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Publication Date

2025-07-01

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2024 - 2025 Undergraduate Sociology Honors Thesis

Feminization and Racial/Ethnic Diversification of the Legal Field, 2005 - 2020

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Abstract

The American legal profession has undergone substantial demographic changes in recent decades, with increasing numbers of women and people of color joining a field historically dominated by white men. With a focus on occupational feminization, I assess whether the devaluation of labor and wage gaps persist in the 21st century. I extend the framework by examining the consequences of racial/ethnic diversification within the legal profession. Using IPUMS workforce data from 2005-2020, I investigate whether increasing representation of women and women of color (WOC) is accompanied by income growth, reduced wage gaps, and sustained professional equity. Specifically, I explore whether the legal profession continues to resist the patterns of devaluation and male flight and how economic recessions affect different demographic groups within the profession. Through an intersectional approach, my research assesses whether WOC faces barriers in the field. The findings show modest white male flight and the continuity of gender- and race-based wage disparities. WOC remains the lowest-paid group in all models, with economic recessions impacting them the most. The findings emphasize the need for policies focusing on the intersections between gender, race, and income. The study provides insight into the effectiveness of workplace diversity initiatives and the continued challenges in achieving economic and professional parity in law.

Introduction

During the latter half of the 20th century, the American workforce underwent a major transformative shift as women entered the paid labor market in more significant numbers than at any other time in recorded history. This shift has not been merely quantitative but has influenced occupational dynamics as women gained prominence in traditionally male-dominated fields (Blackwelder, 1997). As women occupy significant roles in fields such as medicine, engineering, or law, sociologists have assessed the implications of this shift on these male-dominated occupations and the labor themselves (Chiu & Leicht, 1999; Reskin and Roos, 1990). Defined as occupational feminization, women entering the workforce has been associated with various social and economic consequences. For example, Reskin and Roos (1990) have observed "male flight" as a response to occupational feminization, where men tend to leave an occupation as more women enter the field. This flight has exacerbated disparities in compensation and status for women within these roles, leading some to argue that feminization leads to a "devaluation" of the work of the occupation (Busch, 2018). Consequently, occupational feminization influenced wage structures, power dynamics, and professional growth within occupations, creating barriers for women seeking and maintaining employment.

The legal profession in America is an intriguing case study for understanding occupational feminization. Chiu and Leicht (1999) focused on lawyers, observing that increasing female representation in the legal profession did not coincide with male flight and persistent wage inequality. Studies conducted on data from the 1970s and 1980s had a less uniform pattern (Chiu & Leicht, 1999). Their findings suggested that the legal profession did not experience the full scope of challenges in other traditionally male-dominated fields. However, questions remain as to whether the patterns found by Chiu and Leicht have persisted in the context of the 21st

century, which has seen further development in workplace equity and diversity initiatives in its initial decades.

Moreover, previous studies have failed to examine the parallel process of racial diversification in these professions. Similar to gender diversification, the racial and ethnic compositions of these professionals have also shifted over recent decades. Scholars have yet to delve into the unique challenges and inequalities that women of color (WOC)[1] encounter in professions like law, particularly in the context of occupational feminization. Understanding how dynamics such as white male flight, devaluation of labor, and income gaps effects compound with racial/ethnic diversification becomes essential to form a more intersectional lens of diversity, inclusion, and equity in professional America. Consequently, the present research aims to build on Chiu and Leicht's study on successful occupational feminization in the legal profession and extend the analysis to successful occupational racial/ethnic diversification in the 21st century. An additional aim is to examine whether the initial trends of successful feminization persist in the new socioeconomic climate or whether new challenges have emerged. With a focus on gender, race, age, and professional identity in the legal field, the research aims to examine the success of equitable integration in the legal fields.

Successful Occupational Feminization and Racial/Ethnic Diversification

The present study uses Chiu and Leicht's (1999) original definition of successful occupational feminization and extends it to explore racial diversification. Their work stated that successful occupational feminization occurs when a rapidly growing occupation requiring a graduate/specialized college degree observes an increasing influx of women, increasing wages, and a reducing gender wage gap. Extending this definition to racial/ethnic diversification, the

[1] Throughout this paper, I use the abbreviations WOC, MOC, and POC to refer to women of color, men of color, and people of color, respectively.

following study will focus on the gender and racial/ethnic-based demographics of lawyers and data on income and wage gaps. It will assess successful occupational feminization and racial/ethnic diversification based on the shift in demographics toward increasing populations of women and people of color in the legal field. It will also examine the extent of simultaneous wage increases and reducing gender and racial wage gaps. More specifically, I consider whether occupational feminization and racial/ethnic diversification in the American legal profession resulted in white male flight, devaluation of labor and persistent wage gaps in the 21st century?

Literature Review

Chiu and Leicht published an analysis of the American legal profession in 1999, exploring the possibility of successful feminization. They based their research on Reskin and Roos' (1990) study of job and gender queues and Wright and Jacob's (1994) case study on computer professionals. Reskin and Roos (1990) posited a pessimistic picture of women's equality about occupational feminization. They focused on gender queues, which is the idea that the labor market comprises a gender queue where employers prefer male over female workers. These workers also rank jobs into a queue, where the male workers monopolize the most desirable jobs. Consequently, their case studies highlighted that women who entered the workforce in the 1970s were concentrated in lower-paying and less desirable jobs such as food service and hospitality or customer service. The gender pay gap also did not narrow in these occupations. They reported continued segregation, deteriorating working conditions, male flight, and persistent inequality. These characteristics suggest the devaluation of labor in these occupations due to feminization (Busch, 2018). However, Wright and Jacobs challenged Reskin and Roos' perspective by focusing on computer professionals in the 1980s. Although they predicted that feminizing computer occupations would result in devaluation, the results did not

support these predictions. Results showed that the earning gap narrowed, segregation decreased, and deteriorating conditions were not associated with male flight. It was a successful integration. However, Wright and Jacobs highlight that the study was done in the 1980s, which were economically very different from the 70s. Additionally, computer professionals are in a niche field and are not representative of the entire workforce.

Chiu and Leicht explored the two conflicting findings with a different occupation, lawyers. Their research measured the success of occupational feminization in the legal field by focusing on male flight, devaluation of labor, and the gender wage gap. Their data consisted of US Census Data (1970, 1980, and 1990) and the National Survey of Lawyers' Career Satisfaction, Waves 1 and 2 (1984 & 1990). In the 1970s, the legal profession flourished and experienced substantial growth. This decade also presented the start of the rapid feminization of law, which was accompanied by falling wages and an increasing gender gap. While women in private firms were increasing from 54% to 70%, their incomes fell by one-fifth (Reskin & Roos, 1990). In contrast, the 1980s witnessed successful feminization, marked by rising wages and a decreasing gender gap and segregation (Wright & Jacobs, 1994). Women’s income rose by 12 percentage points relative to men. There was also no evidence of male flight. Consequently, Chiu and Leicht concluded that rapid feminization can coexist with improving economic conditions, and real income can increase along with a narrowing female/male wage gap.

While Chiu and Leicht's work provides important insights, the results only represent the realities of the 1970s and 1980s—when women's movements and the US economy matured rapidly. Therefore, the results may vary depending on the socio-economic climate in which a shift in the relative fortunes of men and women occurs. Women's gains may be vulnerable to economic downturns or reach a tipping point where wages would decline. Additionally, the

conclusions do not represent the racial/ethnic realities of lawyers, and their research lacks an intersectional approach. An investigation into how the effects of occupational diversification can compound WOC may provide a more nuanced understanding of the legal field in America. Consequently, the present study aims to extend and examine Chiu and Leicht's results in the socioeconomic climate of the 21st century. With a diverse influx of immigrants and new economic downturns, the initial decades of this century provide an intriguing case study to observe the interactions between occupational feminization and racial/ethnic diversification.

Continuation into the 21st century

In the 21st century, scholars continue to understand the integration of women into male-dominated professions and examine the impact of occupational feminization in fields such as law, medicine, and engineering. England (2018) observed that while women continued to join the workforce, their employment rate stalled post-1990. Additionally, occupation desegregation and gender gap erosion have slowed. Focusing on the legal field, Kay and Gorman (2008) reported a similar stall in women's representation, which peaked in 1993. In legal firms, the representation peaked in 2009 at 45.7%, which remained flat till 2013 and is now witnessing a slight decline (Sterling & Reichman, 2016). Despite the overall decline in women, scholars observe that women still choose to join fields like law known for upward mobility.

Mandel (2018) highlighted that while women work in higher-paying roles due to improved educational achievements, more feminized occupations are experiencing wage devaluation relative to similar male-dominated roles. Busch (2018) also observed the trend, as feminization led to a devaluation of labor. However, their study also pointed out that the top 20% of occupations, including law, did not experience this devaluation. Both genders benefitted from feminization in high-status professions, while men had a more significant benefit. Busch (2018)

highlighted that this discovery was novel and could be explained through Liu and Grusky's (2013) work on the rise of specific skills, like managerial or social skills, which have higher payoffs. Due to such disparities in benefits, literature suggests that women are more likely to exit the legal field than men (Kay & Gorman, 2008; Sterling & Reichman, 2012). Women are overrepresented in the exodus from the law, which scholars have termed "flight from law" (Kay & Gorman, 2008). Consequently, despite the devaluation of feminizing occupations in the 21st century, high-status professions like the legal field have remained immune. The integration of women has not decreased mean earnings in the field (Mandel, 2018; Busch, 2018). Additionally, the evidence for male flight is scant, similar to Chiu and Leicht's original results.

While the overall status of the profession may not be declining, the gender wage gap and segregation of the field are not improving in the 21st century. Kay and Gorman (2008) reported that women in the field are less likely to receive promotions and lack the social and cultural capital necessary for success than men. Additionally, women are more likely to be non-equity partners than equity partners in law firms, a phenomenon described as the "Pink Ghetto" (Sterling and Reichman ,2012). Segregation has also resulted in a significant wage gap. Kay and Gorman (2008) reported that men earn 14% more than female professionals. The data from 2012 showed a worsening situation, with the average compensation of a male partner being 47% higher than that of a female partner. Sterling and Reichman (2016) reported that men earned more than women in every category of legal work. The gap worsened at higher salary levels, where women earned 87% of men's salary at the seventy-fifth percentile of the salary distribution. They also stated that while women and men billed for more or less the same number of hours, men consistently billed at higher rates per hmy than women in similar positions. In cases where women reported slightly lower billable hours than men, they were likelier to report

more non-billable hours, suggesting that women's work was less valued (Flom, 2012). Therefore, the gender wage gap has not significantly improved in the 21st century. The legal field continues to underpay women lawyers more than men.

Racial and Ethnic Diversification

Along with occupational feminization, the present study also focuses on racial and ethnic diversification of the American legal profession. Contrary to feminization, academic research focused on understanding the racial dynamics of the legal field is limited (Bornstein, 2022) despite the legal profession being less racially and ethnically diverse than most professions (Antecol et al., 2004). Greer and Samson (1993) provided a foundational analysis of systemic disadvantages that ethnic minority lawyers face throughout their careers. They highlighted that ethnic minorities in the US experience disadvantages at every stage in the pursuit of a legal career relative to non-minority lawyers. Similar to women lawyers, deliberate and structural discrimination places minority lawyers in the lower-prestige and lower-paid sectors of the legal profession (Greer & Samson, 1993). As a result, many minorities prefer firms with a reputation for hiring ethnically diverse lawyers, leading to a concentration of minorities in specific fields and firms. Greer and Samson (1993) labeled this as the "Minority Lawyers Ghetto," akin to the "Pink Ghetto" (Sterling & Reichman, 2012) because white attorneys are more likely to seek employment in more lucrative firms and earn more than their minority counterparts. Along with a lack of opportunities, minority lawyers also lack networks, which impact their careers and social lives. The lack of networks causes slower professional development and more significant salary gaps relative to white lawyers (Greer & Samson, 1993).

Similarly, Kay (2018) published her work on social capital and minority lawyer earnings and highlighted the devaluation of POC labor. She found that lawyers working in organizations

with greater ethnic diversity were likelier to receive lower salaries. This indicates that labor niches that offered lower wages were more receptive to hiring minorities, who could not find work in other higher-paying firms due to a lack of social capital (Kay, 2004). Gorman and Kay (2010) found similar results, indicating that minorities were less likely to receive invitations to firm partnership ranks. Wilkins (1999) asserted that minorities were more likely to become non-equity partners, echoing the findings of Sterling and Reichman's (2012) study on women lawyers. Wilkins (1999) also observed that African-American partners at major law firms often had less power, status, and income than their white peers and were likelier to seek other employment opportunities. They were disproportionately more likely to leave their firms. Similarly, Gorman and Kay's (2010) study also found that Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans all had higher attrition rates at higher levels than their white counterparts in the US. All of this evidence is consistent with the devaluation of POC labor in the legal field. However, white flight may not exist due to higher attrition rates of minority lawyers than white lawyers in the occupation.

While Greer and Samson (1993) briefly mentioned racial wage gaps, scholars in the 21st century have delved more into this phenomenon. Focused on the legal field, Antecol et al. (2014) highlighted that closing the racial pay gap has been more challenging than closing the gender pay gap, especially for men. Blau, Ferber, and Winkler (2010) stated, "the ratio of Hispanic-to-white median earnings among men has fallen from 72 percent in 1975 to 60 percent in 2007." Similarly, Ornstein (2010) found that while the median earnings of racial minorities and white lawyers between 25 and 29 are similar, a substantial gap emerges by age 30. Minority men and women earn approximately 24% below white men. Focusing on these pay gaps in the general population (i.e., not exclusively lawyers), Bornstein (2022) highlighted that the pay gaps

worsened for WOC. She stated that while there was some improvement prior to 2005, the racial pay gaps are now more significant than they were decades ago. For WOC, the impact of the racialized gender pay gap exacerbates it. Bornstein (2022) labels this as the "double gap," as the pay is proportionately the lowest of all workers. According to her report, in 2019, Black women earned only 63 cents for every dollar earned by White men, while Latina women earned only 55 cents. When compared to the earnings of white women, the racial pay gap for Black and Latina women has increased. Black women's earnings decreased from 92.1% of White women earned in 1979 to 80.1% in 2019, while Latinx women's earnings decreased from 82.5% to 70.4% (Bornstein, 2022). Additionally, compared to white men, the pay gaps for WOC show the slowest rate of closure and have deteriorated disproportionately during the COVID-19 pandemic. These results show how the impact of racial/ethnic diversification and feminization causes a compounded impact on WOC and highlight the urgency of understanding the experiences of women lawyers of color in America. Thus, Bornstein concluded that the racial wage gap has not significantly improved in the 21st century.

Brynin et al. (2019) focused on intersectionality in the workplace. They defined intersectionality as an approach that understands how various facets of their identities victimize individuals. For example, their research focused on how gender and ethnicity interact to create complex discrimination against individuals at work. They highlighted that in the 20th century, gender and race/ethnicity exacerbated the impact of wage gaps. However, the compounded impact has faded away in the 21st century. While gender wage gaps are reducing, the racial wage gaps are increasing and impacting women of color the most. Brynin et al.'s (2019) findings were based on British workers representing the whole economy. However, they may still represent the realities of the American workforce and raise questions on how intersectionality explicitly

impacts the experiences of lawyers in the US. Therefore, the present study aims to extend Chiu and Leicht's study to include dimensions of race and ethnicity and analyze how they interact with gender.

Economic Recession Recovery

Ultimately, the present study also analyzes feminization under varying economic climates. My focus is on theories of economic recession recovery and their disproportionate impact on various demographics. This study primarily focuses on the 2008 recession, also known as the Great Recession, as it was one of my selected period's most significant economic events. Albelda (2013) reported that the official employment statistics indicated that the recession had a more significant impact on men than women. The unemployment rates for women remained considerably lower than for men as the recession had primarily crushed male-dominated fields such as banking. However, Rubery and Rafferty (2013) report that the crash eventually impacted the public sector and made women more vulnerable to job loss. They cited that the industry viewed women as sources of 'savings' and ended up outsourcing their jobs and laying off women. Albelda (2013) also reported that "three years following the recession, there were still just over 1 million fewer women employed than at the onset of the recession."

More importantly, women of color and younger women continued to face higher rates of unemployment (Albelda, 2013). The impact of the Great Recession was not solely on gender outcomes, it also disproportionately impacted ethnic and racial minorities. Masterson et al. (2019) focused on Black and Hispanic households and found that their net worths were 12 and 15 percent of the average net worth of white households post-recession. The average ratio of median and Hispanic household net worth to white households declined from 6.6% to 5.2% in 2007, indicating a significant economic downturn for families of color. Masterson et al. (2019)

also reported that white households lost less and recovered faster than black and Hispanic households after the recession. Therefore, the Great Recession disproportionately impacted ethnic/racial minorities. Similarly, Cunningham (2018) also highlighted that the unemployment rate was highest for Black and Hispanic workers, as the rate peaked at 13% for Hispanic and 16.8% for Black workers. White workers had an unemployment rate of 9.2% (Cunningham, 2018). Hence, the present study focuses on the intersection between race and gender in the context of the Great Recession and observes whether similar results exist in a male-dominated field like law. These distinct disparities in economic recovery illustrate the perception that gender and racial minorities were more negatively impacted during economic recessions, and they prompt inquiries into the functioning of these inequalities in professional occupations.

Data and Methods

Data

My quantitative analysis is based on American Community Surveys (ACS) for each year between 2005 and 2020. All datasets are harmonized and distributed by the Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (Ruggles et al., 2024). The IPUMS USA dataset is selected due to its large sample size, essential for studies investigating occupations. I filtered the large sample size, which contains approximately 35,000,000 samples, down to approximately 197,877 people who report they are employed in a legal occupation (defined in detail below). The smallest sample was 11,227 people in 2005, and the largest sample was 14,409 people in 2019. The sample sizes for the legal occupation based on year, gender, and race/ethnicity appear in Figure 1.

Refer to Figure 1: Sample Sizes of each demographic

Variables

The analysis contains variables focused on individual and occupational characteristics. The dependent variable to determine male flight is the number of men and white men in the field.

For the remaining inquiries, the individual characteristic is annual income for the survey year. We adjusted this variable for inflation and updated it to reflect December 2020 using the CPI inflation calculator (CPI Inflation Calculator, 2025). We compare the annual income against the independent variables of gender and race/ethnicity. We code gender as 0 for Men and 1 for Women and race/ethnicity as 0 for white people and 1 for POC. The non-white category includes all other racial categories, such as Black, Hispanic, and Asian, which I use as people of color (POC). We maintain the ACS sampling years as control variables for the study, comparing individuals from the same year against each other.

Finally, I control for the occupation characteristic across all observations to limit to lawyers. Using the IPUMS variable OCC, which reports an individual's primary occupation, the study filters the total sample for individuals who reported their occupations using ACS codes OCC 2100. The ACS codebook uses the code 2100 for all lawyers (Ruggles et al., 2024). We also incorporate marital status and hours worked per week as control variables for the analysis, as these factors might influence wages and be associated with gender. The present study focuses on the demographic trends relative to income growth in various economic climates. Table 1 in the appendix provides descriptive statistics for the variables used in this analysis.

Refer to Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Analytical Strategy and Methodology

The present analysis focuses on three main dynamics: labor devaluation, wage inequality, and economic recession recovery.

Devaluation of Labor

The analysis to examine the devaluation of labor is conducted in two stages. The first stage focuses on male flight. We begin determining whether the size of the legal profession is declining by comparing whether the percentage of all lawyers has decreased in 15 years.

Following that, I observe the change in the share of men and white men in the field and compare the overall change (%) in men and white men between each year. Ultimately, I compare the percentage of women against men and the percentage of women of color against white men to understand their relative rate of change. This last step helps us understand whether feminization and racial/ethnic diversification correlate with male flight. The second stage of the analysis focuses on the average income of the profession compared to the average income of all other professions. This change in the average income per year is compared to the percentage of women and women of color for the respective years. This analysis helps us determine whether feminization and racial/ethnic diversification correlate with a decrease or increase in average income in the occupation.

Wage Inequality

The next stage of the analysis aims to investigate the trend of persistent wage inequality in the field. It focuses on the gender wage gap, the racial wage gap, and the compounding effect of the racial-gender wage gap. Therefore, it primarily compares the average difference in annual income between women and men for each ACS sample year, and examines how the wage gap evolved over time. For this analysis, I model three equations to understand how various control variables impact the relationship between gender, race and income. Equation 1 focuses on the linear relationship between gender, race and income. In the equation $\beta 0$ represents the predicted income for white male, $\beta 1$ represents the wage gap between white men and white women, and the $\beta 1 + \beta 2 + \beta 3$ represents the wage gap between white males and WOC

$$Eq\ 1\text{:}\ income = \beta 0 + \beta 1 Sex + \beta 2 Race + \beta 3(Sex \times Race) + \epsilon$$

The second model adds control variables to the equation to understand how certain factors may influence incomes earned by different demographic groups within the occupation.

Similar to Chiu and Leicht's (1999) study, the control variables include Age, Age^2, Hours worked/Week, and Marital Status. Equation 2 models this relationship. Age^2 was added to account for the curvilinear effects of age

$$Eq\ 2:\ income = \beta 0 + \beta 1 Sex + \beta 2 Race + \beta 3(Sex \times Race) + \beta 4 Age$$

$$\beta 5 Age^2 + \beta 6 Hours\ worked + \beta 8 Marital + \epsilon$$

Lastly, the third model extends the second equation by adding years as a fixed effect. The fixed effect is added to capture unobserved variables that are stable within a year, but variant across years which may have impacted the relationship. The same is modeled in Equation 3 which is similar to Eq. 2 but introduces year dummies (γt) for the time period between 2005 and 2020. Ultimately, all three equations are used to understand how gender, race and the interactions between gender and race impact the income for an individual in the legal field between 2005 and 2020.

$$Eq\ 3:\ income = \beta 0 + \beta 1 Sex + \beta 2 Race + \beta 3(Sex \times Race) + \beta 4 Age + \beta 5 Age^2 +$$

$$\beta 6 Hours\ worked + \beta 8\ Marital + \gamma t + \epsilon$$

<u>Economic Recession Recovery</u>

The final step in the analysis delves into the economic recovery from the recession by concentrating on the ACS data from 2008 to 2012, which accurately reflects the economic shifts during the Great Recession. This analysis uses Equation 2 but models it for three separate periods. For the first model, Equation 2 is used for 2005 - 2007, which is defined as pre-recession. The second model used years 2008 - 2012, the recession, and the last model used years 2013 - 2018 to understand post-recession. The three models are compared against each other to understand whether the economic climate impacts the income of lawyers based on their gender and race.

Findings and Discussion

Refer to Figure 2: Percentage of Lawyers of ACS by year

The Devaluation of Labor

Figure 2 focuses on the percentage of lawyers each year compared to the entire workforce. They show that, on average, lawyers have increased by 0.5% every year. The percentage of lawyers increased between 2006 and 2008 but then began to decline, reaching its lowest point in 2011. After that, it steadily rose, peaking in 2019 before experiencing a slight dip in 2020. To confirm the statistical significance of the increase, I conducted a Pearson's chi-square test comparing the percentages in 2011 and 2020 (the lowest and highest values, respectively). The chi-square test recognizes that my underlying data is a survey sample, which helps us rule out whether the changes from 2011 to the end are not the result of sample variability. Consequently, the test confirmed that increases in the profession size are statistically significant.

Refer to Figure 3: Percentage of Male & White Male lawyers vs Percentage of Women & WOC lawyers

Next, I analyze whether the percentage of men and white men, in particular, has decreased relative to women and white women. Figure 3 showcases that the percentage of men decreases despite the overall growth of the profession. On average, men experienced a 0.37% decrease every year. As of 2020, male lawyers make up 60% of the lawyer population. Thus, if the aforementioned rate of decrease in men is maintained, it would take approximately 27 years for men and women to reach parity. Consequently, we would see equal representation in 2027 if the conditions are maintained. Figure 3 also showcases the percentage of white men, who have a steeper decrease in their percentages. Again despite the overall growth of the profession, white male lawyers have observed a 0.64% decrease every year in their percentage. As of 2020, they make up 52.2% of the lawyer population. Therefore, if the same rate is maintained, it would take 42.5 years for white men to make up 25% of the population, allowing the other 3 groups (white

women, MOC and WOC) to take up equal space (a quarter each). This gradual shift means fewer men—especially white men—will make up the legal field over time.

Refer to Figure 4: Percentage of Male lawyers for each age group and Figure 5: Percentage of White Men lawyers for each age group

To differentiate whether men are leaving the field or choosing not to enter, I looked at statistics on the number of men per year arranged by age range. Figures 4 and 5 show that the overall percentage in the 18-30 range has dropped by 0.069% every year for men and 0.074% for white men, suggesting that they choose not to enter the field. Additionally, if I observe a ten-year period (where the 30-40 year olds in 2005 become the 40-50 population year olds 2015), I see that the percentage has dropped from 11.7% to 10.1% in white men. Similarly, the 40-50 population in 2005 was 16.6%, which became the 50-60 population in 2015, dropping to 14.3% in men. This steady decline suggests that a greater proportion of men in the field are above 60. Especially, compared to the generation above 60, men are either coming in at lower rates during entry or are exiting during their career before 60. While I see a slight decline in the number of men aged (18-30), it is not conclusive enough to say men are actively choosing not to enter the field. Therefore, I suggest that the decline in men and white men is occuring due to a combination of male flight in the later stages of their careers and reducing numbers of younger male lawyers. These statistics are further interesting because the percentage of women observed an increase of 0.37% every year on average, while WOC experienced an increase of 0.31% on average. Put another way for every 100 male lawyers today, if the same rate of decrease continues for the next decade, then for every three men decreasing, three women are increasing. Over the next decade for every 3 less male lawyers, I would expect an additional 3 women. Thus, these trends together provide evidence for male flight and white male flight in the profession, coinciding with feminization and racial/ethnic diversification, as men and white men are possible

choosing not to enter and leaving the profession while the percentage of women and WOC is increasing.

The presence of male flight contradicts the finding of Chiu and Leicht (1999), as they did not observe the decrease illustrated in Figure 3 during the period they studied. The constant rise in the percentage of women lawyers also sheds more light on England's (2018) and Kay and Gorman's (2008) findings about women's representation. Both articles reported a stall in women's representation, which was valid until 2016, after which women increased at a higher rate, with a peak between 2019 and 2020. This is especially true for WOC, which observed a 2.6% increase between 2019 and 2020. In contrast, the results demonstrated that instead of women, men were more likely not to enter and exit the legal field, especially white men. These findings contradicted Kay and Gorman (2008) and Sterling and Reichman (2012), which the former article termed as "flight from law." The flight is especially present for white men, whose percentage decreased by 4.2% between 2019 and 2020. Similarly, the increasing percentage of WOC contradicts Wilkins (1999) and Gorman and Kay's (2010) study, which cites higher attrition rates for people of color.

The second stage of the analysis focused on the average income of the profession. The income for the legal profession and all other professions was inflation-adjusted to Dec 2020. The legal profession's income growth was comparable to the income growth of other professions. The lawyer's income grew by 0.0030% every year on average, while other profession's income grew by 0.0029% increase on average. Figure 6 presents the adjusted average income for lawyers against the percentage of women and WOC lawyers. Despite the increase of women and WOC in the legal profession, the average income has neither decreased nor significantly increased. The

implication is that feminization and racial/ethnic diversification have not led to the devaluation of labor based on average income in the field in proportion to the overall economy.

Referring to Figure 2 and Figure 3, the current results demonstrate that the increase in women and WOC can coexist with growth in the legal profession, which is similar to Chiu and Leicht's (1999) conclusion on how rapid feminization can coexist with improving conditions. Additionally, the consistent average income during feminization and racial/ethnic diversification aligns with Busch's (2018) research, which concluded that devaluation did not exist in the top 20% of occupations. However, this data would not shed light on Kay's (2018) research on racial devaluation as I lack data about how POC lawyers are distributed within firms. Instead, I attempt to understand the devaluation in the wage gap section through a linear regression analysis of the sample where I can control for differences in employment conditions.

Wage Inequality

The second section of the analysis focuses on gender and racial wage inequality using three linear regression models. All models are statistically significant under the F test. The first model explains about 4.7% variation in income, while the other two explain about 20% of the variation. The first regression modeled the relationship between gender, race, and interaction between the two. Figure 7 displays the predicted incomes for white men, Men of Color (MOC), white women, and WOC. White men earn the greatest at approximately $197,450, while WOC earn the lowest at approximately $116,450. For example, a WOC would take 1 year and 8 months to make what a white man would earn in a year. Thus, WOC lawyers earn 58.6% of what white men lawyers earn, while MOC earns 76.1%, and white women earn 66.1%, comparable to white men. These ratios are better than Chiu and Leicht’s figures, as the average ratio between 1970-1990 between women and men was 53.2%.

Adding onto the first equation, the second regression model has the same relationship with added control variables such as age, age^2, hours worked/week, and marital status. Figure 8 displays the predicted income when control variables are adjusted to their mean values (refer to Table 2 for the coefficients). Like the first model, white men earn the greatest ($208,000 approx.) while WOC earns the lowest ($136,750 approx.). However, the ratios between the demographic groups change with the control variables. WOC earns 65.6% of what white men earn, while MOC earns 85.7% and white women earn 67.1%. These percentages show that as I control for marital status, age, and hours worked, the wage gap between white men, MOC, and WOC narrows significantly. However, it does not affect white men or white women. The wage gap between WOC and white women narrows significantly. In the first equation, WOC earns 88.6% of what white women earn. However, they earn 97.2% with controls added, suggesting that the impact of race diminishes relative to gender.

In the last equation, I add a fixed time effect to the second equation to map out the predicted incomes for each demographic group across my period. Figure 9 displays the predicted incomes. Similar to previous results, white men earn the greatest across years (between $205k - $225k), while WOC earns the lowest (between $168k - $184k)[2]. However, with a fixed time effect, the ratios between the demographic groups narrowed, especially for WOC and white women. WOC earned 81.2% on average relative to white men, white women earned 83.5%, and MOC earned 85.7% on average. These ratios suggest that when I include years as a fixed effect, the impact of gender diminishes as the wage gap between MOC and WOC diminishes considerably. Therefore, I can conclude through the three models that gender and race negatively impact a lawyer's income. However, the impact of the race and gender variables is partially

[2] These ranges depict the lowest and highest average incomes for each demographic group between 2005-2020

mediated by year, marital status, age, and hours worked. Nevertheless, wage inequality consistently persists for women and POC lawyers and affects WOC lawyers disproportionately.

Referring to Chiu and Leicht's (1999) conclusion about actual income increase, this study's data shows similar results. The real income and the female/male wage ratio did increase between 2005 and 2020 by 1.3% for WOC and 1.1% for white women relative to white men. The results also corroborated research on the gender wage gap (Kay & Gorman, 2008; Sterling & Reichman, 2016; Flom, 2012). White men and WOC continued to earn more than white women and MOC in all three models. These gaps in income suggest that women lawyers may be concentrated in lower-paying sectors or more likely to be non-equity partners as Sterling and Reichman (2016) found. Additionally, as Flom (2012) suggests, women may have reported lower billable hours than men despite working the same amount. However, I cannot render that possible due to lack of available data.

In addition, the results also show a persistent racial wage gap. However, the models show that gender impacted income more than race, as MOC continued to earn more than both groups of women. Nevertheless, race did negatively influence income, as supported by previous research (Greer & Samson, 1993; Sterling & Reichman, 2012; Greer & Samson, 1993; Wilkins, 1999; Gorman & Kay, 2010; Bornstein, 2022). The racial wage gap suggests that POC lawyers were likely to work in lower-paying firms and be non-equity partners relative to their white counterparts. Ultimately, the results also demonstrated that the gap worsened for WOC. Bornstein (2022) highlighted how the impact of the racialized gender pay gap exacerbates the income gap for WOC, which they labeled as the "double gap." Therefore, my results suggest that racial/ethnic diversification and feminization cause a compounded impact on WOC as they consistently remain the least-paid demographic group in the legal profession.

Economic Recession Recovery

Finally, I focus on income inequality during periods of recession to see if recession impacts specific demographics disproportionately. This analysis focuses on the 2008 recession. Figure 10 showcases the predicted incomes for pre-recession, during recession and post-recession. The income of white men barely changes during the three periods, as it fluctuates between $208,900 and $207,558, suggesting stable income despite the recession. For MOC, they have a slight increase post-recession, going from $169,030 to $174,000. However, there was a noticeable increase in income for white women during the recession (jumping from $167,800 to $178,000), and it stayed stable after the recession. This may suggest that economic downturns impacted white women less than other groups. In contrast, WOC saw a significant decrease in income during the recession, from $168,700 to $161,937, but then increased again post-recession to $170,901. In general, I observe that income stability was greater for white men and women compared to POC groups, with WOC observing a significant dip during the recession.

The results align with Albelda's (2013) and Masterson et al.'s (2019) research, as white men faced no particular instability during the economic downturn. Race may have had a more significant impact than sex, as white women observe an increase in income while WOC observes the most significant dip. As Masterson et al. (2019) reported, MOC and white women recovered more quickly. WOC has the worst recovery, suggesting that their income was the most vulnerable to budget cuts. These differences in income recoveries suggest how distinct the disparities are during economic downturns between demographics.

In conclusion, white women may have benefited from the recession as their incomes reflected greater income growth. This may suggest that white women were insulated from the recession's negative impacts. However, women as a group (including WOC) did not experience

the same stability as white men did. Ultimately, WOC saw a significant drop in income during the recession with a slower recovery post-recession, especially compared to white men.

Conclusion

This analysis explored how feminization and racial/ethnic diversification have influenced the legal profession, focusing on male flight, devaluation of labor, and economic recession recovery. Following Chiu and Leicht's work (1999), my quantitative analysis examined the demographic trends and wage gaps across 15 years. I aimed to determine whether the growing representation of women and POC lawyers is accompanied by wage devaluation and income disparity. The analysis mainly focused on WOC to determine whether the intersection of race and gender places WOC in a more discriminatory space. Therefore, the study's primary objective was to assess whether feminization and racial/ethnic diversification resulted in lower average incomes, male flight, and wage inequalities and whether periods of economic recessions disproportionately impact marginalized groups.

The study finds significant trends in gender and racial wage gaps, confirming consistent impacts of gender and race on income inequality in the legal profession. My findings reveal that while the legal profession has been growing, the percentage of men (mainly white men) has been decreasing while the percentage of women and WOC has been increasing. A closer look reveals that the major proportion of men in the field is 60 and older while fewer younger men are choosing to join the field. Additionally, men between the ages of 30-50 are slowly decreasing, suggesting a male flight from the legal field. However, the feminization and racial/ethnic diversification are not accompanied by a corresponding decrease in average incomes, suggesting a lack of evidence for wage devaluation. Despite the overall stability in the income, the study found that the racial and gender wage gaps remain persistent. In all regression models, white

men consistently earn more than their counterparts, while WOC earns the least (earning approximately 58.6% of what white men earn). This gap narrows after controlling for age, marital status, and hours worked. However, there is still a significant difference in the wages. These findings corroborate previous studies that identified the racial wage gap in the legal profession (Greer & Samson, 1993; Sterling & Reichman, 2012).

The study also focused on how the Great 2008 recession affected income for the demographic groups. Results showcased that WOC were disproportionately affected as they had the sharpest drop in their earnings, while white women and white men were the least affected. These findings align with Albelda (2013) and Masterson et al. (2019), who report that the recession had a greater impact on women's earnings than men. Moreover, WOC experienced the most significant income dip and slowest recovery. Ultimately, the results show that gender and racial income gaps are not uniform across groups. The intersection of race and gender creates a compounded disadvantage for WOC – a phenomenon noted as the "double gap" by Bornstein (2022). The double gap captures how WOC experiences both the gender and the racial wage gap, which interact in ways that amplify the inequalities. This gap aligns with the concept of intersectionality, as social categories of race and gender do not operate independently.

Despite the insights provided by the analysis, I must acknowledge multiple limitations. A major limitation of the study is using the coined label of 'POC' for the race variable instead of looking into the various races separately. As Kay and Gorman (2010) and Borstein (2022) point out the difference in wage inequality for each race, I fail to compare wage inequality between the various groups of color. Akee et al. (2019) note how income in America varies greatly depending on one's racial group. Whites and Asians earn significantly more than African-American, Latino, and Native American families. Therefore, the current research would benefit from a more

detailed analysis of separate racial groups. The study also does not consider firm-level data similar to Sterling and Reichman (2016) and Green and Samson (1993). A look into how lawyers of various demographics are placed in a firm would provide a more nuanced understanding of wage and social disparities. The lens of the firm provides a structured setting where the disparities become visible due to processes like promotions, hiring, mentorship and client access. Ultimately, the study also focuses on a specific time frame (2005-2020). While it helps extend Chiu and Leicht's timeframe, it does not, which may not capture the economic shifts after the pandemic. For example, the current ABA data showcases that while the number of lawyers dipped in 2020, they have continued to grow again, reaching the 2019 number again in 2023 (ABA Profile of the Legal Profession 2024, n.d.). These changes occurred alongside a worldwide pandemic and recession, which are not explored in the current study. Moreover, while the study does account for several important variables, it does leave out other variables that may potentially impact, such as geographic location, law school, and work experience.

Nevertheless, the findings of this study have several broader implications for policy and future research. The findings highlight the growing need for targeted interventions focused on compounded income disparities for WOCs in the legal profession. Following the legal profession's importance and influence on the economy, I must aim to improve representation and close the wage gap for marginalized groups. These initiatives could include greater access to leadership roles, high-paying positions, and equity partnerships. These initiatives also involve focusing on times of economic recessions as they do not impact all groups equally. While white women display greater economic stability, WOC is disproportionately impacted, highlighting the need for policies protecting marginalized workers during economic recessions. The data suggests the need for support systems and job security models to mitigate the adverse effects of economic

downturns. Ultimately, the study also encourages future research on exploring the reasons behind male flight and white male attrition at different ages. Qualitative research on lawyers across different racial groups could provide deeper insight into career trajectories and the wage gap. Additional research could also focus on wage inequality across firm types and law specialties such as corporate law, family law, or patent law. Finally, further studies could compare the legal field to other professional sectors, such as healthcare or finance, to study how gender and racial wage disparities exist in these fields.

To conclude, this study provides quantitative insights into the gender and racial wage gaps in the legal profession, with a focus on male flight and a lack of labor devaluation. The study points out the continuity of wage disparities as white men continue to earn significantly more than all demographic groups. WOC remains the lowest-paid group in all models, with economic recessions impacting them the most. The findings emphasize the need for policies focusing on the intersections between gender, race, and income. While the data partially supports the study's hypotheses, they suggest the need for the legal profession to continue diversifying and providing equal opportunities for equitable compensation.

Figures and Other Tables

Figure 1: Sample Sizes of each demographic

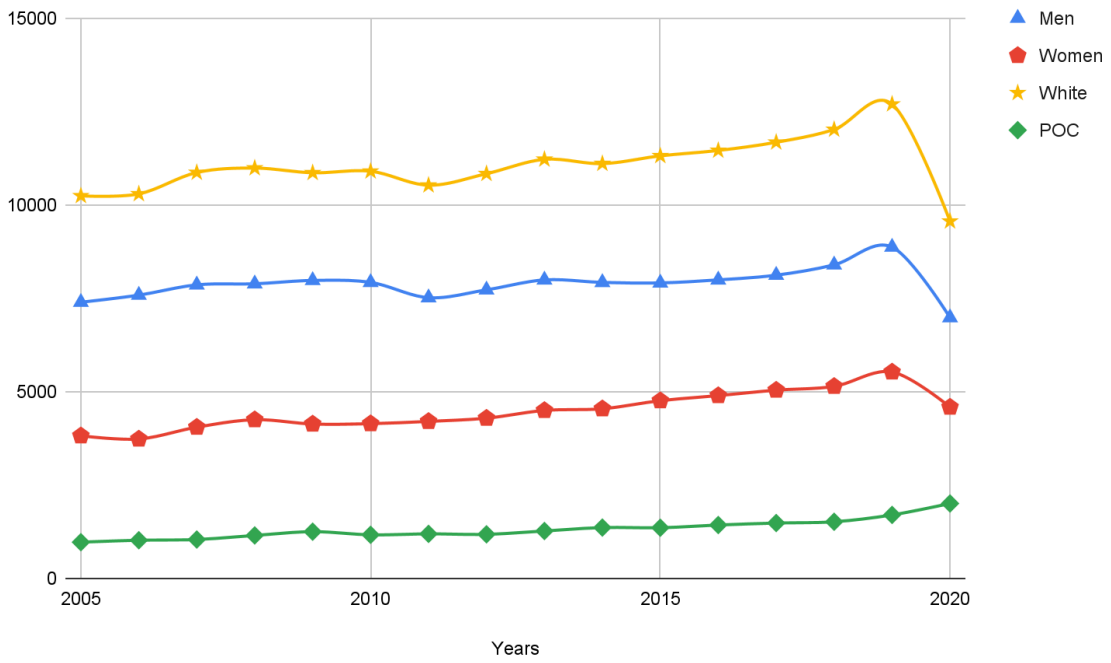


Table 1: Descriptive statistics [n = 19,7877]

Measures	Mean	SD
Adj. Income (2020 Dollars)	67135.02	60434.26
Sex	0.36	0.48
Age	48.29	12.97
Marital	0.28	0.45
Race	0.1075	0.31
Hours Worked	42.64	15.91

Note: Adjusted Income reports each respondent's total pre-tax personal income or losses from all sources for the previous year adjusted to 2020 dollars.

Figure 2: Percentage of Lawyers of ACS by year

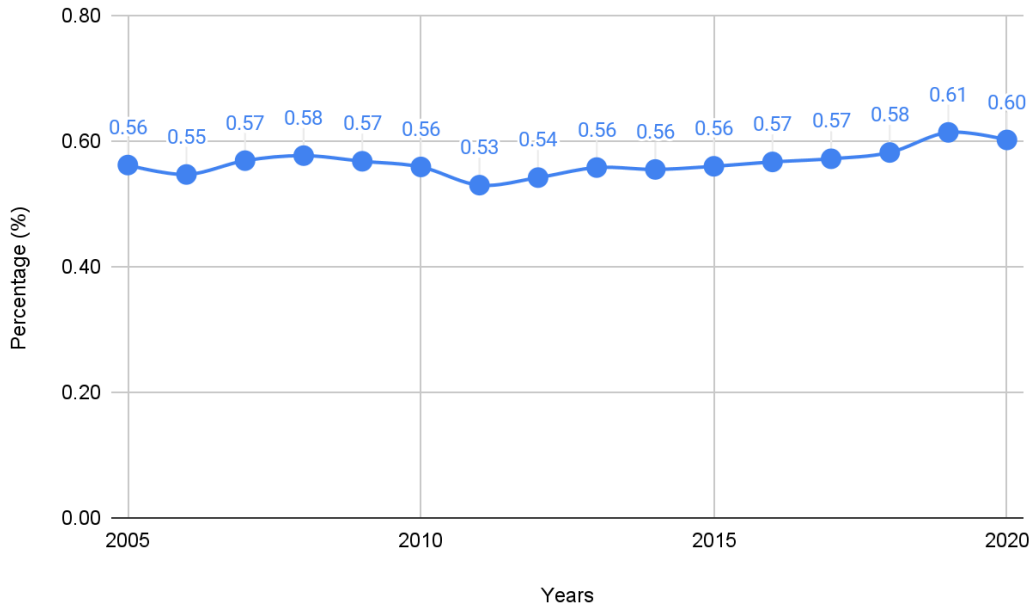


Figure 3: Percentage of Male & White Male lawyers vs Percentage of Women & WOC lawyers

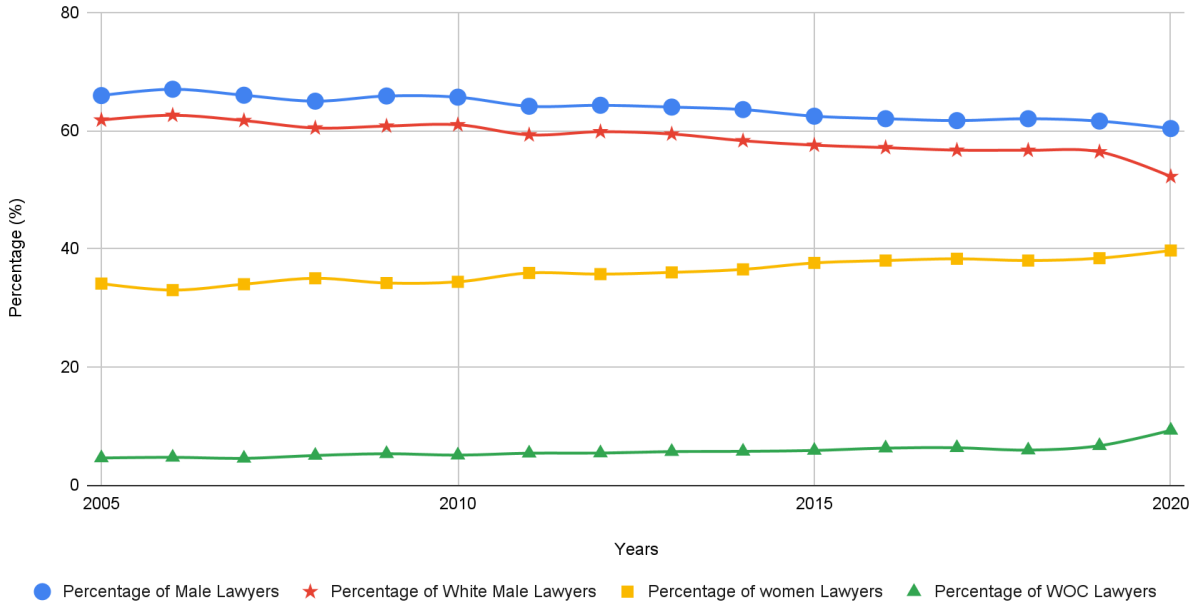


Figure 4: Percentage of Male lawyers for each age group

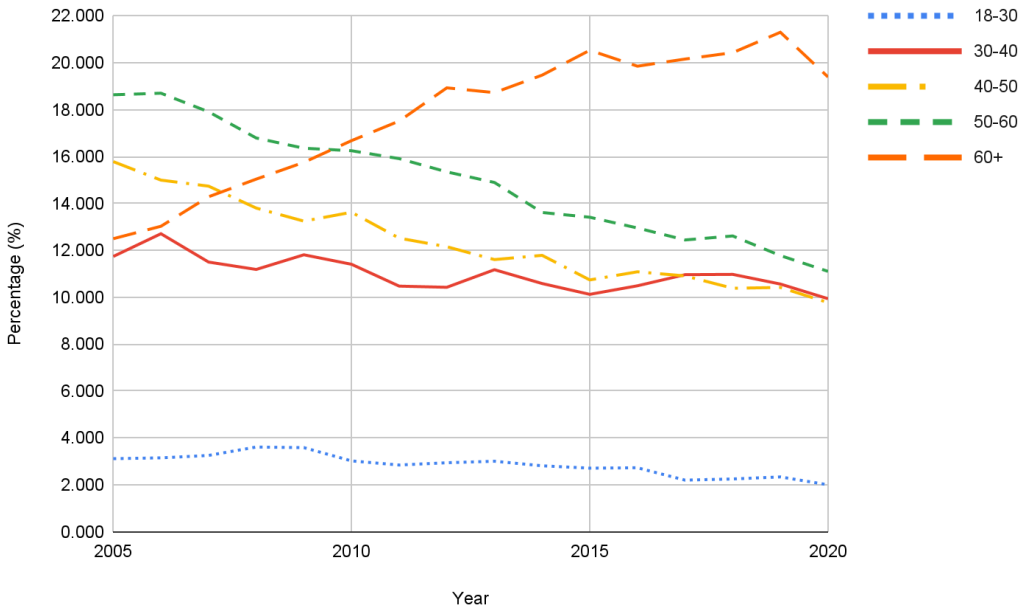


Figure 5: Percentage of White Men lawyers for each age group

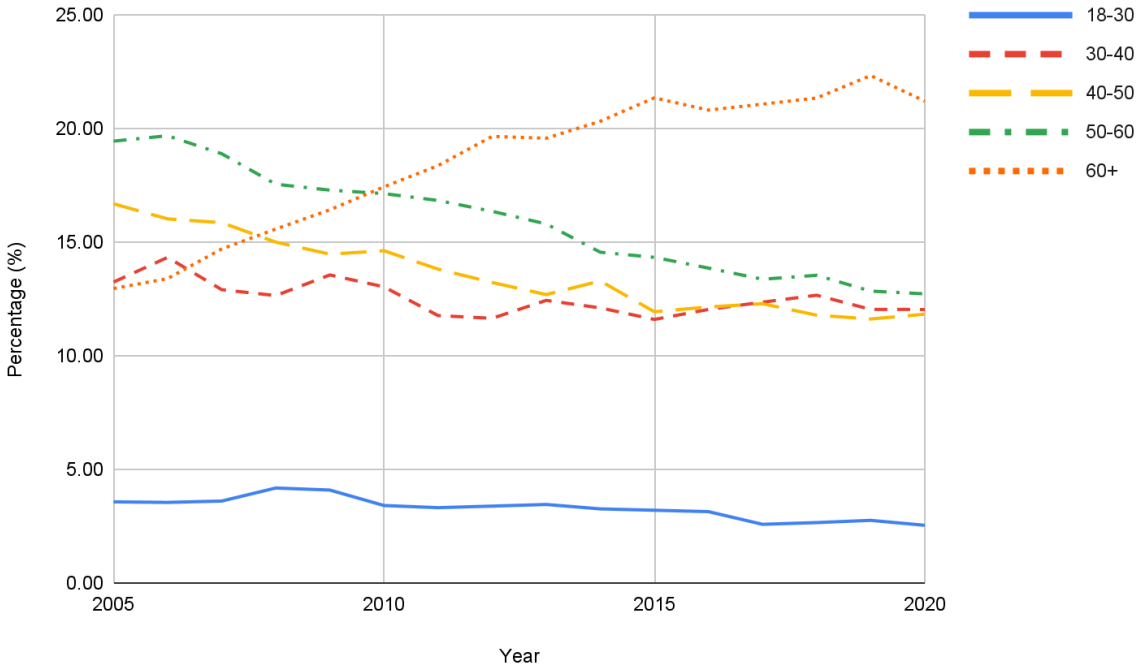


Figure 6: Average Income of Lawyers vs Percentage of Women & WOC lawyers

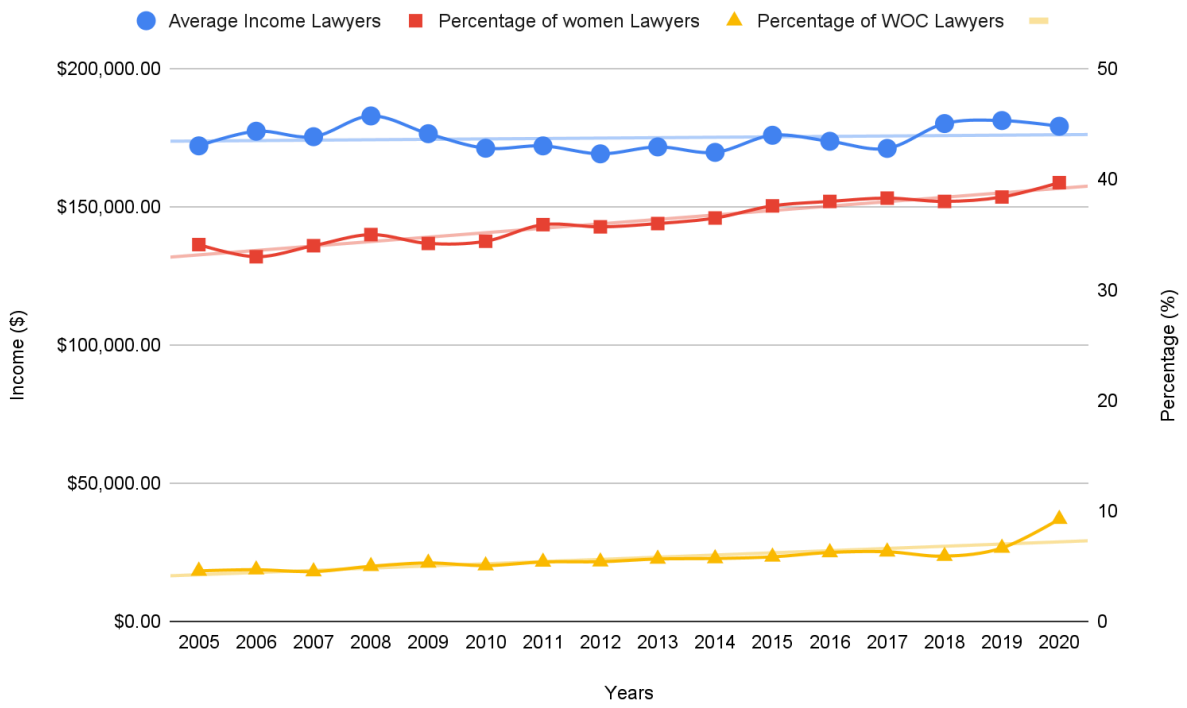


Figure 7: Predicted incomes by gender and race

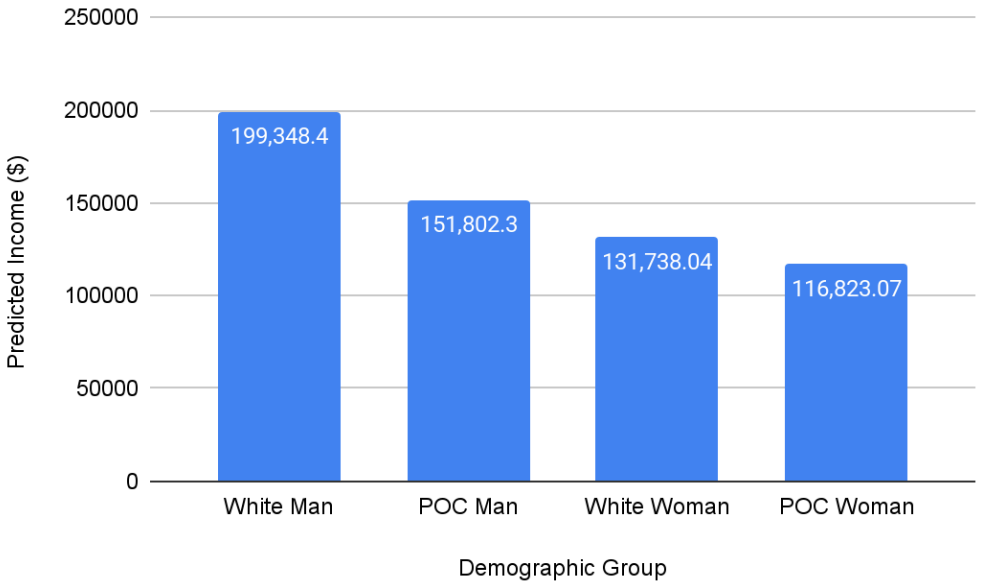


Figure 8: Predicted incomes by gender, race and control variables

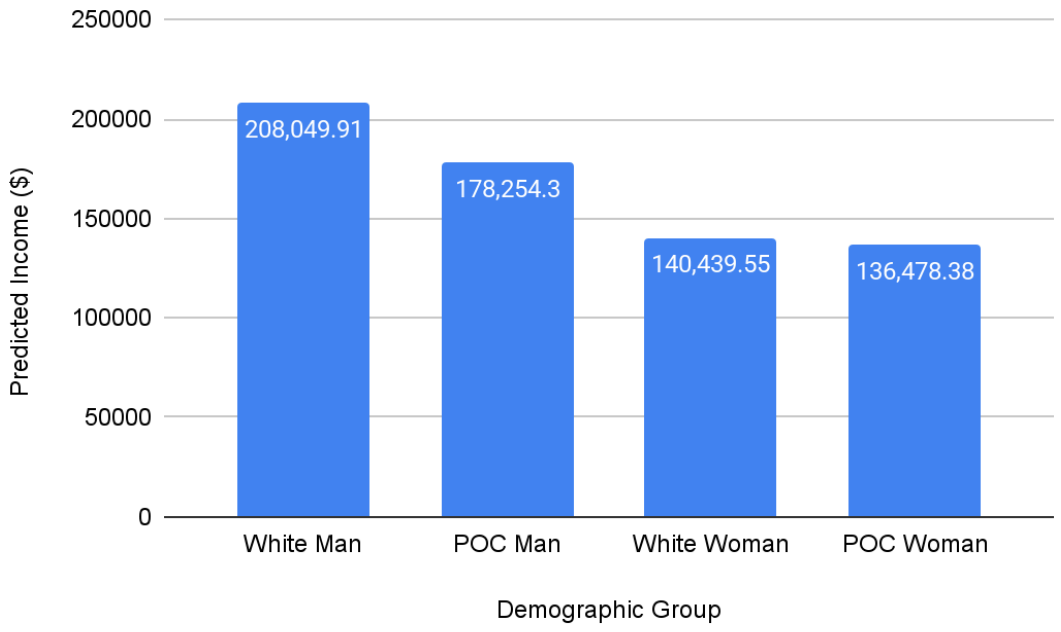


Figure 9: Predicted incomes by gender, race and control variables over the years

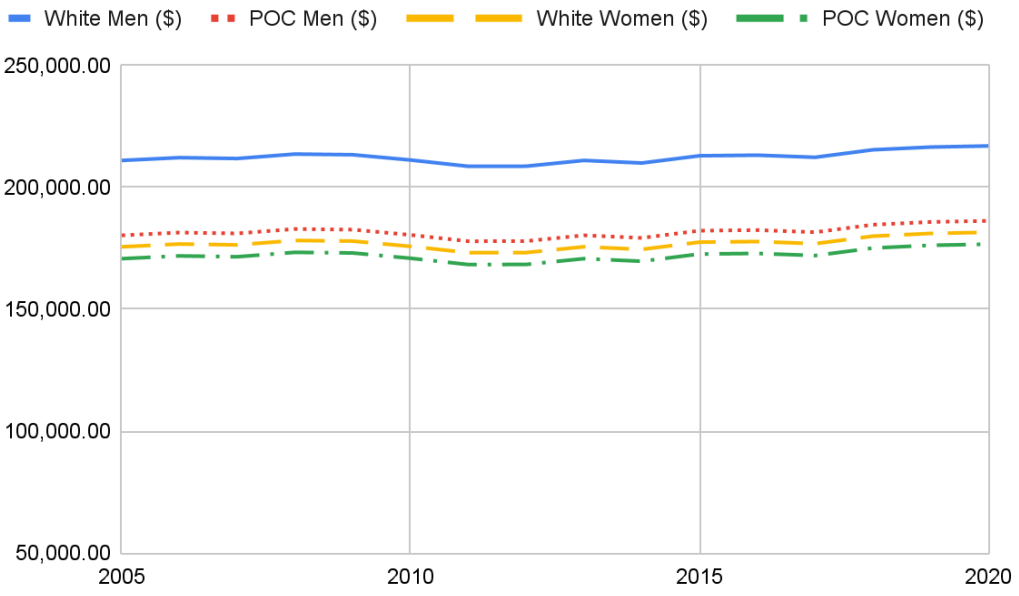
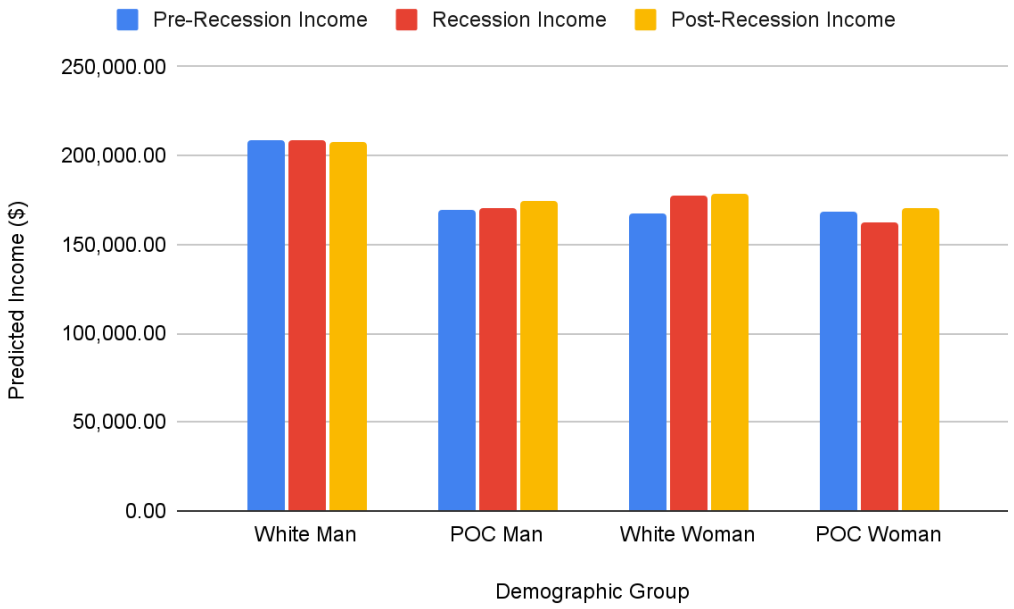


Figure 10: Predicted incomes by gender, race and control variables during different economies



Appendix

Table 2: Wage Inequality Models

	Dependent Variable:		
		Income	
	Equation 1	Equation 2	Equation 3
Constant	77,987.1***	-98,191.1***	-100,624.5***
	(172.987)	(1771.4)	(1864.6)
Gender	-26,449.8***	-13,707.8***	-13,849.150***
	(295.9)	(285.1)	(285.242)
Race	-18,600.5***	-11,656.3***	-12,011.7***
	(618.5)	(571.2)	(571.5)
Gender * Race	12,765.6***	10,106.7***	10,195.4***
	(863.4)	(792.6)	(791.9)
Age		4,091.9***	4,143.9***
		(75.5)	(75.6)
Age^2		-31.6***	-32.2***
		(-0.8)	(0.8)
Hours Worked		1,303.7***	1,305.5***
		(8.3)	(8.3)
Marital		-11,912.8***	-11,902.3***
		(281.2)	(280.92)
Year 2006			1147.2
			(719.9)
Year 2007			790.1
			(711.1)
Year 2008			2,609.5***
			(707.8)
Year 2009			2,342.4***
			(708.2)
Year 2010			176.7
			(708.9)
Year 2011			-2,405.8***
			(714.1)
Year 2012			-2,359.4***

			(709.9)
Year 2013			14.6
			(703.5)
Year 2014			-1055.6
			(703.9)
Year 2015			1,916.8***
			(701.6)
Year 2016			2,157.4***
			(698.9)
Year 2017			1,290.7*
			(695.7)
Year 2018			4,368.7***
			(691.4)
Year 2019			5,485.1***
			(682.4)
Year 2020			5,946.5***
			(718.6)
Observations	197,877	197,877	197,877
R2	0.047	0.198	0.2
Adjusted R2	0.047	0.198	0.2
Residual Std. Error	58,987.4 (df=197873)	54,113.2 (df=197869)	54,063.2 (df=197854)
F Statistic	3,276.4*** (df= 3; 197873)	6,990.8*** (df= 7; 197869)	2,245.8*** (df= 22; 197854)
Note:			*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 3: Economic Recession Recovery Models

	Dependent Variable:		
	Income		
	Pre Recession	Recession	Post Recession
Constant	-100,120.9***	-96,640.5***	-106,434.4***
	(4279.9)	(3116.2)	(2878.1)
Gender	-15,589.3***	-14,291.8***	-13,097.4***
	(697.6)	(503.3)	(456.5)
Race	-16,069.9***	-12,211.1***	-11,400.1***
	(1,460.9)	(1022.4)	(923.9)
Gender * Race	15,940.5***	9,037.2***	10,056.7***
	(2,056.7)	(1430.1)	(1270.7)
Age	4,312.2***	4,163.7***	4,319.8***
	(184.8)	(134.3)	(122.2)
Age^2	-34.2***	-33.3***	-33.4***
	(1.9)	(1.4)	(1.2)
Hours Worked	1,248.7***	1,260.3***	1,344.3***
	(20.2)	(14.6)	(13.2)
Marital	-10,946.4***	-11,084.8***	-12,153.1***
	(678.1)	(491.5)	(453.5)
Observations	34,480	60,120	77,286
R2	0.198	0.204	0.202
Adjusted R2	0.198	0.203	0.202
Residual Std. Error	53.908.6 (df=34472)	52,095.16 (df = 60112)	54,693.1 (df = 77278)
F Statistic	1,213.9*** (df= 7; 34472)	2,194.6*** (df = 7; 60112)	2,788.6*** (df = 7; 77278)
Note:		*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01	

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