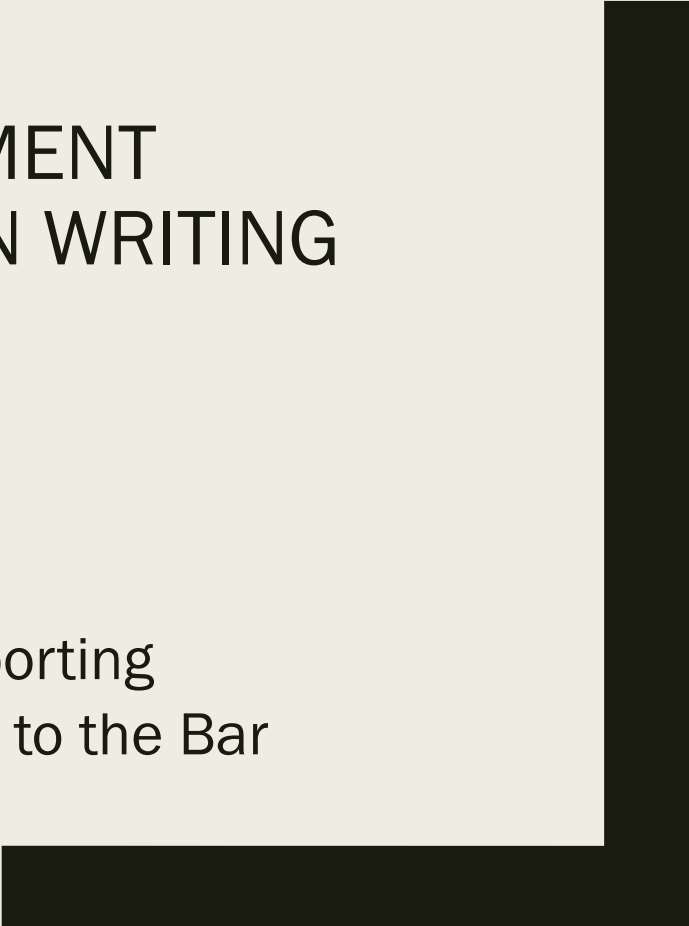


WRITING LIKE A LAWYER:
HOW LAW STUDENT INVOLVEMENT
IMPACTS SELF-REPORTED GAINS IN WRITING
SKILLS IN LAW SCHOOL

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Introduction

- Writing is a critical part of legal practice
- However, the legal profession seems to think new lawyers don't write well
 - *Articles/surveys since early 1990s to mid 2010s*
- Law students may not feel prepared for the writing needed in practice

Research Question

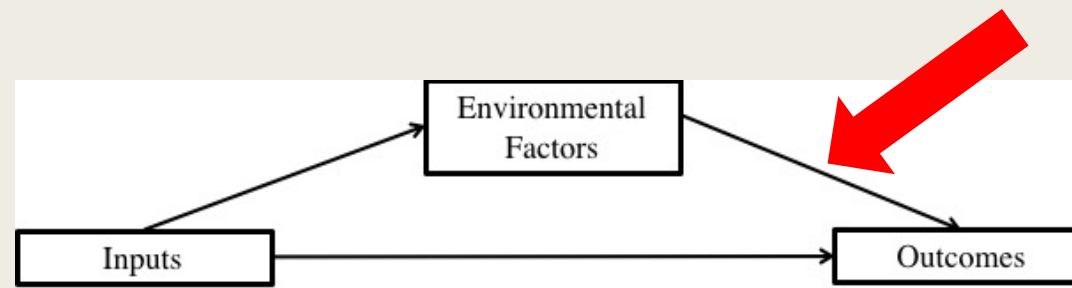
- What impact do the following types of variables have on law student self-reported gains in writing skills? (Variable = LSSSE Question)
 - *Inputs (Student Demographics)*
 - *Between-College Characteristics (Law School Characteristics)*
 - *Academic Involvement*
 - *Student-Faculty Involvement*
 - *Student-Student Involvement*
 - *Non-Academic Involvement*
 - *Intermediate Educational Outcomes*

Data Used

- Obtained survey responses/data for all full-time, third year law students participating in LSSSE 2018
 - *Goal was to get a similarly-situated group of students near graduation who had opportunities for multiple types of writing experiences*
- 3,803 full-time, third year law students were ultimately used in the study
 - *Compared those used in this study to the national population of all third year law students – the students in this study skewed slightly non-minority and female and their law schools tended to be smaller and private.*

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

- Theoretical Framework: Alexander Astin's Involvement Theory
 - *The more students involve themselves in their higher education experience, the more they learn and grow.*
- Conceptual Framework: Alexander Astin's I-E-O Model
 - *Inputs: Student Demographics*
 - *Environmental Factors: All Other Variables*
 - *Outcome: Student Self-Reported Gains in Writing Skills*



Methodology

- Used SPSS to conduct a blocked stepwise multiple regression analysis
- Grouped 112 LSSSE questions into 7 blocks (the same ones used in the research question)
 - *Student Demographics and Law School Characteristics were controlled so they would not unduly influence the results*
 - *Regression went block by block, variable by variable to see if any variables helped predict student self-reported gains in writing skills*
 - *Regressions were run until only variables that were statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level were left*

Results

- The LSSSE question variables that had the strongest impact on law student self-reported gains in writing were as follows:
 - *Self-reported gains in speaking clearly and effectively*
 - *Self-reported gains in thinking critically and analytically*
 - *Self-Reported gains in developing legal research skills*
- Each of these variables had a ***positive*** impact on student self-reported gains in writing skills (i.e., higher gains in one of these areas predicted higher gains in writing skills)

Implications

- Biggest Takeaway of Study
 - *Writing is not learned in a vacuum – it is learned in conjunction with other skills (speaking, legal research, critical/analytical thinking).*
 - Think about your own writing – all these skills are likely involved in creating a good piece of writing.
- How can we integrate this into the law school curriculum?
 - *Maintain or expand first year legal writing programs as they involve these skills*
 - *Add a presentation component to seminar courses that culminate in a paper*
 - *Work in short, research-based writing assignments in doctrinal courses*