

# Michigan Law Review

---

Volume 75  
Issue 5 Issues 5&6

---

1977

## The Alienation of Law Students

Paul D. Carrington  
*University of Michigan Law School*

James J. Conley  
*University of Michigan*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/mlr>



Part of the [Law and Society Commons](#), and the [Legal Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Paul D. Carrington & James J. Conley, *The Alienation of Law Students*, 75 MICH. L. REV. 887 (1977).  
Available at: <https://repository.law.umich.edu/mlr/vol75/iss5/6>

This Essay is brought to you for free and open access by the Michigan Law Review at University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Michigan Law Review by an authorized editor of University of Michigan Law School Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact [mlaw.repository@umich.edu](mailto:mlaw.repository@umich.edu).

# THE ALIENATION OF LAW STUDENTS

*Paul D. Carrington\* and James J. Conley\*\**

Not many years ago, as much as one-fifth of a first-year class at The University of Michigan Law School did not return for the second year.<sup>1</sup> It was a cause of regret that so much waste and frustration was associated with this non-event. Whether students failed or voluntarily withdrew, their time, money, and opportunity were lost.

One of the justifications for the very great increase in law school admission standards that has occurred in recent decades has been the reduction of such waste. As few as one in twenty first-year students now fails to complete his or her degree.<sup>2</sup> However, the result may be less favorable than this comparison suggests. Our research suggests that there is much waste that is disguised by the retention rate. Indeed, our data indicate the possibility that roughly one in seven Michigan law students now drops out emotionally and intellectually, without formally withdrawing from the school. The socializa-

---

\* Professor of Law, The University of Michigan. B.A. 1952, University of Texas; LL.B. 1955, Harvard University.—Ed.

\*\* Research Assistant, Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, The University of Michigan. Thanks are due to Professor Martin Gold of The University of Michigan's Psychology Department for technical advice at the beginning of the data analysis. Special thanks are due to Professor Donald R. Brown of the Psychology Department and the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan, and to Professor Richard O. Lempert of The University of Michigan Law School, for their suggestions at several points during the study.

1. The reduction of the dropout rate since 1950 has been quite dramatic. Registration figures for first- and second-year law students at The University of Michigan are available in vols. 1-23 of the *Journal of Legal Education*, covering the years 1948 through 1970. The statistics were gathered by the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar of the American Bar Association. The data reveal that until 1963 the academic carnage was extreme. In 1950, the second-year class was only 70% as large as the first-year class of the preceding year. In 1955, the second-year class was still only 70% the size of the first-year class of the preceding year. In 1960, the returning second-year class was 67% the size it had been upon entrance to the Law School. In 1965 and 1970, however, the second-year classes were respectively 85% and 90% the sizes of the first-year classes of the immediately preceding years. Comparative figures for 1961 through 1964 were as follows: 75%, 79%, 85%, 89%. After 1965 and up through 1970, the figures stabilized at around 90%. The early 1960s were the turning point in a major change in law school dropout rates. In this analysis, the number of admissions of new students at the second year is assumed to be insignificantly small throughout the period under consideration.

2. For example, there were 386 entering the school in 1974 and about 360 graduates in 1977, including a few transfer students.

tion process, which is key to education and links a professional school to the work of which it is a part, may simply be inoperative for these students.

We report a single study based on student responses to questionnaires.<sup>3</sup> It is far from definitive. It will be necessary to replicate it here and elsewhere, and to improve it in important respects, before our observations can be presented as firm conclusions. Yet we believe that our research is of sufficient quality and interest to merit a brief report at this time.

This study was concerned with the responses of students to a range of questions concerning the law school, the faculty, their fellow students, and themselves. We also gathered some demographic data for the purpose of learning whether attitudinal differences reflect variations in education, family background, experience, sex, class, and race.<sup>4</sup> A multivariate statistical technique, factor analysis,

3. The data collection was conducted during winter term, 1976 by the senior author in consultation with staff members of The University of Michigan's Center for Research on Learning and Teaching.

The 185 students surveyed included all students attending particular classes in Civil Procedure, Administrative Law, and Creditors' Rights. Selection was therefore not random, but was fairly representative of all students then attending The University of Michigan Law School. When basic demographic and background variables of the surveyed group were compared to the same variables for the general law school population, a close correspondence was found, thus bolstering the authors' belief in the representativeness of the surveyed group. The two upper-class courses were chosen in a deliberate attempt to diversify the type of student surveyed.

All differences and relationships discussed in this paper are statistically significant at the .05 level of confidence. The measures computed were Fisher Exact Tests or Chi Squares (when two categorical variables were involved), analysis of variance (when a categorical and a continuous variable were involved), or Pearson product-moment correlations (when two continuous variables were involved).

4. Of the 185 students in the sample, 146 (or 79%) were male, 39 (or 21%) were female. The students surveyed came from relatively affluent homes for the most part; more than half stated that during their adolescence the income of their families exceeded \$16,000/year, while only 12% of the families had incomes of less than \$8,000/year during that period.

Ancestry of the respondents broke down as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Sample</u>
White Protestant	77	42
White Catholic	65	35
Jewish	27	15
Black & Hispanic	10	6

24% of the sample had graduated from The University of Michigan's undergraduate colleges, while another 16% came from other public colleges in Michigan; 18% were from public colleges in states other than Michigan, 15% came from "prestige schools" (Ivy League, Seven Sisters, Amherst, Cal. Tech, University of Chicago,

was employed to identify and evaluate the patterns of the responses.<sup>5</sup>

## I. THE ALIENATION FACTOR

The alienation of a significant number of respondents was the single most important factor in the attitudes of the students surveyed.<sup>6</sup> In explaining what we mean by "alienation," it is important

MIT, Oberlin, Wesleyan, Williams), and 27% graduated from other private colleges. The most common undergraduate majors were as follows:

	<u>Number</u>	<u>% of Total Sample</u>
Political Science	34	18
History	33	18
Economics	20	11
English	14	8
Accounting	10	5
Philosophy	10	5
Business Administration	9	5
Psychology	8	4
Engineering	8	4
Mathematics	6	3

5. Factors were found for the items on basic attitudes and were inspected for substantive meaning. Basic attitudes included information relating to student motives for choosing a legal career, grade pressure, political reference groups, enjoyment of classes, general attitudes toward the law school and legal profession, assessment of the prevalence of certain opinions among fellow students and the law school faculty, and student motives for choosing a legal career. The four major attitudinal factors were found to be satisfaction versus dissatisfaction, liberalism versus conservatism, integration versus alienation, and sociability versus nonsociability.

The first four factors listed accounted for 40% of the total variance in the pool of attitudinal items; there was a substantial decrement in variance accounted for between the fourth and fifth principal factors. Furthermore, the factors from the fifth downward were either very difficult to interpret or obviously dependent on such extraneous elements as wording of questionnaire items. For these reasons only the first four factors were retained for rotation. Varimax through four iterations yielded a factor structure that was conceptually satisfying and represented the major trends in the attitudinal item pool. Factor scores were retained and used for an investigation of the relationship of the other variables to the four factors of basic attitudes. Most of these correlates are on the order of .2 and .3 and thus represent important but not overwhelmingly powerful relationships. In both the factor analysis and the correlational study of background factors, dichotomous variables were treated as "dummy" variables (reduced to 0-1 values).

6. Most items in the factor analysis were answered on five-point scales. The alienation factor consists of the following loadings on these items (sign of the loadings is toward the integration end of the integration versus alienation dimension):

### ALIENATION

"Michigan's law school deserves its great reputation"	.68
"I enjoy law school classes"	.65
"Other law students agree that Michigan's law school deserves its great reputation"	.53
"Michigan law students enjoy their classes"	.52
"I am uncertain about why I came to law school"	-.52
"Law school teaching is too academic, not practical enough"	-.52

to note that we are describing a trend in the attitudes expressed, not a clear-cut typology of students. The presence of one of the attitudes identified as a feature of alienation may be used with moderate success to predict the presence of other attitudes associated with alienation. Thus, the alienation factor describes an array of attitudes that if expressed together identify an alienated response. The more strongly these attitudes are expressed, the greater is the degree of alienation, resulting in a continuum ranging from total social-professional alienation on the one end to complete social-professional integration on the other.

The essential attitude of the alienated student is disinterest or disengagement. He is not hostile so much as uncaring or "turned off." He is not sure why he came to law school. He does not enjoy his classes and drastically underestimates how many of his classmates do enjoy them. He wants the material to be more concrete and practical and has no appetite for what is perceived as an academic presentation not related to his vocational needs. He does not think that The University of Michigan Law School deserves its reputation as a great institution, and he assumes that his fellow students do not respect the school much, either. He does not dislike the faculty so much as he perceives them to be uninvolved in their assigned roles. He supposes that they do not work very hard, that they are little concerned about whether students become good lawyers, and that they are selfishly motivated. The most common of all opinions held by the alienated group is indifference to the idea of law reform. The alienated student does not care whether the law school is a center for law reform efforts, does not suppose that other students are inter-

---

"Law school should be a center for law reform research and activity"	.48
"Members of the law school faculty are concerned to help students master practice"	.48
"Members of the law school faculty work hard at their jobs"	.45
"Other law school students agree that law school teaching is too academic, not practical enough"	-.44
"Michigan law students would make false statements to get financial aid from the law school"	-.41
"Other law students agree that most law school alumni earn their livings honorably"	.40
"Other law students agree that the law school should be a center for law reform research and activity"	.38
"Members of the law school faculty make contributions that are unrelated to their own careers"	.37
"The legal profession should be more exclusive to maintain high standards and protect the public"	.36
"Members of the law school faculty work actively in law reform"	.33
"Members of the law school faculty donate time and money to the Law School Fund"	.30
"Michigan law students would alter their transcripts to get a better job"	-.30

ested in such matters, and does not imagine that the law faculty are actively engaged in such activity.<sup>7</sup>

The alienated student does not value his association with fellow students and doubts that they enjoy one another's company much. In this respect, as in others, he is a very poor judge of what his peers believe. The alienated student is prone to suppose that fellow students would neglect the affairs of legal-aid clients, lie in order to acquire financial aid, or alter their transcripts to obtain better employment. He is also rather suspicious of the integrity of alumni and projects this mistrust on his fellow students.

As noted, about one Michigan law student in seven manifested a very strong tendency toward alienation. Who are the alienated? Surprisingly to us, none of the demographic factors (sex, age, ancestry, political persuasion, family type, and family income) correlate with alienation. Thus, it appears that a radical chicana from a poor, one-parent family is no more likely to be alienated than a conservative, Ivy League graduate from a stable and affluent suburban family.

It appears from our data that only one response elicited, the experience of working while in undergraduate school, correlated significantly with alienation. The working student has long been admired as the model of dedication to high purpose; can it be true that such persons are unusually cynical? We note that our data analysis is complicated by the lack of correlation between alienation and family income and between alienation and the experience of working full-time while not in school. Perhaps the findings that these economic variables are unrelated to alienation suggest that the student who works while in undergraduate school is manifesting indifference to the academic enterprise as frequently as he is fulfilling a real economic need. Thus, undergraduate students may work while in school not so much to provide for room and board as to meet the payments on a new, expensive automobile or stereo. It is not altogether astonishing if, as our data suggest, some of the latter group tend to be emotionally withdrawn from the educational process.

What are the consequences of such alienation? Our study indicates that alienated students tend to exert relatively little effort on their studies and to be rewarded with lower grades, although cause

---

7. Views favoring law reform involvement appear to be a strong social norm for law students. More than 80% of the students surveyed expressed a desire for the law school to be a center for law reform activity. Most students (70%) also expressed the opinion that the great majority of law faculty at Michigan want the school to be a center for law reform activity. The minority of students on both issues tended toward high scores on the alienation factor.

and effect may be uncertain here. Further, our data, albeit sparse, reveals that alienated students admit more frequent acts of antisocial conduct such as vandalism. We would be prepared to infer from our data that such students pose a higher than ordinary risk of cheating on law school examinations, although the data does not directly support that conclusion.

There is, of course, little in the data that demonstrates that alienated students will make alienated or ineffective lawyers, although the data indicate that the alienation of law students does extend to opinions about the alumni and the profession at large. The alienated student seems to be indifferent to the policy of preserving high professional standards, not because this state of mind is illiberal, but rather because the alienated are not much concerned about the general public. It is possible to hope that the alienated student will react differently to the "real world" of work than he does to law school, for he may find the former to be exhilarating and thus may become filled with higher aspirations and ideals. However, while this attitudinal change could occur, at least if such students find the profession to be notably more idealistic than they had supposed, we find it difficult to resist the belief that alienated students will tend to be cynical lawyers. We would even intuitively predict that a group of lawyers composed of former students with factor scores on the alienation end of the continuum would be a significantly greater menace to their clients and others than would a group composed of persons who had been socially and professionally integrated while in law school.

Focusing on the immediate consequence of alienation, we can say with greater confidence that the presence of much alienation in law students does detract from the quality of life at the law school. Even those students who are not alienated are adversely affected by a general lowering of morale. The impact of student alienation on faculty morale is especially significant since the faculty is responsible for attempting to arouse the interest and enthusiasm of all students, including the alienated. Leaving aside the question of the effect of student alienation upon the quality of legal instruction, it would seem clear that this attitude lessens the faculty's enjoyment of teaching.

## II. THE DISSATISFACTION FACTOR

In understanding alienation and its effects, it is important to distinguish it from the quite different attitude of dissatisfaction. Factor

analysis of our data<sup>8</sup> confirms the separate existence of this latter phenomenon, as factor rotation revealed clearly separate trends with only random overlap between alienated responses and dissatisfied responses. More respondents revealed a high level of dissatisfaction than indicated a high degree of alienation, although it is fairly clear that at least a majority of the Michigan law students sampled were neither alienated nor dissatisfied.<sup>9</sup>

The dissatisfied student is not "turned off," he is "teed off." At the extreme end of the dissatisfaction side of the satisfaction-dissatisfaction continuum, our data reveals the existence of a cluster of opinions that might be expressed as follows:

---

8. The questionnaire items and their loadings for the dissatisfaction factor are as follows (sign of the loadings is toward the dissatisfaction end of the satisfaction versus dissatisfaction dimension):

DISSATISFACTION

"Members of the law school faculty enjoy embarrassing students in class"	.61
"The faculty treats students differently according to sex"	.60
"Michigan law students treat fellow students according to the latter's academic record or abilities"	.60
"Michigan law students are motivated by big incomes and high social status"	.59
"Members of the law school faculty disfavor minority students"	.58
"Members of the law school faculty would retaliate against a student attack in Res Gestae [student newspaper]"	.57
"Members of the law school faculty would downgrade a student for political disagreement with them"	.55
"Michigan law students think that the legal profession should be more exclusive"	.55
"Law school faculty are overbearing and selfish with their families"	.54
"Michigan law students would strongly prefer to be at another law school"	.52
"The law school faculty tends to favor the best students"	.48
"Michigan law students are motivated by desire for fame and political power"	.47
"Law students treat fellow students according to the latter's race"	.47
"Members of the law school faculty are more interested in publication than in teaching students"	.45
"Michigan law alumni earn honorable livings"	-.38
"I select classes with an eye towards passing the bar exam"	.38
"Law school students spend more than 40 hours/week actually working on law school assignments"	.37
"Law school students are motivated by desires for financial and family security"	.34
"I select classes with an eye toward the expected grade curve"	.34
"Law school students would put studying for an exam before keeping an appointment with a Legal Aid client"	.34
"I felt pressure to get high grades to get into a good law school"	.30

9. Twenty-six members of the sample of 185 manifested severe alienation. They were more than one-and-one-half standard deviations from the mean in their indicative responses. Twenty-nine members could be said to be extremely dissatisfied; this included three persons who seemed to be both extremely alienated and extremely dissatisfied. At the other end of the spectra, 25 students were very satisfied, but only 13 could be said to be very integrated. Four revealed themselves to be both very satisfied and very integrated. Ninety-two students recorded responses that tended to hover around neutrality and the mean, not manifesting alienation or dissatisfaction, integration or satisfaction.



The law school faculty is sexist, sadistic, racist, retaliative, and unfair in giving preferences to students who play their game well. Faculty members are chiefly interested in publishing, not in teaching us. They will dock your grade if you disagree with them, and they probably are rotten to their families.

My fellow students are here to make a buck. They judge you by your grades. They want a nice, exclusive profession. They, too, are racists. They are hungry for power and their own advancement and have no interest in helping people in need. They are a bunch of grinds. A lot of us would really like to get away from this hell-hole.

The alumni are probably crooks.

I really felt the pressure for grades to get into a top law school. Now I select my classes with an eye toward the grade curve and the bar exam.

The most frequently recurring opinion expressing extreme dissatisfaction was the belief that many faculty members enjoy embarrassing students in class.

At base, dissatisfied students seem to be resisting the pressure that they feel is placed on them to measure up to some abstract standard of performance in law school. However, while the dissatisfied students have been angered by the beliefs they suppose are held by their classmates and teachers, the data suggest that they have not become alienated from the law school community. Also, we found a significant tendency for dissatisfaction to diminish over time, and thus third-year students appear to be distinctly less dissatisfied than first-year students.

The data suggest some tendency for dissatisfaction to correlate with ethnicity. Jewish students manifested a stronger tendency toward dissatisfaction than did those of either Protestant or Catholic ancestry, and the Black and Hispanic students were markedly more dissatisfied than any of the White groups. Family structure seemed to make relatively little difference. Family income appeared to have no relationship whatsoever with satisfaction in law school. Women were slightly more dissatisfied than men. Also, dissatisfied students tended to be barely, but perceptibly, more liberal than the norm. In our sample, however, women law students were more liberal than their male counterparts, and therefore the variables of sex and liberalism may overlap to some extent.

Academic performance had notably less relationship to dissatisfaction than to alienation. The most dissatisfied law students, unlike the most alienated ones, worked almost as diligently on their academic assignments as did the satisfied majority. There was a group of students who worked very hard and yet produced poor marks,

however, and they were somewhat more dissatisfied. Dissatisfaction also correlated with the consumption of alcohol and drugs; it appears that dissatisfied students are more likely to consume larger amounts of mind-altering substances. Surprisingly, very dissatisfied students used alcohol and drugs more than the alienated, although the latter also consumed more than the norm.

Dissatisfaction seems to have less influence on the future careers of law students than does alienation. Even though dissatisfied students did not like their classmates very much, they were not notably suspicious of cheating by fellow students, whereas the alienated students were prone to assume fairly widespread cheating. Moreover, the dissatisfied students did not admit to antisocial conduct, as did some alienated students. These data suggest that dissatisfied students are not themselves particular ethical risks.

However, dissatisfaction is an immediate evil in the sense that it impairs the enjoyment of legal education both by those who are dissatisfied (the students) and by those who are the objects of dissatisfaction (the professors). Indeed, from the professor's perspective, student attitudes of dissatisfaction may be even more undesirable than those of alienation, because the former are more likely to be reflected in personal hostility. On the other hand, at least moderate dissatisfaction is a necessary impetus to improvement of the school. In this light, the presence of dissatisfaction may even indicate that the school's academic environment has vitality; a contented student body is rarely highly inspired. We find it improbable that any institution could completely satisfy the demands of so critical an audience as Michigan law students.

Moreover, some dissatisfaction is unavoidable for an institution serving a youthful clientele, especially one that is self-selected for preoccupation with authority and authority relationships. In speaking generally about the problem of dealing with younger persons who have not yet attained emotional maturity, Erik Erikson put the matter thus:

In their search for a new sense of continuity and sameness, adolescents have to refight many of the battles of earlier years, even though to do so they must artificially appoint perfectly well-meaning people to play the roles of adversaries; and they are ever ready to install lasting idols and ideals as guardians of a final identity.<sup>10</sup>

It is quite possible that not all law students have emerged from such a stage. Taking these matters into account, we cannot say that the

---

10. E. ERIKSON, *CHILDHOOD AND SOCIETY* 261 (2d ed. 1963).

level of dissatisfaction is necessarily excessive. All that we can say is that it seems high.

### III. THE SOCIABILITY FACTOR

In addition to attitudes of alienation and dissatisfaction, factor analysis of our data revealed a third category of opinions, which we shall label as the "sociability factor." The continuum of sociability consists of attitudes ranging from little to strong desire to increase personal contact with fellow students, professors, and lawyers.<sup>11</sup> The data suggest that this factor, while being somewhat less clearly identified than were alienation and satisfaction, describes a real aspect of student attitudes.

The extremely "sociable" student believes most strongly that law students want more contact with lawyers in general and Michigan Law School alumni in particular. He supposes that the faculty shares his desire that such contact be increased and that law students and the faculty want to know each other better. Such a student would prefer more personal contact with both faculty and alumni. He tends to be sympathetic to the organized bar. He tends to believe that Michigan law students treat fellow students of the opposite sex as equals and are motivated by a desire to serve others. Students

11. The questionnaire items and their loadings for the sociability factor are as follows (sign of the loadings is toward the sociability end of the sociability versus nonsociability dimension):

"Law students agree that they should have more personal contact with alumni and other lawyers"	.67
"Law school students agree that they should have more personal contact with law school faculty"	.60
"Law students agree that women and minority persons should be recruited actively for the law school faculty"	.58
"Law students agree that the law school should assure a reasonable number of minority students in entering classes"	.56
"I think law students should have more personal contact with law school faculty"	.50
"Law students agree that law school teaching is too doctrinal, not concerned enough with social matters"	.50
"Law school faculty agree that law students should have more personal contact with alumni and other lawyers"	.50
"I think law students should have more personal contact with alumni and other lawyers"	.48
"Michigan law students are motivated by the desire to be of service"	.46
"Members of the law school faculty agree that women and minority persons should be recruited actively for law school faculty"	.43
"Law students treat fellow students of the opposite sex as equals"	.43
"Members of the law school faculty agree that the law school should assure a reasonable number of minority students in entering classes"	.42
"Members of the law school faculty agree that they should have more personal contact with law students"	.36
"Members of the law school faculty agree that law school teaching is too academic, not practical enough"	.32
"I tend to disagree with the ABA"	.30

manifesting strong sociability also tend to think that both faculty and students favor recruitment of women and minority faculty members and students. Generally these students regard the faculty as more liberal than do their classmates. In short, the sociable student finds the law school to be an unduly lonely place. While he tends to admire the school and the legal profession, and though he works as hard as his peers, the sociable student wishes that more personal warmth were associated with his legal education.

Sociability, while not appearing to be related to most of the demographic data, did correlate with the degree of contact with faculty members. A counter-indicative datum is that while it may be true that students who come to know faculty members tend to like them, this analysis may confuse cause and effect. For example, while women law students seemed to know substantially more faculty members than did their male counterparts, the respondents' sex did not correlate with sociability.

Sociability correlated with part-time work during the law school term, much of which brings the working student into contact with lawyers and alumni. Apparently, the professionalizing effect of part-time work while in law school, at least if the endeavors involve the law, sometimes negates the applicability of any generalization, such as that previously discussed involving the relationship of alienation and part-time work as an undergraduate, based on the notion that working students are more indifferent to education.

The data also suggested a relationship between sociability and a few opinions about the educational program; most significant in this respect was the tendency of sociable attitudes to correlate with the belief that law school teaching is too doctrinal and not sufficiently concerned with considerations of public policy. Sociable students thus seem to be less concerned than the alienated students about any lack of curricular practicality.

Finally, sociable students tended to perceive accurately that their peers held generally liberal opinions on such social issues as the rights of minorities and women. In contrast, alienated students were notably incorrect in discerning their classmates' opinions on such issues, and the dissatisfied group was indistinguishable from the norm in this respect. In this regard it is interesting to note that Michigan law students as a group appeared to be more liberal than many students believed. Such "pluralistic ignorance," here shown by the student who perceives himself to be a lone liberal lost in a sea of conservatism, is well documented in the literature of social psychology.<sup>12</sup>

---

12. Pluralistic ignorance was first noted by R.L. Schanck in *A Study of a Com-*

It seems unlikely that the sociable student's desire for more emotionally satisfying relationships in the law school community can be fully gratified. Our study does not reveal whether the loneliness they expressed is excessive. What seems clear, however, is that the phenomenon is much less harmful, both to the student and to the law school community, than is alienation or severe dissatisfaction.

#### IV. REDUCING ALIENATION

Our data bear only indirectly on prescribing remedies for law student alienation. One potential solution would involve the utilization of the admissions process. It is at least possible that the major sources of alienation are the psychological characteristics students bring with them to law school. If such factors could be identified prior to admission, the school could reject applicants who were likely candidates for alienation. But our data do not even suggest how one might develop a profile that could be used for this purpose. Without such objective guidance, interviewers could do little more than make intuitive judgments about each applicant's psychological makeup, and such speculative determinations would be unlikely to identify accurately which applicants are more likely to become alienated in law school.

If the alienated cannot be prevented from entering the law school, perhaps at least the school can do a better job of integrating them into the law school community. At the present time, the school's programs appear to have little effect on alienation; our data indicated that about the same number of first-, second-, and third-year students were alienated. This finding contrasts with our conclusions about dissatisfaction, which does seem to diminish significantly over the period of law school study. It is scarcely surprising that the school has little remedial impact on student alienation, since those

---

*munity and Its Groups and Institutions Conceived of as Behaviours of Individuals*, PSYCHOLOGICAL MONOGRAPHS, 1932, vol. 43, no. 2. Schanck reported on a rural community where nearly all persons interviewed assumed that they were liberal exceptions to the conservative, puritanical religious ethic of the community. The people who assumed that they were more liberal than the majority were themselves a majority of the community. A similar situation appears to exist in The University of Michigan Law School at present. This survey revealed that Michigan law students perceive the legal profession (as personified by their professors) as a sociopolitically conservative group. These students assume that the great majority of their peers are being effectively socialized toward the dominant conservative ethic. In fact, however, most students are definitely liberal to "leftist" in their self-reported sociopolitical views. It is possible that students similarly misperceive the views of the faculty in particular and the legal profession in general, but investigation of these issues would require polling of these latter groups on the sociopolitical questions used in this survey.

who plan its programs have given no thought to reducing the incidence of this destructive psychological force. While it is difficult to make prescriptions, our data does suggest that faculty contact may help to alleviate alienation. Further, our study indicates that the first semester is the most crucial psychological period for the student. Perhaps more small group instruction during the first semester would be useful in reducing alienation. While our own data do not directly support this conclusion, it is usually true that integration is stronger in smaller groups.<sup>13</sup> If this generalization is valid in this setting, it would suggest that a large law school like Michigan might generate more student alienation than its smaller counterparts. This hypothesis, of course, would be verifiable by proper psychological experimentation.

The third and least attractive approach would be to remove alienated students from the school. Perhaps much higher academic standards would serve to effectuate this goal somewhat, but obviously such a policy would remove much wheat with the chaff. It is not unlikely, however, that the rising level of alienation is in some measure a product of the falling rate of attrition. As we noted earlier,<sup>14</sup> it was not so many years ago that as many as one law student in five withdrew from the law school. That phenomenon has almost disappeared. Although the data did not explore the question, there is some reason to believe that today's students feel a stronger impulse to stay in school while "dropping out" attitudinally. This trend may be a consequence of very high admission standards that make admission a precious achievement not to be forsaken lightly, or it may be a product of the financial rewards awaiting many of today's graduates and the shortage of other vocational opportunities.

We are not prepared to prescribe any remedy on the basis of our current knowledge of the alienation phenomenon. Improved understanding of the problem seems to be a necessary predicate for remedial action. Publication of this article is intended to be a step in that direction.

---

13. Though most of the research on the effects of group size has focused on laboratory situations or industrial work groups, the results of this work can be reasonably extrapolated to academic settings. CARTWRIGHT & ZANDER, *GROUP DYNAMICS: RESEARCH AND THEORY* (1968), summarizes the general effects of large group size as reduced communication among individual group members, less satisfaction with the group, more impersonal communication of group rules and policies, and less group cohesiveness. It is possible that more small-group instruction would reduce not only alienation but dissatisfaction as well; indeed, the more marked effect might well be in the area of satisfaction, since our data suggest that aspects of the student experience in law school already have a perceptible effect on the level of satisfaction.

14. See note 1 *supra*.