first differences) of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns by sources of social capital are computed from this model, determining if the effect of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns on sense of belonging differ significantly by students' use of social capital (Table 6). Comparing the magnitudes of these effects (Table 5) and first differences (Table 6) allows me to answer the third research question— what influence do various sources of social capital, specifically support from Student Affairs, having someone to confide in at the law school, quality of relationship with faculty, quality of relationship with other students, and support provided by student organizations, have on students' sense of belonging? And how do these sources of social capital influence the effects of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns on students' sense of belonging?

Lastly, for a clear and concise explanation of the findings, the analyses in this paper are limited to the probability of a low sense of belonging, but the full ordered logistic regression models are presented in the Appendix. The story told by analyzing low sense of belonging is similar to the examination of moderate sense of belonging, and the same story is revealed when examining high sense of belonging, except in the inverse.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics in Table 2 show the majority of students across race-gender groups have a moderate sense of belonging. However, more women of color have a low sense of belonging compared to the other groups. Additionally, women of color have the highest rates of

perceived experiences of bias. Women of color have the highest rate of self-reporting experiences of bias, discrimination, or unfair treatment at their law school at 23%, which is significantly higher than white men at 9% ($t = -6.85$; $p < .001$), white women at 12% ($t = -5.66$; $p < .001$), and men of color at 13% ($t = -3.48$; $p < .01$). Similarly, women of color have the highest rate of self-reporting experiences of not being taken seriously in class at 29%, which is significantly higher than white men at 9% ($t = -10.10$; $p < .001$), white women at 17% ($t = -5.68$; $p < .001$), and men of color at 13% ($t = -5.36$; $p < .001$). Moreover, white women have a significantly higher rate of self-reporting experiences of not being taken seriously than white men ($t = -4.92$; $p < .001$). These descriptive statistics show significant race-gender differences in law school experiences along race-gender.

The Effects of Perceived Experiences of Bias and Stereotype Concerns on Students' Sense of Belonging in Law School

Probability of a Low Sense of Belonging: Who Feels a Sense of Belonging in Law School?

Table 3 shows that there is evidence of significant race-gender differences in students' sense of belonging, even after including controls.¹⁷ White women and women of color are significantly more likely than white men to have a low sense of belonging in law school. Specifically, in Table 3 Model 2, AMEs—the average white female predicted probability minus average white male predicted probability— reveal that white women have a probability of a low sense of belonging that is 2 percentage points ($p < .01$) higher than white men. Women of color have a probability of a low sense of belonging that is 6 percentage points ($p < .001$) higher than white men.

¹⁷ Model 1 shows the base model where sense of belonging is only regressed on race-gender. No controls are included in Model 1. The race-gender difference is significant even before the inclusion of controls.

Figure 1 shows that women of color are significantly more likely to have a low sense of belonging not only compared to white men ($p < .001$), but also compared to white women ($p < .05$), and men of color ($p < .01$). Specifically, the calculation of marginal effects reveal that women of color have a predicted probability of a low sense of belonging of 18%, which is significantly higher compared to white men's 13%, white women's 15%, and men of color's 14%. The same patterns are observed when examining the predicted probabilities for a moderate sense of belonging and a high sense of belonging. Likewise, white women differ significantly from white men across in their probability of a moderate sense of belonging and a high sense of belonging (see Appendix).

Overall, these findings indicate that white women and women of color significantly differ from white men in their experiences, but that women of color also significantly differ from white women and men of color in their predicted probability of a low sense of belonging.

The Effects of Perceived Experiences of Bias and Stereotype Concerns on Sense of Belonging

Model 3 in Table 3 shows estimates of how exactly perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns influence sense of belonging after taking into account race-gender and demographic, enrollment status, past performance, and school controls. First, it should be noted that while transfer student status and upper-class year (3L and 4L) are significantly related to sense of belonging, they do not mitigate the relationship between perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns and sense of belonging (see Appendix). However, it appears that perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns explain away the significant effect of race-gender on sense of belonging. Compared to Models 1 and 2, the differences between white women and white men and between women of color and white men are no longer significant in Model 3. Therefore, these patterns suggest that perceived experiences of bias and stereotype

concerns partially explain the race-gender differences in students' sense of belonging observed earlier. In other words, this finding suggests that white women and women of color have a higher probability of a low sense of belonging in part because of their perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns.

All forms of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns are significantly and adversely associated with sense of belonging. Students who perceived experiences bias discrimination, or unfair treatment at their law school have a probability of a low sense of belonging that is 8 percentage points ($p < .05$) higher than students who do not. Students who perceived not being taken serious in class also have a probability of a low sense of belonging that is 4 percentage points ($p < .05$) higher than students who do not perceive not being taken seriously. Those who indicate worrying that their professors underestimate their intelligence have a probability of a low sense of belonging that is 12 percentage points ($p < .001$) higher than students who do not worry. Students who agree that others in their school would be surprised to see them succeed have a probability of a low sense of belonging that is 7 percentage points ($p < .001$) higher than students who do not. Similar patterns are seen in the probabilities of a moderate sense of belonging and a high sense of belonging (see Appendix). Overall, these findings indicate that all measures of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns significantly and adversely influence students' sense of belonging.

The Probability of Experiencing of Bias and Stereotype Concerns by Race-Gender

Table 4 shows that both in the base and full models, perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns are patterned by race-gender. While age, LSAT score, fulltime status, and class year controls are significantly related to students' perceived experiences of bias and

stereotype concerns, they do not explain away the significant differences based on race-gender (see Appendix).

The full models in Table 4 show that minoritized students are more likely to perceive experiences of bias than their white male classmates. Specifically, women of color have a probability of experiencing bias, discrimination, or unfair treatment at their law school that is 13 percentage points ($p < .001$) higher than white men. White women have a probability of not being taken seriously that is 8 percentage points ($p < .001$) higher than white men. Men of color have a probability of not being taken seriously that is 5 percentage points ($p < .05$) higher than white men.¹⁸ However, women of color have a probability of not being taken seriously that is poignantly 22 percentage points higher than white men.

Minoritized students are also more likely to report stereotype concerns than their white male classmates. White women have a probability of worrying that their professors underestimate their intelligence that is 7 percentage points ($p < .001$) higher than white men. While women of color have a probability of worrying that their professors underestimate their intelligence that is 13 percentage points ($p < .001$) than white men. White women have a probability of reporting that others in their school would be surprised to see them succeed that is 3 percentage points ($p < .05$) higher than white men. Men of color have a probability of reporting that others in their school would be surprised to see them succeed that is 7 percentage points ($p < .01$) higher than white men. Women of color have a probability of reporting that others in

¹⁸ It should be noted that the inclusion of demographic, enrollment status, past performance, and school controls made the difference between men of color and white men significant.

their school would be surprised to see them succeed that is 12 percentage points ($p < .001$) higher than white men.

Figure 2 visually shows that across the board women of color have the highest predicted probabilities of perceived experiences of bias compared to not just white men as seen in Table 3, but to everyone else. Specifically, women of color have a predicted probability of perceiving experiences of bias, discrimination, or unfair treatment at their law school of 22%, which is significantly higher than white women's 12%, ($p < .001$) and men of color's 12%, ($p < .01$). And women of color have a higher predicted probability of not being taken seriously of 30%, which is significantly higher than white men's 8% ($p < .001$), and men of color's 13% ($p < .001$).

Similarly, women of color have the highest predicted probabilities of stereotype concerns compared to everyone else. Specifically, women of color have a predicted probability of worrying that their professors underestimate their intelligence of 34%, which is significantly higher than white women's 28% ($p < .01$) and men of color's 24% ($p < .01$). And, women of color have a predicted probability of reporting that others in their school would be surprised to see them succeed of 27%, which is significantly higher than white women's 18% ($p < .001$), and men of color's 22% ($p < .05$). While minoritized students are more likely to experience bias and stereotype concerns than white men, the most poignant and consistent finding across all models is the alarmingly high predicted probabilities for women of color compared to white men, white women, and men of color.

The Influence of Social Capital on Sense of Belonging and on the Effects of Perceived Experiences of Bias and Stereotype Concerns

Tables 5 shows AMEs calculated from a series of ordered logistic regressions predicting sense of belonging. Model 1 is the base model predicting sense of belonging with all perceived experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, race-gender, and control variables. Models 2 through 6

build on each other by including one source of social capital at a time. Model 6 is the full model with all sources of social capital included. Table 5 specifically shows AMEs for low sense of belonging.¹⁹

Even with the inclusion of all sources of social capital, they all remain significantly predictive of sense of belonging. Specifically, based on Model 6, students with support provided by student affairs have a probability of a low sense of belonging that is 3.8 percentage points ($p < .001$) lower than students without it. Having someone to confide in at the law school is also important for students' sense of belonging. Students with someone they can confide in have a probability of a low sense of belonging that is 5.9 percentage points ($p < .001$) lower than students without someone. Support from student organizations are also important, as prior literature on law school shows (e.g. Deo 2013). Specifically, students with support provided by student organizations have a probability of a low sense of belonging that is 4.3 percentage points ($p < .001$) lower than students without it. Relationships, as Green et al. (2020) found, significantly matter for students' sense of belonging. Specifically, students with high quality relationships with their faculty have a probability of a low sense of belonging that is 9.8 percentage points ($p < .001$) lower than students with lower quality relationships with their faculty. However, students' relationships with their classmates are especially important to their sense of belonging. Specifically, students with high quality relationships with their peers have a probability of a low sense of belonging that is 14.9 percentage points ($p < .001$) lower than students lower quality relationship with their peers.

¹⁹ There were too many models to present in one table. Therefore, I divided them into the three sense of belonging categories, but only show the table predicting low sense of belonging in this paper.

The inclusion of the sources of social capital also had two interesting effects across all levels of sense of belonging. First, with the inclusion of each source of social capital, there was a decrease in the average marginal effect of each perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concern variable. In fact, in Model 6, the inclusion of all sources of social capital explains away the difference between students who agreed and students who do not, making it no longer significant. This suggests that sources of social capital are partially buffering the effects of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns, but they do not explain away the effects of discrimination or bias, not being taken serious in class, and worrying that faculty underestimates their intellectual capacity.

Secondly, the inclusion of the sources of social capital influenced the relationship of race-gender and sense of belonging. In Model 1, perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns mitigated the effect of race-gender on sense of belonging (see Table 3). However, after the inclusion of the second source of social capital in Model 2 in Table 5, a significant effect of race-gender reappeared. Specifically, from Model 2 through Model 6, the difference between white women and white men and women of color and white men are significant again. White women and women of color have a significantly lower probability of a high sense of belonging and a significantly higher probability of a low and moderate sense of belonging than white men. This finding suggests that these sources of social capital are important to white women and women of color's sense of belonging, especially when confronting marginalizing perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns.

Additionally, Table 6 shows that various sources of social capital do in fact significantly decrease the effects of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns on students' probability of a low sense of belonging. Specifically, students who reported experiencing

discrimination, bias or unfair treatment have a predicted probability of a low sense of belonging of 27.2% if they reported not having support provided by students organizations. However, students who reported having support from student organizations have a predicted probability of a low sense of belonging of 13.6%, which is a significant 13.6% decrease ($p < .01$). Similarly, there is a significant 27% and 16.2% decrease in students' predicted probability of a low sense of belonging if students have a higher quality of relationships with faculty ($p < .001$) and peers ($p < .001$), respectively. However, the effect of experiencing discrimination, bias, or unfair treatment does not differ between students with support provided by students affairs or with someone to confide in at the law school and students' without support provided by student affairs or someone to confide in.

Among students who reported experiencing not being taken seriously in class, support provided by student affairs and relationships with faculty and peers have a significant effect on their predicted probability of a low sense of belonging. Specifically, students with support from student affairs have a predicted probability of a low sense of belonging that is 8.2% lower than that of students without support from student affairs ($p < .001$). Students with high quality relationships with faculty and peers have a predicted probability of a low sense of belonging that is 10.1% ($p < .05$) and 26.1% ($p < .001$), respectively, lower than students with lower rated quality of relationships with faculty and peers. However, the effect of experiencing not being taken seriously in class does not differ between students with support provided by students organizations or with someone to confide in at the law school and students' without support provided by student organizations or someone to confide in.

All sources of social capital significantly influence the effect of students' worry that their professors underestimate their intelligence on the probability of a low sense of belonging.

Specifically, among students who worry, students with support from student affairs and student organizations have a predicted probability of a low sense of belonging that is 6.9% ($p < .001$) and 5.9% ($p < .01$), respectively, lower than that of students without support from student affairs or student organizations. Students with someone to confide in have a predicted probability of a low sense of belonging that is 9.7% lower than students' without someone ($p < .001$). Students with high quality relationships with faculty and peers have a predicted probability of a low sense of belonging that is 16.5% ($p < .001$) and 21.2% ($p < .001$), respectively, lower than students with lower rated quality of relationships with faculty and peers.

Lastly, all sources of social capital, except having someone to confide in, significantly influence the effect of stereotype concerns measured by knowing that others in their school would be surprised to see them succeed, on students' predicted probability of a low sense of belonging. Specifically, students with support from student affairs and student organizations have a predicted probability of a low sense of belonging that is 6.4% ($p < .01$) and 4.5% ($p < .05$), respectively, lower than that of students without support from student affairs or student organizations. Students with high quality relationships with faculty and peers have a predicted probability of a low sense of belonging that is 8.4% ($p < .01$) and 28.5% ($p < .001$), respectively, lower than students with lower rated quality of relationships with faculty and peers. These findings make sense given that this specific stereotype concern is based on students perceptions of what others think of them.

Overall, Table 5 shows that support from student affairs, having someone to confide in at the law school, support provided by student organizations, higher quality of relationship with faculty, and higher quality of relationship with peers will all significantly decrease the probability of having a low sense of belonging. And Table 6 shows that getting support from

student affairs, having someone to confide in, findings support in student organizations, and having high quality relationships with faculty and their peers are some of the mechanisms by which students can contend with marginalizing experiences of bias and stereotype concerns while negotiating their sense of belonging.

Conclusion

Using the Law School Survey of Student Engagement, studies in this dissertation provided evidence that sense of belonging is patterned by race-gender, which is associated with students' actual experiences in school observed in their perceived experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, and the usage of various sources of social capital for support. Moreover, the studies show that the effects of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns on students' sense of belonging can be mitigated by tapping into various sources of social capital. This dissertation does not exhaust every way students' affected by perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns are able to persist in law school, but it provides insight on some of the major factors of emotional and moral support. These findings have important implications for our theoretical and practical understanding of how professional education is experienced by minoritized students.

Law schools are not immune to the effects of race, gender, and other social stratifying mechanisms in and outside the classroom. The significant raceXgender differences found throughout this dissertation highlight the vulnerability and marginalization of women of color in legal education. Although these perceptions and concerns are self-reported by individuals from 17 different law schools, in the aggregate, the findings suggest there is a pattern of a social experience that women of color likely have in common in law schools throughout the country. Therefore, to the extent these perceived experiences bias and stereotype concerns are captured in

this study, this raceXgender difference should be taken seriously in the ongoing conversation surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion in legal education

Moreover, this dissertation echoes the words of Justice Sotomayor in *Schuetz v. Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, Integration and Immigrant Rights and Fight for Equality By Any Means Necessary (BAMN)*. “Race matters because the slights, the snickers, the silent judgments that reinforce that most crippling of thoughts: ‘I do not belong here.’” The quality of relationships with fellow peers significantly affects students’ sense of belonging in law school. In sociology, sense of belonging has a cognitive and an affective component (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). At the cognitive level, *judgments* of belonging stems from the accumulation of information about their experiences within the group as a whole and *with other group members*. At the affective level, *feelings* reflect the individual’s personal appraisal of their experiences within the groups as a whole and *with other group members* (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). In this study, the subjective evaluation of students’ relationships with their peers—other group members— plays a significant role in how exclusionary forces— perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns— impact their sense of belonging. Therefore, suggesting that fostering and facilitating an inclusive and collaborative culture is particularly crucial for minoritized students.

It is imperative to understand that race and gender are not restricted to students’ personal lives, or topics for certain courses, like constitutional law. These are social constructs that affect our students’ wellbeing (e.g. Pavalko et al., 2003), how they learn, and how they interact with others, including faculty. Deans, administrators, faculty, clinicians, career advisors, student affairs professionals, and future employers must take these findings into account in policies, strategic planning, hiring (Deo et al., 2010), pedagogy, mentorship, academic support programming, teaching of legal ethics, experiential learning opportunities, and access to other

professional development opportunities, such as researching with faculty, clinics, internships, journal, and moot court.

In order to systemically address inequality, it must first be observed and recorded. Further work is needed to examine how often do students who perceive that they are targets of bias leave law school? And at what point in their law school career do they leave? How do various sources of social capital affect retention? How does sense of belonging influence graduation rates across specific race-gender groups? How do perceptions of experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, and a low sense of belonging influence students' career aspirations and career trajectory after law school? How do these findings vary when we examine diversity within women of color and men of color? Why are the experiences of men of color different from women of color? The answers to these questions and more are important not just for the recruitment and retention of a diverse student body in law school, they are crucial for the future of the legal profession. As a gateway to one of the most elite professions in the country, the fate of the profession and more broadly access to justice (King et al., 2010) starts long before lawyers are sworn – it is molded by their professional socialization experience in law school.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics for Full Sample (N=2,527)

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Sense of Belonging				
Low	.15	.36	0	1
Moderate	.54	.50	0	1
High	.31	.46	0	1
Minoritized Status				
White Men	.33		0	1
White Women	.37		0	1
Men of Color	.11		0	1
Women of Color	.19		0	1
Demographic Controls				
First-Generation College Student	.31		0	1
International Student	.04		0	1
Age: Young than 30 years old	.81		0	1
Past Performance Control				
LSAT Score	153.95		135	174
Enrollment Status Controls				
Fulltime Status	.87		0	1
Transferred Student	.03		0	1
Class				
1L	.35		0	1
2L	.32		0	1
3L	.30		0	1
4L	.02		0	1
Perceived Experience of Bias				
I have experienced <i>bias, discrimination,</i> or unfair treatment at my law school	.13		0	1
I experienced not being taken <i>seriously</i> in a class	.16		0	1
Stereotype Concerns				
In class, I <i>worry</i> that my professor underestimates my intelligence	.26		0	1
Others in my school would be <i>surprised</i> to see me succeed	.19		0	1
Social Capital				
Student Affairs Provided Support	0.49		0	1
Not Alone: Have Someone to Confide In	0.84		0	1
Quality of Relationship with Faculty	0.81		0	1
Quality of Relationship with Other Students	0.80		0	1
Student Organization Provided Support	0.46		0	1

Table 2 Means for Belonging, Perceived Experiences of Bias, and Stereotype Concerns by Race-Gender Subsamples

	White Men (N=829)		White Women (N=941)		Men of Color (N=279)		Women of Color (N=478)	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Sense of Belonging								
Low	.13	.34	.14	.35	.14	.34	.19	.39
Moderate	.52	.50	.56	.50	.54	.50	.54	.50
High	.35	.48	.30	.46	.32	.47	.26	.44
Perceived Experiences of Bias								
I have experienced <i>bias</i> , <i>discrimination</i> , or unfair treatment at my law school	.09	.29	.11	.32	.13	.33	.23	.42
I experienced not being taken <i>seriously</i> in a class	.09	.28	.16	.37	.13	.33	.29	.46
Stereotype Concerns								
In class, I <i>worry</i> that my professor underestimates my intelligence	.20	.40	.28	.45	.24	.43	.36	.48
Others in my school would be <i>surprised</i> to see me succeed	.14	.35	.18	.38	.22	.42	.29	.45

Table 3: Average Marginal Effects on Low Sense of Belonging Across Race-Gender, Perceived Experiences of Bias, and Stereotype Concerns (N=2,527)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Minoritized Status (versus White Men)			
White Women	.02**	.02**	.01
Men of Color	.01	.01	.00
Women of Color	.06***	.06***	.01
Perceived Experiences of Bias			
I have experienced <i>bias, discrimination</i> , or unfair treatment at my law school			.08**
I experienced not being taken <i>seriously</i> in a class			.04*
Stereotype Concerns			
In class, I <i>worry</i> that my professor underestimates my intelligence			.12***
Others in my school would be <i>surprised</i> to see me succeed			.07***

Notes: Average marginal effects were calculated from ordered logistic regressions predicting sense of belonging. Model 1 is the base model with no controls. Model 2 includes school controls. Model 3 is the full model with all variables and demographic, enrollment status, past performance, and school controls; Only estimates for low sense of belonging are presented. Full models presented in the Appendix.

*** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

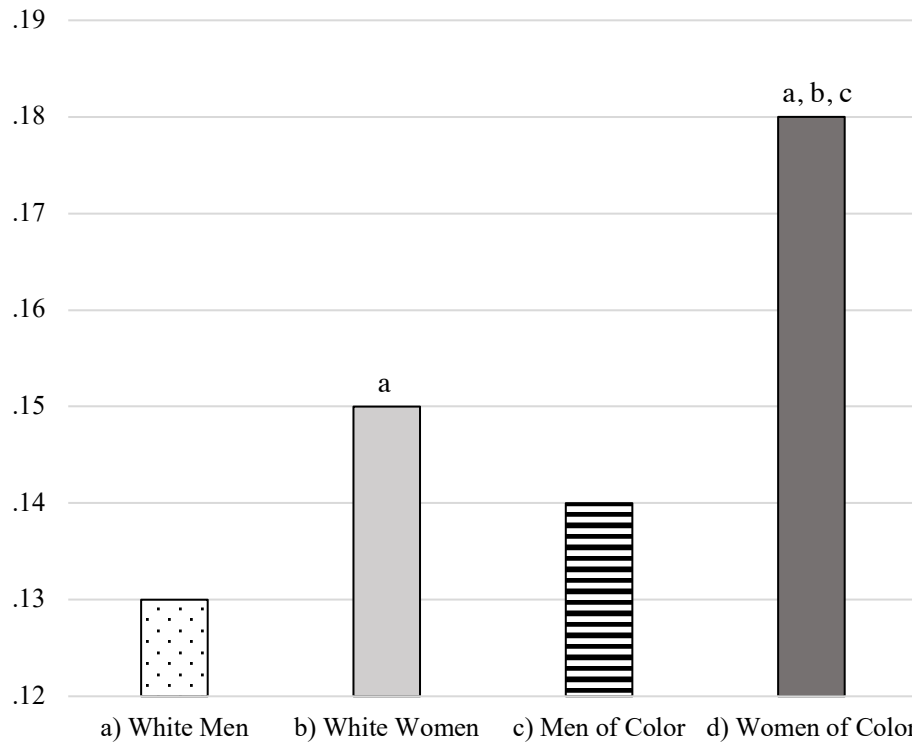
Table 4: Average Marginal Effects on Perceived Experiences of Bias and Stereotype Concerns Across Race-Gender (N=2,527)

	Perceived Experiences of Bias			
	I have experienced <i>bias, discrimination, or unfair treatment at my law school</i>		I experienced not being taken <i>seriously</i> in a class	
	Base	Full	Base	Full
Minoritized Status (versus White Men)				
White Women	.02	.02	.08***	.08***
Men of Color	.03	.03	.04	.05*
Women of Color	.14***	.13***	.21***	.22***
	Stereotype Concerns			
	In class, I <i>worry</i> that my professor underestimates my intelligence		Others in my school would be <i>surprised</i> to see me succeed	
	Base	Full	Base	Full
Minoritized Status (versus White Men)				
White Women	.08***	.07***	.04**	.03*
Men of Color	.04	.03	.08**	.07**
Women of Color	.16***	.13***	.15***	.12***

Notes: Average marginal effects were calculated from binary logistic regressions predicted each form of perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns. Full models are presented in the Appendix.

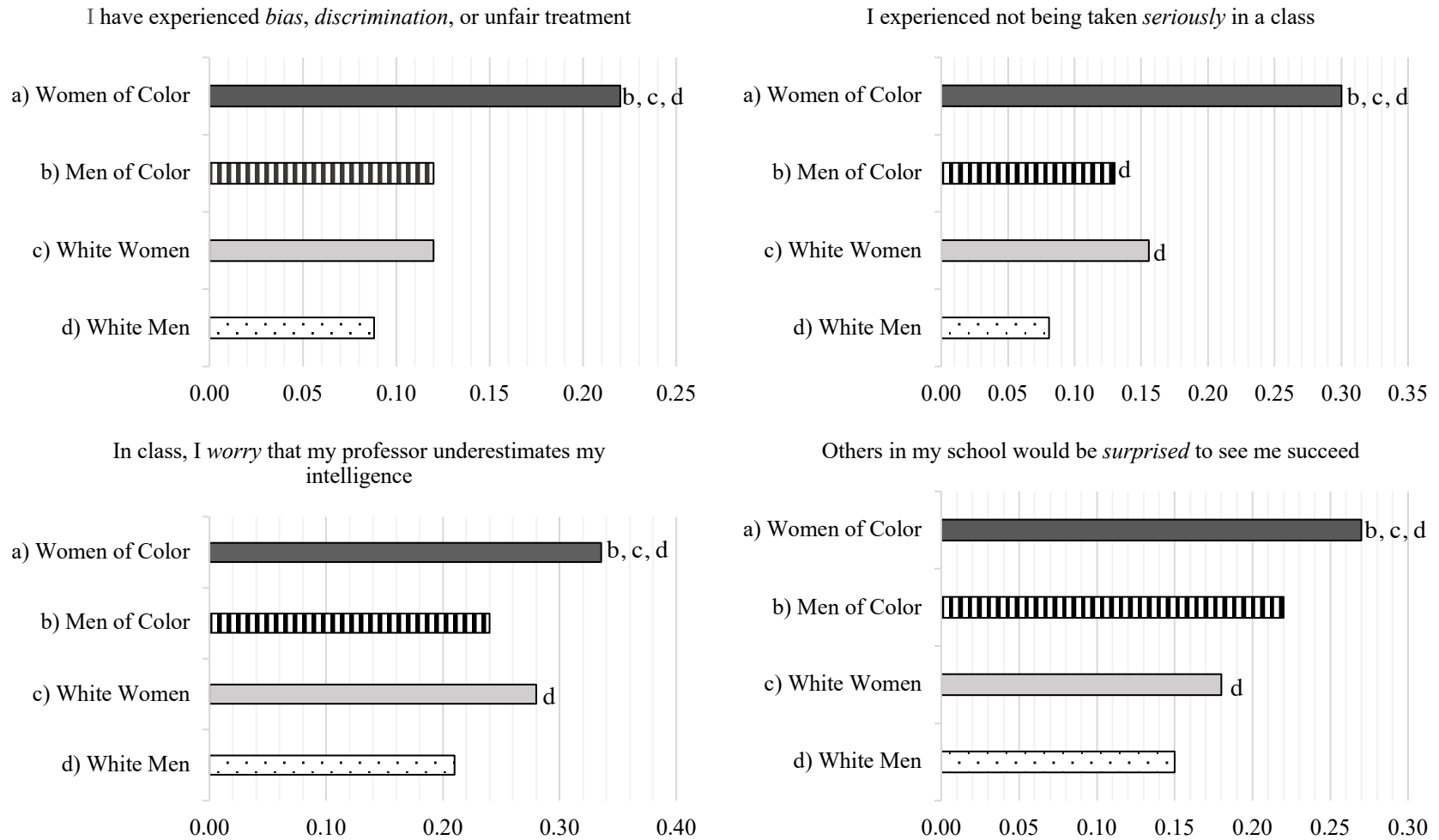
*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Figure 1: Average Predicted Probabilities for Low Sense of Belonging by Race-Gender (N= 2,527)



Notes: The predicted probabilities were calculated from ordered logistic regression predicting sense of belonging, including all control variables, but excluding variables for perceived experiences of bias and stereotype concerns. Only outcomes for low sense of belonging are presented. Letters denote group differences that are statistically significant by $p < 0.5$.

Figure 2: Average Predicted Probabilities of Perceived Experiences of Bias and Stereotype Concerns



Notes: The predicted probabilities were calculated from the binary logistic regressions predicting each variable of perceived experiences of bias and negative stereotype concerns, including all control variables. Letters denote group differences that are statistically significant by $p < 0.5$.

Table 5: Average Marginal Effects on Low Sense of Belonging Across Sources of Social Capital (N=2,527)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Minoritized Status (versus White Men)						
White Women	.01	.01	.02*	.02*	.03**	.02**
Men of Color	-.00	.00	.01	.01	.01	.00
Women of Color	.01	.02	.03*	.04**	.04**	.03*
Sources of Social Capital						
Student Affairs Support		-.08***	-.07***	-.06***	-.04***	-.04***
Have someone to talk to at the law school			-.12***	-.12***	-.09***	-.06***
Student Org. Support				-.06***	-.05***	-.04***
High Quality of Relationship with Faculty					-.15***	-.10***
High Quality of Relationship with Peers						-.15***
Perceived Experiences of Bias						
I have experienced <i>bias, discrimination</i> , or unfair treatment at my law school	.08**	.08**	.09**	.09***	.08***	.06***
I experienced not being taken <i>seriously</i> in a class	.04*	.03*	.03*	.04**	.03**	.02*
Stereotype Concerns						
In class, I <i>worry</i> that my professor underestimates my intelligence	.12***	.12***	.10***	.10***	.07***	.06***
Others in my school would be <i>surprised</i> to see me succeed	.07***	.06***	.05**	.05**	.03*	.01
Demographic Controls						
First-Generation College Student	.02	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01
International Student	.03	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04
Age: Young than 30 years old	-.01	-.02	-.01	-.01	-.01	-.00
Past Performance Control						
LSAT Score	.00	.00	.00	-.00	.00	.00
Enrollment Status Controls						
Fulltime Status	-.01	.00	.00	.01	.01	.00
Transferred Student	.06**	.06**	.05**	.05**	.03	.02
Class (versus 1L)						
2L	.01	.01	.01	.01	.01	.00
3L	.03*	.03	.03	.02	.02	.01
4L	.05	.05	.05	.05	.05	.04
Observations	2,527	2,527	2,527	2,527	2,527	2,527

Notes: Average marginal effects are calculated from Ordered Logistic Regressions; all models include law school controls. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.5

Table 6: Average Predictive Probabilities of a Low Sense of Belonging: Influence of Sources of Social Capital on the Effects of Perceived Experiences of Bias and Stereotype Concerns (N= 2,527)

		Pr (Low Sense of Belonging)	First Differences
Perceived Experiences of Bias			
Experienced <i>bias, discrimination</i> , or unfair treatment	Student Affairs Support	.22	.01
	No Student Affairs Support	.21	
	Have someone to talk to at the law school	.21	
	Do not have someone to talk to at the law school	.24	-.03
	Student Org. Support	.14	
	No Student Org. Support	.27	-.14**
	Higher Quality of Relationship with Faculty	.16	
	Lower Quality of Relationship with Faculty	.43	-.27***
	Higher Quality of Relationship with Peers	.17	
	Lower Quality of Relationship with Peers	.33	-.16***
Experienced not being taken <i>seriously</i> in a class	Student Affairs Support	.11	-.08***
	No Student Affairs Support	.20	
	Have someone to talk to at the law school	.15	
	Do Not Have someone to talk to at the law school	.20	-.05
	Student Org. Support	.16	
	No Student Org. Support	.16	-.00
	Higher Quality of Relationship with Faculty	.13	
	Lower Quality of Relationship with Faculty	.23	-.10*
	Higher Quality of Relationship with Peers	.09	
	Lower Quality of Relationship with Peers	.35	-.26***

Notes: The average predicted probabilities were calculated from the Ordered Logistic Regression predicting sense of belonging, including perceived experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, sources of social capital, and interaction term variables, as well as all controls. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table 6 (continued)

		Pr (Low Sense of Belonging)	First Differences
Stereotype Concerns			
In class, I <i>worry</i> that my professor underestimates my intelligence	Student Affairs Support	.15	
	No Student Affairs Support	.22	-.07***
	Have someone to talk to at the law school	.17	
	Do Not Have someone to talk to at the law school	.27	-.10***
	Student Org. Support	.15	
	No Student Org. Support	.21	-.06**
	Higher Quality of Relationship with Faculty	.15	
	Lower Quality of Relationship with Faculty	.31	-.17***
	Higher Quality of Relationship with Peers	.13	
	Lower Quality of Relationship with Peers	.34	-.21***
Others in my school would be <i>surprised</i> to see me succeed	Student Affairs Support	.12	
	No Student Affairs Support	.19	-.06**
	Have someone to talk to at the law school	.15	
	Do Not Have someone to talk to at the law school	.19	-.04
	Student Org. Support	.13	
	No Student Org. Support	.18	-.05*
	Higher Quality of Relationship with Faculty	.13	
	Lower Quality of Relationship with Faculty	.22	-.08**
	Higher Quality of Relationship with Peers	.09	
	Lower Quality of Relationship with Peers	.37	-.29***

Notes: The average predicted probabilities were calculated from the Ordered Logistic Regression predicting sense of belonging, including perceived experiences of bias, stereotype concerns, sources of social capital, and interaction term variables, as well as all controls. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Appendix

Table A1: Average Marginal Effects on Sense of Belonging Across Perceived Experiences of Bias, Stereotype Concerns, and Race-Gender

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High	Low	Moderate	High
Minoritized Status (versus White Men)									
White Women	.02**	.02**	-.04**	.02**	.02**	-.04**	.01	.01	-.01
Men of Color	.01	.01	-.03	.01	.01	-.02	.00	.00	.00
Women of Color	.06***	.03***	-.09***	.06***	.03***	-.09***	.01	.01	-.02
Perceived Experiences of Bias									
I have experienced <i>bias, discrimination</i> , or unfair treatment at my law school							.08**	.03***	-.11***
I experienced not being taken <i>seriously</i> in a class							.04*	.02**	-.06*
Stereotype Concerns									
In class, I <i>worry</i> that my professor underestimates my intelligence							.12***	.05***	-.17***
Others in my school would be <i>surprised</i> to see me succeed							.07***	.03***	-.10***
Demographic Controls									
First-Generation College Student				.02*	.01*	-.03*	.02	.01	-.03
International Student				.04	.03	-.06	.03	.03	-.06
Age: Young than 30 years old				.00	.00	.00	-.01	-.01	.02
Past Performance Control									
LSAT Score				.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
Enrollment Status Controls									
Fulltime Status				.01	.01	-.01	-.01	-.01	.01
Transferred Student				.06**	.04**	-.10**	.06**	.05**	-.11**
Class (versus 1L)									
2L				.02	.01	-.03	.01	.01	-.02
3L				.03*	.02*	-.05*	.03*	.02*	-.05*
4L				.06	.03**	-.09*	.05	.03**	-.08
Observations	2,527	2,527	2,527	2,527	2,527	2,527	2,527	2,527	2,527
Clusters	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	17

Notes: These are the complete models from Table 3 in the paper. Average marginal effects calculated from Ordered Logistic Regressions. Models 2 and 3 also include school controls. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Table A2: Average Marginal Effects on Perceived Experiences of Bias and Stereotype Concerns Across Race-Gender

	Perceived Experiences of Bias			
	I have experienced <i>bias, discrimination, or unfair treatment</i>		I experienced not being taken <i>seriously</i> in a class	
	Base	Full	Base	Full
Minoritized Status (<i>versus White Men</i>)				
White Women	.02	.02	.08***	.08***
Men of Color	.03	.03	.04	.05*
Women of Color	.14***	.13***	.21***	.22***
Demographic Controls				
First-Generation College Student		.00		-.02
International Student		.01		-.01
Age: Young than 30 years old		.02		.03
Past Performance Control				
LSAT Score		.00*		.00
Enrollment Status Controls				
Fulltime Status		.10**		.09*
Transferred Student		-.02		-.02
Class (<i>versus 1L</i>)				
2L		.05**		.03
3L		.06***		.04
4L		.13*		.08
	Stereotype Concerns			
	In class, I <i>worry</i> that my professor underestimates my intelligence		Others in my school would be <i>surprised</i> to see me succeed	
	Base	Full	Base	Full
Minoritized Status (<i>versus White Men</i>)				
White Women	.08***	.07***	.04**	.03*
Men of Color	.04	.03	.08**	.07**
Women of Color	.16***	.13***	.15***	.12***
Demographic Controls				
First-Generation College Student		.02		.01
International Student		.01		.05**
Age: Young than 30 years old		.08***		.07**
Past Performance Control				
LSAT Score		-.01**		-.01***
Enrollment Status Controls				
Fulltime Status		.01		.07**
Transferred Student		-.02		-.04
Class (<i>versus 1L</i>)				
2L		.00		-.03
3L		-.04		-.03
4L		-.01		-.03
Observations	2,527	2,527	2,527	2,527
Clusters	17	17	17	17

Notes: These are the complete models from Table 4 in this paper. Average marginal effects calculated from Binary Logistic Regressions. The Full Models include school controls. *** p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05