

*No Difficulty Holding Both Logic and Feeling:  
Can the Barbie Movie Help with Women's  
Professional Identity Education?*

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# THE PREMISE: IRRECONCILABLE CONFLICT?

- ▶ According to the Holloran Center, professional identity education “*should involve an intentional exploration of the values, guiding principles, and well-being practices considered foundational to successful legal practice.*”
- ▶ This requires an accurate self-understanding of **who law students are.**

BUT...

- ▶ The exploration of professional identity **for women lawyers**, has historically hit a roadblock.
- ▶ For many women law students their system of values and principles that are connected to their **gender and self-expression of that gender** historically are downplayed.

# SOME RESULTS OF THIS CONFLICT

- ▶ At the ABA National Summit on Achieving Long-Term Careers for Women in Law, Professor Iris Bohnet indicated that some women leave [their jobs] because of a work culture that forces them to minimize important parts of their lives.
- ▶ She noted that women who leave often ask themselves, **“Can I bring my whole self to work?”**



# SOME RESULTS OF THIS CONFLICT: QUESTIONS OF SUCCESS IN THE PROFESSION

- ▶ “Our identities are like icebergs. The large bulk of them lies invisible to us below the surface of consciousness...”The non-conscious bulk of identity is called “*habitus*.”
- ▶ When one’s habitus is in *dissonance with the professional identity of one’s chosen profession*, this leads in most cases to difficulty having success in the profession or added physical stress—and often both.
- ▶ The formation of a professional identity should be **most significantly informed by and consonant with one’s personal identity**—including one’s lived experience as a person of, among other things, a particular race, gender, or socioeconomic class.

David I.C. Thomson, “*Teaching*” *Formation of Professional Identity* (2015)

Harmony Decosimo, *A Taxonomy of Professional Identity* (2022)



## THE GOAL

“I have no difficulty holding both logic and feeling at the same time and that does not diminish my powers; it expands them!” Imagine! Emotion as power! A world where we allowed our full humanity into spaces of collective decision making!”



## AWAKENING— THANKS TO MOVIES?

That moment when Warner said Elle wasn't smart enough for law school was one of those experiences that women lawyers can relate to: **being seen as less competent, intelligent or being judged solely on appearances.**

“It’s incredible. ... You can be unapologetically feminine but also smart and driven.” Since the announcement of *Barbie*, we’ve witnessed the rise of **unapologetic hyper-femme codes intertwined in mainstream culture.**

IS IT EASIER TO TALK ABOUT BEING A WOMAN IN THE PROFESSION?  
CAN WE **MAKE IT EASIER?**




# SUCCESS AS GENDER ISSUE?

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# CAN WE MAKE IT EASIER? POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS



- ▶ Understanding that students may experience **imposter syndrome** because of gender, male-dominated work environments, and a lack of diversity in leadership roles within the profession.
- ▶ Don't be afraid to include gender identity and how it impacts your view of the world. Ask the question: **When was the last time you showed up PROFESSIONALLY... as yourself?**
- ▶ Have students ask themselves—**what does it mean to be a lawyer TO YOU?** And have them answer it with all their perspectives on life.
- ▶ Pairing professional identity with **cultural competence** can help all students understand these issues (pairing 303(b) and (c))



# Thank you! Questions?

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