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ORIENTATION DAY: A STARTING POINT FOR SUPPORTING THE FORMATION OF POSITIVE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AMONG UNDERGRADUATE LAW STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Law students who develop a positive professional identity during their legal education are more likely to be engaged with their studies, experience greater psychological wellbeing, cultivate connection with their potential future profession, and have more advantageous employment prospects. Existing scholarship recognises the value of intentionally supporting the formation of positive professional identity from the earliest stages of legal education, including during students' transition to university. Drawing on this scholarship, this article describes the design of the Bachelor of Laws Orientation Project ('LLB Orientation Project') implemented at Curtin University in February 2024. This article considers the literature concerning transition pedagogy, professional identity formation and undergraduate socialisation and then explains how it informed the design of three initiatives embedded within the Orientation Day program which was the focus of the LLB Orientation Project: an interactive survey encouraging students to reflect on their perceptions of lawyers, the legal profession and themselves; a masterclass on personal branding and professional identity; and videos featuring legal practitioners and judicial officers from various practice areas and career stages sharing their advice for commencing law students. In doing so, this article provides a practical example of how existing scholarship can be translated into Orientation Day initiatives designed to provide early support for the formation of positive professional identity among commencing undergraduate law students.

I INTRODUCTION

Professional identity is understood as 'the self that has been developed with the commitment to perform competently and legitimately in the context of the [relevant] profession'.[1] It is well-established in the

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literature that universities should assist students with the formation of their professional identity during the course of their studies.[2] The benefits to students of doing so are well-recognised, key among them being helping them 'to achieve good learning, to feel confident, and to stay motivated'.[3] For law students more specifically, research shows that their experience of university has an 'intense and transformative impact on [their] understanding of what it means to be a lawyer',[4] and that assisting them to develop a positive professional identity can promote engagement with their studies,[5] increase their psychological wellbeing,[6] offer a 'sense of purpose and connectedness to their future

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Generative Artificial Intelligence ('GenAI') tools were used to improve clarity of expression, structure and sequencing of ideas and discussion in various passages in the article, as well as to check for consistency in the use of key terminology. The authors critically reviewed all revisions suggested by Gen AI tools and modified them accordingly to ensure they accurately reflect the authors' understandings and perspectives. The authors confirm that GenAI tools were not deliberately used for identifying or reviewing sources referred to in the literature review or for research or data analysis purposes, noting that this excludes GenAI functionality embedded within subscription research databases.

1 Chin Pei Tan, HT Van der Molen and HG Schmidt, 'A Measure of Professional Identity Development for Professional Education' (2017) 42(8) *Studies in Higher Education* 1504, 1505.

2 See, eg, Kath Hall, Molly Townes O'Brien and Stephen Tang, 'Developing a Professional Identity in Law School: A View from Australia' (2010) 4(19) *Phoenix Law Review* 19; Franziska Trede, Rob Macklin and Donna Bridges, 'Professional Identity Development: A Review of the Higher Education Literature' (2012) 37(3) *Studies in Higher Education* 365, 368; Dorthe Høj Jensen and Jolanda Jetten, 'The Importance of Developing Students' Academic and Professional Identities in Higher Education' (2016) 57(8) *Journal of College Student Development* 1027; Denise Jackson, 'Developing Pre-Professional Identity in Undergraduates through Work-Integrated Learning' (2017) 74 *Higher Education* 833; Michael Tomlinson and Denise Jackson, 'Professional Identity Formation in Contemporary Higher Education Students' (2021) 46(4) *Studies in Higher Education* 885; Abigail Lewis, Denise Jackson and Dawn Bennett, 'Perceived Professional Identity Formation and Influencing Characteristics Among Speech Pathology Students' (2025) 16(1) *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability* 39; Doaa M Hanafy et al, 'Developing Professional Identity and Connection in Medical Laboratory Science Undergraduate Students Through an Online Learning Module' (2025) 46(2) *Australian Journal of Medical Science* 60.

3 Jensen and Jetten (n 2) 1034.

4 Stuart Scheingold and Austin Sarat, *Something to Believe In: Politics, Professionalism and Cause Lawyering* (Stanford University Press, 2004) 57.

5 Rachael Field, James Duffy and Anna Huggins, 'Supporting Transition to Law School and Student Well-being: The Role of Professional Legal Identity' (2013) 4(2) *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education* 15. Recent research by van Lamoen et al, involving university law students in the Netherlands, suggests that professional identity 'plays a role as a supportive factor at the transition to [university]', indicated by their research results showing 'the positive effect of professional identity on students' commitment to law school': Pieter M van Lamoen et al, 'Professional Identity Development and Sense of Belonging of Diverse Students at the Transition to Higher Education' (2026) 31(1) *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* 152, 167.

6 Ibid.

profession',[7] and enhance their employability.[8] It is therefore important that law students are supported to form a positive professional identity from the earliest stages of their legal education.

The literature reviewed in this article recognises the value of initiatives intended to support positive professional identity formation early in law students' legal education and identifies the transition to university as a useful beginning for the formation process. Drawing on this body of scholarship, this article describes the Bachelor of Laws Orientation Project ('LLB Orientation Project'), an initiative specifically designed to support the formation of positive professional identity among commencing undergraduate law students at Curtin Law School, part of Curtin University, in Western Australia.

This article begins, in Part II, by examining the literature concerning transition pedagogy and professional identity formation and explaining the value of supporting the formation of positive professional identity during law students' transition to university. Part III then introduces Weidman's Model of Undergraduate Socialisation as the conceptual framework informing the design of the LLB Orientation Project. It explains how the model conceptualises students' pre-existing identities as being reshaped through the academic and social influences they encounter at university, including in ways that affect the professional dimension of their future identity. Part IV describes the LLB Orientation Project first implemented at Curtin Law School at the beginning of Semester 1, 2024 and subsequently delivered for commencing undergraduate law students in 2025 and 2026. It also presents qualitative and quantitative data collected in 2024 through one of the Project initiatives, offering insights into how commencing undergraduate law students perceive themselves, lawyers and the legal profession. Part V considers the limitations of the LLB Orientation Project and survey data and identifies opportunities for further research.

The purpose of this article is to describe the design and implementation of the LLB Orientation Project, a novel initiative informed by existing scholarship pertaining to transition pedagogy, professional identity formation and undergraduate socialisation, and in doing so illustrate one approach to using Orientation Day programs to support the early development of positive professional identity among commencing undergraduate law students. The potential value for students of doing so is indicated by the existing scholarship. Possible benefits include promoting engagement with university studies, fostering a sense of belonging and wellbeing at university, contributing to career-readiness, and shaping positive perceptions of the law, lawyers and the legal profession.

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7 Sandra Noakes and Anna Cody, 'Building a (Self) Reflective Muscle in Diverse First-Year Law Students' (2022) 32 *Legal Education Review* 69, 80.

8 Jill Alexander, 'Modelling Employability Through Clinical Legal Education: Building Confidence and Professional Identity' (2023) 57(2) *The Law Teacher* 135.

II THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORTING THE FORMATION OF POSITIVE PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AMONG COMMENCING LAW STUDENTS

Kift's transformative research on transition pedagogy establishes that for undergraduate students, the first year at university must 'foster a critical sense of belonging and student identity, through involvement and connectedness with the students' university and discipline'.[9] Central to transition pedagogy is the notion that students' 'early experiences at university [can] be enhanced by the proactive curation of a "sense of belonging through involvement, engagement and connectedness", including explicitly to the external world of communities, work and future professionalism'.[10] Over the last decade or so, the principles of transition pedagogy have been applied to design and implement strategies and initiatives aimed at supporting commencing undergraduate students as they progress through their first year studies. Examples implemented at Australian universities include: a co-ordinated 'First Year Program' across university academic, administrative and support functions;[11] the implementation of 'First Year Experience' forums and appointment of 'First Year Experience' coordinators in university faculties;[12] the development of a university-wide 'Transition Framework' intended to coordinate the work of academic and professional staff in supporting incoming undergraduate students;[13] and a 'First Year Skills – Getting Started Module' comprising topics relevant to academic skills development incorporated in the first six weeks of tutorials.[14] These strategies and initiatives demonstrate the capacity of universities to assist undergraduate students to successfully transition into their first year university studies through learning, teaching and assessment approaches intentionally designed to engage and support students and assist them to feel a sense of belonging and positive student identity.[15]

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9 Sally Kift, 'A Decade of Transition Pedagogy: A Quantum Leap in Conceptualising the First Year' (2015) 2 *HERDSA Review of Higher Education* 51, 54.

10 Sally Kift, 'Two Decades of Transition Pedagogy: An Integrative Framework for Conceptual Consilience' (2025) 16(3) *Student Success* 16, 21 (citations omitted).

11 Kathy Egea and Jo McKenzie, 'Transition Pedagogy in Action: A 15-Year Institutional Journal: A Practice Report' (2025) 16(3) *Student Success* 105.

12 Kathy Egea, Neela Griffiths and Jo McKenzie, 'An Evolving Approach to Developing Academics' Understanding of Transition for First Year Students: A Practice Report' (2014) 5(2) *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education* 103.

13 Kelly Linden, Sarah Teakel and Neil van der Ploeg, 'Seen and Supported: Implementing a University-Wide Transition Framework to Improve First-Year Success' (2025) 16(3) *Student Success* 67.

14 Belinda McCarten et al, 'Evaluation of an Embedded Transition Support Module: Bringing Academic Skills and Peers into First-Year Classrooms' (2025) 16(2) *Student Success* 37, 38.

15 See generally Sally Kift, *Articulating a Transition Pedagogy to Scaffold and to Enhance the First Year Student Learning Experience in Australian Higher Education* (Report, August 2009) Australian Learning and Teaching Council <https://transitionpedagogy.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Kift-Sally-ALTC-Senior-Fellowship-Report-Sep-09.pdf>.

The formation of positive student identity during the transition to university is well-recognised in the literature as an important contributor to student success.[16] This literature focuses predominantly on the formation of a student's learner identity and the associated impact of this on their sense of belonging during the initial stages of their undergraduate studies. Briggs and Clark, for example, have offered a model of the process of transition and the formation of learner identity which they suggest can be implemented to aide effective student transition from school to university.[17] From a similar viewpoint, McFarlane's research examines the effects of a year-long program designed to immerse Scottish high school students in higher education on the formation of their higher education learner identities.[18] McFarlane's research concluded that, for students from disadvantaged backgrounds in particular, immersion in higher education whilst still attending high school has the capacity to contribute to the formation of positive higher education learner identities by offering students the opportunity to 'imagine their future selves as [higher education] students'.[19] Separately, Ding and Curtis have studied this subject from the perspective of international students, using a narrative inquiry approach to describe the learner identity formation experienced by a student from mainland China at a Hong Kong university.[20]

In contrast with this research focusing on students' learner identity, the literature describes relatively few initiatives targeting the formation of students' professional identity during the transition to university.[21] The literature does, however, examine initiatives designed to foster students' professional identity formation during the first year of study more generally. For example, Field, Duffy and Huggins describe additions initiated to the first year curriculum and assessment design which connected law students at an Australian university with legal practitioners.[22] These additions were designed 'as pedagogical trigger points; a conscious attempt to support the pathways thinking of [their] students so that *they* attempt to create plausible routes to the goal of professional fulfilment and positive professional identity'.[23] These researchers identify clear benefits of doing so: supporting first year

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16 Karen Seary et al, 'STEPS, LEAPS and Bounds: Is There a Recipe for Success?' (2023) 20(4) *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice* 8, 9; van Lamoen et al (n 5) 153.

17 ARJ Briggs, J Clark and I Hall, 'Building Bridges: Understanding Student Transition to University' (2012) 18(1) *Quality in Higher Education* 3.

18 Karen McFarlane, 'Higher Education Learner Identity for Successful Student Transitions' (2018) 37(6) *Higher Education Research and Development* 1201. Similarly designed programs have been implemented elsewhere, including in the Australian context: see, eg, L Scanlon, '"I've Learnt a Lot. Not Being Taught Something but Thinking for Myself": Engaging Students in Authentic University Learning Experiences in Senior High School' (2004) 25(1) *Teaching & Learning* 79.

19 McFarlane (n 18) 1213.

20 Feng Ding and Fiona Curtis, '"I Feel Lost and Somehow Messy": A Narrative Inquiry into the Identity Struggle of a First-Year University Student' (2021) 40(6) *Higher Education Research & Development* 1146.

21 van Lamoen et al (n 5).

22 Field, Duffy and Huggins (n 5).

23 Ibid 21 (emphasis in original).

students to develop a positive professional identity boosts their engagement with their learning and sense of wellbeing, and thereby contributes to a constructive transition into law school.[24] Further, against the backdrop of research pointing to heightened levels of psychological distress and risk of depression among law students,[25] research by Hall, O'Brien and Tang concludes that there is value in legal educators instituting greater balance in the curricula by finding ways to develop empathy and resilience among law students, qualities which they identify as being key aspects of professional identity necessary for a sense of wellbeing as both students and as future legal professionals.[26] More recent research conducted by van Lamoen et al, also undertaken in the context of law students, considers the influence of the inclusion of profession-oriented activities early in the first year curricula and posits that the formation of positive professional identity can strengthen students' commitment to persisting at law school in the face of academic challenges.[27]

Despite the comparatively little attention directed to the transition period itself as an opportunity for assisting the formation of positive professional identity, the literature nevertheless acknowledges the value of such an approach. As Reid et al observe, entering university 'can be seen as the start of a trajectory of professional identity formation, which includes both the appropriation of a body of knowledge and of the history, social practices, skills and discourses that are part of the respective discipline or profession that is studied'.[28] Relevantly, it has been observed that for law students, the transition to university is integral to the formation of positive professional identity, given the likelihood that their decision to study law was influenced by 'strong professionally oriented motives'.[29]

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24 Ibid.

25 Norm Kelk et al, 'Courting the Blues: Attitudes Towards Depression in Australian Law Students and Lawyers', *Council of Australian Law Deans (CALD)* <https://cald.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/BMRI-Report-Courting-the-BluesLaw-Report-Website-version-4-May-091.pdf>.

26 Kath Hall, Molly Townes O'Brien and Stephen Tang, 'Developing a Professional Identity in Law School: A View from Australia' (2010) 4(1) *Phoenix Law Review* 21. As McEwan and Price identify, this includes clinical legal education iniatives which, when done effectively, '[play] a significant role in … forming the professional identities that students require for a successful transition into practice': Alexandra McEwan and Luke Price, 'Assessing the Transformative Learning Impact of International Study Tours in Clinical Legal Education' (2026) 36(1) *Legal Education Review* 4.

27 van Lamoen et al (n 5) 170.

28 Anna Reid et al, 'Identity and Engagement for Professional Formation' (2008) 33(6) *Studies in Higher Education* 729, 730. See also Rachael Field, James Duffy and Anna Huggins, 'Supporting Transition to Law School and Student Well-being: The Role of Professional Legal Identity' (2013) 4(2) *The International Journal of the First Year in Higher Education* 15, 18; Kath Hall, Molly Townes O'Brien and Stephen Tang, 'Developing a Professional Identity in Law School: A View from Australia' (2010) 4(1) *Phoenix Law Review* 21, 38.

29 van Lamoen et al (n 5) 154. van Lamoen et al observe this to be acknowledged in existing research, although explain that their own research findings 'do not provide evidence for the transition to [university] as a developmental stage for professional identity': at 167.

The LLB Orientation Project described in this article was an initiative informed by this as the starting premise. Acknowledging the established links between initiatives aimed at the formation of positive professional identity and students' feelings of belonging and wellbeing during their transition into university, the LLB Orientation Project sought to launch the process of positive professional identity formation among undergraduate law students at an Orientation Day held in the week immediately prior to the formal commencement of their university studies. Part III of this article outlines the conceptual framework that informed the design of this initiative, namely Weidman's Model of Undergraduate Socialisation. This model offers a useful framework for understanding the process of the formation of students' identity, including their professional identity.

III THE PROCESS OF FORMATION OF STUDENTS' PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY

Weidman's Model of Undergraduate Socialisation, originally conceptualised in 1989, identifies a series of four processes that influence the formation of a university student's identity, including their future identity and its professional dimensions.[30] These are the processes by which a student: commences university having already adopted certain values, aspirations and goals; is exposed to socialising influences while attending university; assesses the influence of behavioural expectations encountered at university on their personal goals; and subsequently changes or maintains the values, aspirations and goals which they held upon commencing university.[31] Essentially, the model views the undergraduate university experience as 'a set of normative contexts (academic and social) in which socialization processes (interpersonal, intrapersonal, and integration) occur and influence significant outcomes (affective and cognitive) related to student identity formation'.[32] Although Weidman's model references the broader concept of students' 'future identity', this article is interested specifically in the professional dimension of that future identity. As is explained in this section, the model provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding how law students begin to form their professional identity during their undergraduate studies.

Since its inception in 1989, Weidman's model has been applied in research aimed at understanding the formation of students' identities during the course of their tertiary studies.[33] Weidman, DeAngelo and Bethea, reflecting on the application of the model by others in research directed at student development, observe that the model's utility is

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30 John Weidman, 'Undergraduate Socialization: A Conceptual Approach' in John Smart (ed), *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research* (Agathon Press, 1989).

31 Ibid 301.

32 John C Weidman, Linda DeAngelo and Kathryn A Bethea, 'Understanding Student Identity From a Socialization Perspective' (2014) 166 *New Directions for Higher Education* 43, 49.

33 Ibid 45.

demonstrated by its capacity to 'inform our understanding of identity development in [university] and assist practitioners to develop programs and practices aimed at assisting students with building a strong sense of self'.[34] Of particular relevance is Bleasdale and Humphreys' work, which draws on Weidman's model to understand how law students' 'distinctive past and future identities' impact their sense of well-being at university.[35] Their work provides a useful illustration of the model's application in the context of legal education.

Bleasdale and Humphreys define identity generally as 'our understanding of who we are, where we belong in the world and our purpose—including our potential future identity'.[36] They observe that a person has past, present and future identities that are 'formed through interactions with the social environment' and that the process of identity formation is therefore a dynamic one which is influenced by the setting in which a person finds themselves.[37] The conceptual framework offered by Weidman's model serves as the starting point for Bleasdale and Humphreys, which is that a student's university experience serves to 'reinforce or challenge' their past, present and future identities.[38] As they explain:

> [A]n undergraduate may have been a school student (past identity), currently be a law student (present identity), and wish to be a lawyer (future identity). The university environment may enable them to enact these roles, thereby confirming these academic and career identities, which in turn reinforces their salience.[39]

This conceptualisation of identity acknowledges that a student's future identity is shaped not only by their university experience, but also by their prior experiences and their 'ideas about their future'.[40] A student's socio-economic status, academic aptitude, parental expectations and interactions with other significant figures in the student's life prior to their commencement at university each play a part in forming their future identity.[41] For law students in particular, research shows that their exposure to popular culture references in film, television and novels contribute to their preconceived ideas about the law, lawyers and the legal profession,[42] and thereby also influence the formation of the professional dimension of their future identity.

Weidman's model points to a range of academic and social influences which may alter students' preconceived ideas, aspirations and goals during their time at university. These include: the quality of the university and the course being studied, evaluation of the student's

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34 Ibid 43.

35 Lydia Bleasdale and Sarah Humphreys, 'Identity, Well-being and Law Students' in Caroline Strevens and Rachael Field (eds), *Educating for Well-Being in Law: Positive Professional Identities and Practice* (Routledge, 2019) 172.

36 Ibid 176.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid 177.

40 Ibid 176.

41 Weidman (n 30) 301–4.

42 Micheal Asimow et al, 'Perception of Lawyers—A Transnational Study of Student Views on the Image of Law and Lawyers' (2005) 12(3) *International Journal of the Legal Profession* 407.

work by teaching staff, expectations and standards for student conduct, the student's participation in extra-curricular university activities, the student's living arrangements; and the extent of the student's engagement with their studies, peers and staff.[43] Weidman's model, in essence, 'views the campus as a set of normative contexts (academic and social) in which socialization processes … occur and influence significant outcomes … related to student identity development'.[44] These outcomes include the career choices, lifestyle preferences, aspirations and values of the student.[45]

The socialisation processes identified in Weidman's model have particular implications for legal education. Field, Duffy and Huggins suggest that for many law students, law school is where their perceptions of the legal profession '"get real", where the curriculum takes over from TV images and cultural stereotypes, and where students are introduced to the genuine expectations of legal practice'.[46] They therefore emphasise the importance of law students' exposure to a range of positive representations of the legal profession, emphasising meaningful intrinsic rewards and motivations, in their first year of law school, on the basis that students who form a positive professional identity tend to have a greater sense of psychological wellbeing.[47]

The design of the LLB Orientation Project was informed by the understanding that the process of professional identity formation among law students begins before they commence university and is shaped by the academic and social experiences they are exposed to at university. The Project was therefore designed to encourage students to begin forming positive connections between their past, present and future identities from the earliest stage of their transition to law school. It sought to achieve this through three initiatives embedded in the Orientation Day program. These initiatives are described in Part IV of this article.

IV THE BACHELOR OF LAWS ORIENTATION PROJECT

For the LLB Orientation Project, students newly enrolled in Curtin Law Schools's Bachelor of Laws ('LLB') course (including LLB double degree students) were invited to attend a day-long Orientation Day scheduled in the week immediately prior to the commencement of Semester 1 classes. In addition to traditional Orientation Day presentations and activities, three new initiatives were introduced into the program. These are described in turn in the remainder of Part IV of this article.

Students who were unable to attend the Orientation Day in person were provided with access to recordings of all sessions via the university's Learning Management System. Copies of all PowerPoint

43 Weidman (n 30) 301–12.
44 Weidman, DeAngelo and Bethea (n 32) 49.
45 Weidman (n 30) 299.
46 Field, Duffy and Huggins (n 5).
47 Ibid 18.

slides used throughout the day were also made available. Although these students were unable to participate in the live interactive elements of the Orientation Day program, access to the recordings did enable them to engage with the Project's central theme of professional identity. This is consistent with the Project's overarching objective of providing early support for the formation of positive professional identity among commencing law students.

A *Interactive survey of student perceptions of themselves, lawyers and the legal profession*

At the start of the Orientation Day, students were given the opportunity to participate in an interactive survey which focused their attention on their past, present and future identities. Human research ethics approval was obtained in respect of this survey from Curtin University's Human Research Ethics Office.[48]

The qualitative and quantitative data collected from the survey is presented in this part of the article to provide an example of how commencing undergraduate law students at an Australian university perceive themselves, lawyers and the legal profession. Importantly, the data collected demonstrates a central tenet of Weidman's Model of Undergraduate Socialisation: that an undergraduate student's identity, including their future identity, is shaped by their past values and experiences and their perceptions of their future professional role.

1 *Participants*

Participants in the survey were students newly enrolled in Curtin Law Schools's LLB course in attendance at the Orientation Day held prior to the commencement of Semester 1, 2024. Pursuant to the associated human research ethics approval,[49] all students in attendance were, upon their arrival, provided with a Participant Information Statement explaining the nature of the project and a Consent Form for their completion should they decide to participate in the survey.

There were approximately 100 or so students in attendance at the Orientation Day. This was slightly more than half of the 196 students enrolled in the two compulsory first year LLB units.[50] Of the 100 students in attendance at the Orientation Day, 80 participated in the survey. These 80 students represented 40.82% of the potential sample, namely all students enrolled in the two compulsory first year LLB units. The authors note that pursuant to the human research ethics approval, participation in the survey was voluntary and restricted to those of 18 years of age or older.

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48 Curtin University Research Ethics Office Approval Number: HRE2024-0063.

49 Curtin University Research Ethics Office Approval Number: HRE2024-0063.

50 There were 196 students enrolled in either or both of LAWS1005 Legal Foundations and LAWS1006 Legal Research and Writing for 2024. These units are the two compulsory first year, first semester units required to be studied as part of Curtin Law School's Bachelor of Laws course.

The age distribution of the participants was largely between 18-20 years old (73.75%), reflecting the fact that the majority of participants were high school leavers (70%) and new to university. See Tables 1 and 2 below.

Table 1: Age distribution of the LLB Orientation project participants

Age of the participants	Number of responses (N)
20 years old and under	59
21-30 years old	6
31-40 years old	1
41 years old and above	0
Did not answer	14
TOTAL	80

Table 2: Background of the LLB Orientation project participants

Background of the participants	Number of responses
School leaver	56
Overseas student	1
Mature age student	9
Other	0
Did not answer	14
TOTAL	80

2 *Research method*

The research method employed for the purposes of the interactive survey was the survey method, given its appropriateness for the sample size.[51] This method facilitated the data collection required for the purposes of the LLB Orientation Project, namely a series of both closed-ended and open-ended questions which did not require substantial elaboration.

Participants were asked to participate in a one-off interactive survey facilitated through Mentimeter online, which is an 'audience engagement platform'.[52] The survey was administered through Mentimeter so that data could be collated instantaneously and displayed to participants in real time, prior to the masterclass on personal branding. This provided participants, and non-participating students in attendance, with an understanding of the cohort's collective perception of themselves, lawyers and the legal profession. All data displayed during the exercise were non-identifiable and anonymous.

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[51] Wing Hong Chui, 'Quantitative Legal Research' in Mike McConville and Wing Hong Chui (eds), *Research Methods for Law* (Edinburgh University Press, 2017) 48.

[52] Mentimeter, *Features* (Web Page) <https://www.mentimeter.com/features>.

The questions posed during the Mentimeter interactive survey exercise were informed by Weidman's Model of Undergraduate Socialization, described in Part III of this article, and crafted to have students reflect on their past, present and future professional identities. The questions covered three broad categories:

(a) *current values, aspirations and goals;*

(b) *future aspirations with respect to personal brand and professional identity; and*

(c) *general understanding and management of personal brand and professional identity.*

Firstly, to encourage students to reflect on their current values, aspirations and goals and how these influence their professional identity, the following questions were posed:

- What is your idea of professional success?
- At this point in time, do you intend to work as a lawyer when you graduate?
- Do you know any lawyers? If yes, what is their relationship to you?
- When you picture a lawyer, who do you think of?
- What characteristics and qualities do you think are desirable to be a successful lawyer?

Following these questions, to prepare students for the upcoming masterclass on personal branding and professional identity, a series of indirect questions about personal branding were posed. These were intended to have students reflect on their future aspirations with respect to their personal brand and professional identity. The questions were:

- Do you think your current attributes align/match/position you well for a career as a lawyer?
- Do you think you will need to rebrand yourself in order to have a successful career as a lawyer?
- Finally, once the masterclass on personal branding and professional identity had commenced, a further series of questions was posed regarding students' understanding and management of their personal brand. The questions were:
- What are three words which you associate with 'personal branding'?
- At this point in time, to what extent do you manage your personal brand?

Taken together, these questions were intended to encourage students to reflect on the beliefs, motivations and aspirations they brought with them to law school before they were introduced to alternative perspectives later in the Orientation Day program. This reflection was particularly important in light of research suggesting that students'

reflections on their motivations for pursuing a career in the legal profession is a critical aspect of professional identity formation.[53]

3 *Results*

(a) Questions regarding current values, aspirations, and goals

To ascertain students' current values, aspirations and goals relating to their future career, the following open-ended question was posed: 'What is your idea of professional success?' Students were not required to respond and could submit multiple responses. Table 3 below outlines the distribution of responses to this question.

Of the 80 participants, 64 provided a response to this question, and in total 88 responses were provided. The most common response related to monetary wealth or status, representing 30.68% (N=27) of the responses. A representative sample of the qualitative responses include 'money', 'rich', 'big house', 'Porsche', etc. The next common response related to corporate status or network (N=10), professional fulfilment (N=10) and personal fulfilment (N=10), with each response category reflecting 11.36% of the responses. Other noticeable responses included helping others (N=9), comfort and stability (N=6) and pop culture references (N=4).

Table 3: Student responses to: 'What is your idea of professional success?'

Response	Number of responses
Response related to monetary wealth or status, e.g. 'money', 'rich', 'big house', 'Porsche' or similar	27
Response related to corporate status or network, e.g. 'corporate ladder', 'connections' or similar	10
Response related to professional fulfilment, e.g. 'satisfied professionally', 'engaging work' or similar	10
Response related to personal fulfilment, e.g. 'happiness', 'enjoying what I do', 'personal satisfaction', 'meaningful relationships'	10
Response related to helping others, 'impacting society in a positive way', 'human rights', 'environmental law', 'compassion' or similar	9
Yes or No response	7
Response related to comfort and stability	6
Response related to popular culture, e.g. 'Fortnite', 'Elle Woods', emojis or similar	4
Response related to purpose, determination, leadership or similar	3
Response related to work life balance, e.g. 'having	2

[53] Field, Duffy and Huggins (n 5) 16.

fun' or similar	
TOTAL	88

To gauge the portion of students intending to work in the legal profession upon graduation from law school, the following question was posed: 'At this point in time, do you intend to work as a lawyer when you graduate?' This was a close-ended question with the following response options: "Yes", "No" and "Not sure". Students were not required to respond and could only submit one response. Table 4 below outlines the distribution of responses to this question.

Of the 80 registered participants, 69 provided a response to this question. Over 65.22% of students who provided a response indicated that they intend to work as a lawyer upon graduation (N=45). Only 7.25% indicated that they did not intend to work as a lawyer (N=5), and 27.54% were unsure (N=19).

Table 4: Student responses to: 'At this point in time, do you intend to work as a lawyer when you graduate?'

Response	Number of responses
Yes	45
No	5
Not sure	19
TOTAL	69

To understand the extent of students' previous interactions with and exposure to lawyers and the legal profession, the following question was posed: 'Do you know any lawyers? If yes, what is their relationship to you?' This was a close-ended question with the following response options: "Yes—immediate family", "Yes—extended family", "Yes—friends" and "No". Students were not required to respond and could only submit one response. Table 5 below outlines the distribution of responses to this question.

Seventy of the 80 registered participants provided a response to this question. Notably, 65.71% of students who provided a response knew a lawyer (N=46), either in their immediate family (N=13), extended family (N=12) or circle of friends (N=21), whereas 34.29% did not know a lawyer (N=24).

Table 5: Student responses to: 'Do you know any lawyers? If yes, what is their relationship to you?'

Response	Number of responses
Yes—immediate family	13
Yes—extended family	12

Yes—friends	21
No	24
TOTAL	70

To have students consciously reflect on their preconceived ideas of lawyers, the following open-ended question was posed: 'When you picture a lawyer, who do you think of?' Students were not required to respond and could submit multiple responses. Table 6 below outlines the distribution of responses to this question.

Of the 80 registered participants, 48 provided a response to this question, and a total of 51 responses were provided. Despite the fact that over half of students who responded to the previous question indicated they knew a lawyer personally (i.e. 65.71%), a significant portion of the responses to this question (N=38) (i.e. 73.08%) referenced a fictional lawyer character from television shows, movies, or books. A representative sample of the qualitative responses include Harvey Specter (N=15),[54] Elle Woods (N=9),[55] and Saul Goodman (N=8).[56] Interestingly, only 11.54% of responses to the question cited a non-fictional person that has some connection to the law and/or legal profession (N=6).

Table 6: Student responses to: 'When you picture a lawyer, who do you think of?'

Response	Number of responses
Harvey Specter (Television show: Suits)	15
Elle Woods (Movie: Legally Blonde)	9
Saul Goodman (Television show: Better Call Saul)	8
Adjectives and general descriptions of characteristics of a lawyer, e.g. 'big ego', 'full of yourself', 'legal eagle', 'man in a suit', 'professional', 'suit' or similar	6
Responses referencing themselves, e.g. 'me', 'myself' or similar	2
Mike Ross (Television show: Suits)	1
Atticus Finch (Book: To Kill a Mockingbird)	1
Howard Hamlin (Television show: Better Call Saul)	1

[54] IMBd, *Suits* (Web Page) <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt1632701/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1>. Harvey Specter is the fictional lead character in the American legal drama television series called 'Suits' (2011-2019).

[55] IMBd, *Legally Blonde* (Web Page) <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0250494/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1>. Elle Woods is the fictional lead character in the American comedy movie called 'Legally Blonde' (2011-2019).

[56] IMBd, *Better Call Saul* (Web Page) <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt3032476/?ref_=fn_al_tt_1>. Saul Goodman is the fictional lead character in the American legal drama television series called 'Better Call Saul' (2015-2022).

Jimmy McGill (Television show: Better Call Saul)	1
Kim Wexler (Television show: Better Call Saul)	1
Jesse Pinkman (Television show: Breaking Bad)	1
Nelson Mandela	1
Martin Luther King Jnr	1
Matt Keogh MP	1
My friend	1
Unexplainable response, e.g. 'Donald Trump', 'Hussenburg' or similar	2
TOTAL	52

The data in Tables 5 and 6 above suggests that despite students personally knowing lawyers in their immediate circle, their preconceived ideas of the law, the legal profession and lawyers tend to be influenced by popular culture, this being consistent with research from the United States.[57]

To continue having students reflect on their preconceived ideas of lawyers, students were asked the following open-ended question: 'What characteristics and qualities do you think are desirable to be a successful lawyer?' Students were not required to respond and could submit multiple responses. Table 7 below outlines the distribution of responses to this question.

Forty-six of the 80 participants provided a response to this question, and a total of 74 responses were provided. The three most popular characteristics and qualities suggested in these responses were determination (cited by 14.86% (N=11)), critical thinking (cited by 13.5% (N=10)), and interpersonal skills (12.16% (N=9)).

Table 7: Student responses to: 'What characteristics and qualities do you think are desirable to be a successful lawyer?'

Response	Number of responses
Response related to determination, e.g. 'determined', 'diligence', 'drive', 'discipline', 'perseverance', 'grit', 'studious' or similar	11
Response related to critical thinking, e.g. 'critical thinking', 'analytical skills', 'problem solving', 'logical thinking' or similar	10
Response related to interpersonal skills, e.g. 'empathy', 'social skills', 'soft skills', 'compassion', 'accepting', 'patient' or similar	9
Response related to confidence, e.g. 'confidence', 'boldness', 'full of yourself', 'assertive', 'firm' or similar	7

[57] Asimow (n 42).

Response related to intelligence, e.g. 'smart', 'intelligent', 'huge brain' or similar	5
Response related to appearance, e.g. 'suit', 'can dress', 'tie' or similar	4
Response related to charisma, e.g. 'charisma', 'rizz' or similar	4
Response related to argumentative, e.g. 'argumentative', 'can argue' or similar	3
Response related to fictional legal character, e.g. 'Harvey Specter', 'Mike Ross', 'Saul Goodman' or similar	3
Response related to communication, e.g. 'communication', 'public speaking' or similar	2
Response related to fairness, e.g. 'fair, 'impartial' or similar	2
Response related to attention to detail, e.g. 'attention to detail', 'pedantic' or similar	2
Response related to calmness	2
Response related to adaptability	1
Response related to knowledge of the law	1
Response related to professionalism	1
Response related to quick thinking	1
Response related to strategic	1
Response related to teamwork	1
Response related to sacrifice sleep	1
Response related to sense of self	1
Response related to lack of morals	1
Response related to nepotism	1
TOTAL	74

While 4.05% of the responses specifically referenced popular culture legal characters (N=3), there is no conclusive correlation that the characteristics the students cited were influenced by popular culture. Although popular culture characters such as Harvey Specter, Elle Woods and Saul Goodman demonstrate determination, critical thinking and interpersonal skills, these characteristics cited in survey responses may have been influenced by lawyers known to students or students' knowledge of lawyers and the legal profession more generally.

(b) Questions regarding future aspirations with respect to personal brand and professional identity

To have the students engage in self-reflection, they were asked: 'Do you think your current attributes align/match/position you well for a career as a lawyer?' This was a close-ended question with the following

response options: “Yes”, “No” and “Not sure”. Students were not required to respond and could only submit one response. Table 8 outlines the distribution of responses to this question.

Seventy of the 80 participants provided a response to this question. Notably, 50% of students who provided a response felt their current attributes position them well for a career as a lawyer (N=35). Only 7.14% felt their current attributes did not position them well for a career as a lawyer (N=5), although 42.86% indicated that they were not sure (N=30).

Table 8: Student responses to: ‘Do you think your current attributes align/match/position you well for a career as a lawyer?’

Response	Number of responses
Yes	35
No	5
Not sure	30
TOTAL	70

Given that 65.22% of students (of the 69 who provided a response to the question) indicated that they intend to work as a lawyer upon graduation (N=45), this may have influenced their response as to whether they perceive their current attributes will position them well for a career as a lawyer. In other words, those who intend to pursue a career as a lawyer believe they have the characteristics and qualities that would position them well for the legal position.

To assess whether students perceived they needed to change in order to have a successful career as a lawyer, the following question was posed: ‘Do you think you will need to rebrand yourself in order to have a successful career as a lawyer?’ This was a close-ended question with the following response options: “Yes”, “No” and “Not sure”. Students were not required to respond and could only submit one response. Table 9 below outlines the distribution of responses to this question.

Of the 80 participants, 70 provided a response to this question. Interestingly, despite 50% of students (of the 70 who provided a response to the previous question) indicating that they felt their current attributes position them well for a career as a lawyer, 60% felt they needed to recreate their personal brand and professional identity to have a successful legal career (N=42). 31.43% felt they did not (N=22), and 8.57% were not sure (N=6).

Table 9: Student responses to: ‘Do you think you will need to rebrand yourself in order to have a successful career as a lawyer?’

Response	Number of responses
Yes	42
No	22

Not sure	6
TOTAL	70

(c) Questions regarding general understanding and management of personal brand and professional identity

Once the masterclass on personal branding and professional identity had commenced, a further series of Mentimeter questions were posed regarding students' understanding and management of their personal brand. The first in this series sought to gauge students' perceptions and understanding on personal branding, asking: 'What are three words which you associate with 'personal branding?' Students were not required to respond and could submit multiple responses. Table 10 below outlines the distribution of responses to this question.

Sixty-five of the 80 participants provided a response to this question, and a total of 98 responses were provided. Responses reveal that the three words most commonly associated by students with personal branding were 'image' (27.55%, N=27), 'reputation' (16.32%, N=16), and 'perception' (12.25%, N=12).

Table 10: Student responses to: 'What are three words which you associate with 'personal branding?'

Response	Number of responses
Response related to image, e.g. 'image', 'presentation', 'façade', 'expression' or similar	27
Response related to reputation, e.g. 'reputation' or similar	16
Response related to perception, e.g. 'how people perceive you', 'how you want to be perceived' or similar	12
Response related to marketing, e.g. 'marketing', 'advertising yourself', 'branding personally' or similar	7
Response related to professionalism, e.g. 'professional' or similar	6
Random response, e.g. 'humanity', 'idea', 'its me hi', 'passion', 'swear words' or similar 'collected'	5
Response related to networking, e.g. 'network', 'connection' or similar	3
Response related to personality, e.g. 'personality', 'persona', 'rizz' or similar	3
Response related to impressions, e.g. 'impression' or similar	3
Response related to appearance, e.g. 'handsome', 'presentability', 'sharp' or similar	3

Response related to skill, e.g. 'skill', 'competency' or similar	2
Response related to standing out, e.g. 'stand out', 'unique' or similar	2
Response related to ego, e.g. 'egotistical' or similar	1
Response related to LinkedIn	1
Response related to necessary for employment	1
Response related to personal growth	1
Response related to punctuality	1
Response related to self-belief	1
Response related to status	1
Response related to values	1
TOTAL	98

The responses provided suggest that students had a superficial understanding of personal branding. The nature of the responses focused on exterior aspects of personal branding, such as image, reputation, and perception. Students overlooked key aspects of facilitating an authentic personal brand which is informed by one's values and lived experiences. Notably, of the 98 responses submitted, only 1 cited 'values' as a word they associated with personal branding.

To understand the extent to which the students consciously manage their personal brand, the following question was posed: 'At this point in time, to what extent do you manage your personal brand?' This was a close-ended question with the following response options: "Always", "Occasionally", "Not at all" and "Not sure". Students were not required to respond and could only submit one response. Table 11 below outlines the distribution of responses to this question.

Of the 80 participants, 73 provided a response to this question. Overwhelming, 86.3% of students who provided a response manage their personal brand (N=63). 15.07% indicated that they always manage their personal brand (N=11) and 71.23% occasionally manage their personal brand (N=52). Only 5.48% indicated that they did not manage their personal brand (N=4), and 8.22% were not sure (N=6).

Table 11: 'At this point in time, to what extent do you manage your personal brand?'

Response	Number of responses
Always	11
Occasionally	52
Not at all	4
Not sure	6
TOTAL	73

B *Masterclass on personal branding and professional identity*

Following the interactive student survey exercise, students participated in a one-hour masterclass on creating an authentic personal brand, specifically tailored for law students. The masterclass was delivered by Professor Sonia Dickinson, Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor, Faculty of Business and Law, whose discipline expertise is Marketing Communication and Engagement. Professor Dickinson developed the masterclass based on her research on branding, and her own professional and personal experiences.

The central purpose of the masterclass was to encourage students to consider how their past and present identities might shape their own personal brand and professional identities. Students were asked to reflect on what they know about themselves through a series of questions aimed at uncovering aspects of their past and present identities. These questions included:

- What are your strengths and capabilities?
- What characteristics constitute you as a person?
- What motivates you?
- What successes did you achieve last year (and the years before that)?
- What's important to you in your life?
- What are some of the values that determine how you act?
- How do you want to use your law degree? How is this shaped by your personal background?
- What is your unique selling proposition?
- Professor Dickinson shared her own personal reflections on these questions with the students in order to explain that 'personal branding is all about knowing yourself' and not about 'faking it until you make it'.

A message emphasised during the masterclass was that students' answers to the questions put to them would inevitably differ from one student to the next, and that this diversity was something to be celebrated. Professor Dickinson encouraged students to understand that they should not seek to change themselves in order to 'fit in' to the legal profession, but rather that they should seek to identify the set of attributes, values and experiences unique to them and consider how these will shape their personal brand as they eventually embark on their professional legal career. In this way, the masterclass provided students with a further opportunity to develop and understand the connections between their past, present and future identities.

C *Videos featuring local legal professionals*

Prior to the Orientation Day, the project team recorded video interviews with eight Perth-based legal professionals:

- a judge of the Supreme Court of Western Australia;

- a judge of the District Court of Western Australia;
- a Special Counsel practising in Western Australia in the areas of commercial, administrative and constitutional law;
- a barrister practising in Western Australia in the areas of commercial, criminal, family and administrative law;
- a Perth-based Partner at an Australian corporate and commercial law firm;
- a Perth-based Legal Counsel at a large ASX-listed company;
- a Perth-based solicitor at the Environmental Defenders Office; and
- a law graduate at the Western Australian State Solicitors' Office.

In identifying and approaching professionals for interviews, the authors were concerned to ensure the group as a whole reflected diversity in personal and professional characteristics and circumstances, including age, ethnicity, gender, type and area of professional legal practice, and organisational seniority. The deliberate selection of interviewees with diverse personal and professional backgrounds served a purpose beyond exposing students to a range of legal careers. It was intended to present students with authentic and diverse representations of what it means to be a legal professional, thereby encouraging them to recognise that there is no single pathway to, or model of, success within the legal profession. Students who are able to see depictions of their present identity represented in their future professional identity are more likely to be engaged and motivated throughout their legal education because they are working towards what they perceive to be a viable future career.[58] By contrast, if students are unable to see aspects of themselves represented in the profession, they may feel they do not belong or fit in at law school, possibly leading them to experience 'imposter syndrome', which research from the United States suggests is commonly experienced by first year law students. [59] The videos therefore sought to broaden students' perceptions of lawyers and the legal profession by exposing them, early in the commencement of their studies, to legal professionals of diverse backgrounds.

During the recorded interviews, each of the eight professionals was asked the following question: 'What advice would do you wish you could go back and give yourself on your first day of law school?' Their answers, recorded on video, were shown to students at intervals throughout the Orientation Day. Broadly speaking, their answers fell into two categories: advice for law school itself and advice connecting law school to professional practice and career opportunities. Within these two categories there was a variety of advice offered in the professionals' answers, reflecting the diversity of the professionals themselves. The answers are summarised in the following table:

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58 Field, Duffy and Huggins (n 5) 19.

59 Peter Lake, 'When Fear Knocks: The Myths and Realities of Law School' (2000) 29 *Stetson Law Review* 1015, 1029.

Advice for law school itself:	The study of law is a marathon, not a sprint.
	Enjoy the law school journey. Have fun.
	You will make mistakes. You need to see mistakes as an opportunity to learn and develop.
	Lean into the experiences offered at law school—join the student society, attend events, get to know other students. Law school is what you make of it.
	Trust that you will not be the only one questioning whether you are the right fit for law school.
	To maintain a sense of curiosity and an open mind. Approaching interactions with these two things will ensure you are always learning.
Advice connecting law school to professional practice and career opportunities:	You will find law school difficult at times, but this is for a reason: it prepares you for what's to come in legal practice.
	Focus on developing a robust understanding of the guiding principles of law, rather than on trying to remember every single legal principle. The guiding principles are the building blocks of legal practice.
	A career in law is rewarding and offers variety, but it is tough: the expectations of you are high, as are the professional standards which you must uphold. This is why you need to build the right foundations at law school.
	Be open to meeting your fellow law school students. They will go on to become your professional peers, and will be a source of job opportunities, career advice and friendship.
	Learn to be receptive to criticism while at law school, for receiving criticism is a normal part of professional practice.
	Legal practice is not a competitive sport. You will be far successful if you work as part of a team. Practice doing so at law school.
	Seek out all the opportunities you can to gain legal work experience. These opportunities are what will launch your career.
	Don't limit yourself as a law student to thinking that the only career prospects for you are those based in Perth. It is possible for law students in Perth to go on to have careers in international law.
	Don't assume that good grades are the only thing you need to worry about in terms of getting a job as a graduate law. Good grades do not guarantee you a job. Work experience matters too.
	Be prepared that you might not get a job as a graduate lawyer right away after you finish law school. It may take some time. Focus on finding opportunities for experience, including as an associate or paralegal.
	Actively seek out feedback from lecturers, tutors and fellow students. This is the best way to learn and is something you need to do at all stages of your career, not just when you're starting out.

The videos featuring the professionals' advice were shown to students after the conclusion of the survey initiative described in the previous section of this article—that is, after students had been provided an initial opportunity to reflect on their past, present and future identities. The advice given by the professionals in the videos extended this opportunity by inviting students to consider the connections between their present identity as new law students and their possible future identity as legal professionals.

V LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The authors acknowledge three limitations with respect to the LLB Orientation Project described in this article. First, the Project represents only an initial step in what should be an ongoing program for professional identity formation throughout students' time at law school. Professional identity is not static but evolves throughout students' legal education and after they have entered the profession. Accordingly, no Orientation Day program, regardless of its design, can be expected to singularly shape and sustain the formation of professional identity formation among law students. In this regard, the authors contend that is critical to facilitate regular opportunities for law students to consciously reflect on and develop their professional identity throughout their legal education. Future research might therefore focus on evaluating effective in-curricular and extra-curricular practices designed to support professional identity formation, with a focus on the first year. This could include incorporating transformative degree experiences in the first year, such as legal clinics, service-learning projects and professional immersion experiences. It might also include contemplating changes to assessment design which require students to engage in reflective practice and ethical dilemmas connected to professional identity formation. Beyond in-curricular initiatives, future research might investigate how extra-curricular experiences such as law networking events, industry engagement and mentorship opportunities, together with connection with peers outside of the law discipline, impact professional identity formation.

A second limitation concerns the scope of the LLB Orientation Project. The Project was designed and implemented for commencing undergraduate law students at a single Australian law school. The authors acknowledge that cohort differences are likely, such that future research might seek to understand nuances in undergraduate and postgraduate law students, particularly in terms of their transition into their law studies, and explore how this might influence the design of Orientation Day initiatives targeting positive professional identity formation. In addition, the LLB Orientation Project assumes that all law students intend to pursue a career as a lawyer or work in the legal profession upon graduating. While a large portion of law students do intend to pursue a career as a lawyer upon graduating (for example, see the quantitative data presented in 'Table 4: Student responses to: 'At this point in time, do you intend to work as a lawyer when you

graduate?’’), the authors acknowledge that this is not an intention inevitably shared by all law students. Future research might place greater emphasis on the diversity of career options available to law graduates.

A third limitation of the LLB Orientation Project is that, although the Project was informed by existing scholarship identifying the benefits of initiatives designed to support professional identity formation, the Project team did not solicit evaluative feedback from students as to whether they considered their participation in the Project to be helpful in this regard. Inviting quantitative and qualitative feedback from students on this point would provide evidence against which to assess the effectiveness of the Project in achieving its aim of providing early support for the formation of positive professional identity among commencing undergraduate law students.

The authors also acknowledge three limitations with respect to the qualitative and quantitative data collected as part of the interactive survey initiative described in this article. First, the manner in which Mentimeter displays participants’ responses in real time means that students may have been exposed to the responses of their peers before submitting their own answers to some survey questions. This interactive feature was deliberately incorporated into the design of the LLB Orientation Project to prompt collective reflection and discussion about students’ perceptions of themselves, lawyers and the legal profession. However, it does raise the possibility that some participants’ responses were influenced by those already displayed and, as such, it cannot be assumed that all survey responses reflect participants’ independent views in isolation from the broader survey sample.

Second, the data collected from the interactive survey was akin to a cross-sectional study, as opposed to a longitudinal study, in that it solicited the perceptions of law students at a single point in time. While the interactive survey was also implemented at the 2025 and 2026 Orientation Days for commencing LLB students at Curtin Law School, the data collected during those years was not used for research purposes. Rather, in 2025 and 2026 the survey was facilitated because of its value in encouraging commencing students to reflect on their past, present and future identities in line with the objectives of the LLB Orientation Project. Consequently, although the data presented in this article, gathered at the 2024 Orientation Day, provides valuable insights into how one cohort of undergraduate law students perceived themselves, lawyers and the legal profession at the commencement of their legal education, it does not facilitate conclusions as to whether students’ participation in the LLB Orientation Project influenced their perceptions in this regard or their professional identity formation. A useful avenue for future research might involve a longitudinal study designed to determine the immediate impact of Orientation Day initiatives akin to those described in this article, as well as their ongoing influence on professional identify formation over the course of students’ law studies. Such research could provide valuable insight into the factors and points in time which are most influential in shaping the

formation of law students' professional identity, which would better equip law schools and academics to assist with this process.

Third, the interactive survey gathered data specific to commencing undergraduate law students at one Australian university only. Conducting equivalent surveys at other, and perhaps multiple, Australian universities would enable the collection of data which reflects the perceptions of a broader cohort of commencing law students. This includes the collection of data pertaining to law students enrolled in postgraduate courses such as a Juris Doctor, Master of Laws or Graduate Diploma in Legal Practice. Such research might examine whether students' perceptions of themselves, lawyers and the legal profession differ across institutions, courses, locations and modes of legal education (for example, online or in-person), and would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping commencing law students' professional identity formation.

VI CONCLUSION

The literature reviewed in this article identifies the transition to university as an important opportunity to support the formation of positive professional identity among commencing students and recognises the educational and longer-term benefits of doing so. Drawing on this body of scholarship and informed by the conceptual framework offered by Weidman's Model of Undergraduate Socialisation, the LLB Orientation Project described in this article sought to provide early support for the formation of positive professional identity among commencing undergraduate law students. It did so through three initiatives incorporated into the Orientation Day program designed to encourage students to reflect on their existing values, aspirations and goals, expose them to diverse representations of the legal profession, and begin considering how their professional identity might develop throughout their legal education.

The contribution of this article is to describe one practical example of how existing scholarship concerning transition pedagogy, professional identity formation and undergraduate socialisation can be translated into the design of Orientation Day programs intended to support the formation of positive professional identity among commencing law students. Although, as acknowledged in this article, further evaluative and longitudinal research is required to understand the influence of initiatives of this kind on students' professional identity formation, the existing scholarship nevertheless indicates that intentionally supporting positive professional identity formation from the commencement of legal education has the potential to enhance students' engagement with their studies, psychological wellbeing, and sense of connectedness to the legal profession. In turn, these outcomes have the potential to benefit law schools and legal educators through the flow-on effects of increased engagement and sense of wellbeing and connectedness among students.