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# **WHY LAW? EXAMINING THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE DECISION TO UNDERTAKE A LAW DEGREE**

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## I INTRODUCTION

Globally, universities generally employ quantitative measures to facilitate entry into specific degrees.<sup>1</sup> These scores provide a metric to compare students' prior academic abilities, facilitate entry into tertiary courses and predict students' potential performance. Research has consistently indicated that students with high tertiary entrance scores tend to achieve higher academic performance in their first-year courses.<sup>2</sup> Higher academic performance has been correlated with reduced depression, increased happiness, life satisfaction and overall wellbeing.<sup>3</sup> While this article does not directly investigate student satisfaction as it relates to wellbeing specifically, it adds a nuanced discussion by examining factors (other than entry scores), that may motivate and influence a prospective student to enrol in a law degree, and their overall satisfaction with that choice. Although traditionally tertiary entrance scores determined students' selection for law school, universities are now embracing a diverse student population by considering alternative methods of entry, including interviews, portfolios, work experience and mature-aged and Indigenous entry programs.<sup>4</sup> This has made tertiary study, including law study, more accessible.<sup>5</sup> This suggests that universities are now more cognisant of the various factors, over and above achievement of the entry score that might encourage students to apply to study at university.

Previous research has examined factors that motivate students to enrol in other degrees, such as medicine, engineering, and the clinical

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<sup>1</sup> Rebecca Zwick (ed), *Rethinking the SAT: The future of standardized testing in university admissions* (Routledge, 2013); Mike Flude and Sandy Sieminski (eds), *Education, training and the future of work II* (Routledge, 2013); One example is the Law Admissions Test used by UNSW Law and Justice for selection into undergraduate law programs at UNSW Sydney, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Law Admissions Test* (Web Page) <<https://lat.acer.edu.au/>>.

<sup>2</sup> See George Messinis and Peter Sheehan, 'The academic performance of first year students at Victoria University by entry score and SES, 2009-2013' (Victoria Institute of Strategic Economic Studies, 1 May 2015) <<https://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/cs/es/pdfs/the-academic-performance-of-first-year-students-at-VU-by-entry-score-and-SES-2009-2013.pdf>>; Kirsten McKenzie and Robert Schweitzer, 'Who succeeds at university? Factors predicting academic performance in first year Australian university students' (2001) 20(1) *Higher Education Research & Development* 21; But see Stuart Levy and Julie Murray, 'Tertiary entrance scores need not determine academic success: An analysis of student performance in an equity and access program' (2005) 27(1) *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management* 129; Michelle Richardson et al, 'Psychological correlates of university students' academic performance: A systematic review and meta-analysis' (2012) 138(2) *Psychological Bulletin* 353.

<sup>3</sup> Syed Razia Bukhari and Sarwat Jahan Khanam, 'Relationship of academic performance and well-being in university students' (2017) 56(4) *Pakistan Journal of Medical Research* 126; Teodora Slavinski et al, 'Academic performance and physical activities as positive factors for life satisfaction among university students' (2021) 13(2) *Sustainability* 497.

<sup>4</sup> Mark R Diamond and Angela O'Brien-Malone, 'Pathways to performance: an examination of entry pathway and first-year university results' (2018) 38(1) *Asia Pacific Journal of Education* 110.

<sup>5</sup> Maxine Evers et al, 'Law's not hard; it's just hard to get into: A study of alternative entry students to law school' (2017) 51(2) *The Law Teacher* 151.

sciences.<sup>6</sup> However, understanding the motivation/demotivation of students to enter law school has only been examined in the context of subsequent academic performance and wellbeing of law students.<sup>7</sup> We argue that *intrinsic factors*, like self-efficacy and self-confidence, internally motivate prospective students to enrol in a law degree.<sup>8</sup> Self-efficacy is defined as an individual's belief they have the skill and capability to undertake a particular action, whereas self-confidence is more general and refers to an individual's overall belief in themselves in all contexts.<sup>9</sup> As a law school ultimately seeks to produce high performing, work-ready graduates and reduce attrition rates, understanding how these intrinsic drivers impact on a student's choice to enrol, and their satisfaction with that choice, is important. Having this knowledge may enable better assessment and prediction of a student's potential performance, over a tertiary entrance score alone. This knowledge may then encourage law schools to implement support programs that nurture these intrinsic motivations in students. We further suggest these direct relationships are moderated by *extrinsic factors*, such as the influence of direct family members (parents/caregivers),<sup>10</sup> educators (teachers/guidance officers) and social groups (friends).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Xueli Wang, 'Why students choose STEM majors: Motivation, high school learning, and postsecondary context of support' (2013) 50(5) *American Educational Research Journal* 1081; John Woolham and Martin Stevens, 'Careers in medicine: Key factors that influence people to choose to study medicine and sustain medical careers: A rapid review' (NIHR Policy Research Unit in Health and Social Care Workforce, The Policy Institute, King's College London, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Anne Haarala-Muhonen et al, 'Factors affecting the study pace of first-year law students: In search of study counselling tools' (2011) 36(8) *Studies in Higher Education* 911; Massimiliano Tani and Prue Vines, 'Law students' attitudes to education: Pointers to depression in the legal academy and the profession' (2009) 19(1) *Legal Education Review* 3; Lawrence S Krieger and Kennon M Sheldon, 'Does Legal Education Have Negative Effects on Law Students? Evaluating Changes in Motivation, Values, and Well-being' (2002) 22(2) *Behavioural Sciences and the Law* 261; Lawrence S Krieger and Kennon M Sheldon, 'What Makes Lawyers Happy?: A Data Driven Prescription to Redefine Professional Success' (2015) 83 *George Washington Law Review* 554.

<sup>8</sup> Veerle Germeijs et al, 'Choosing a major in higher education: Profiles of students' decision making process' (2012) 37(3) *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 229; Edward Vieira and Susan Grantham, 'University students setting goals in the context of autonomy, self-efficacy and important goal-related task engagement' (2011) 31(2) *Educational Psychology* 141; Richard Ryan and Edward Deci, 'Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations: Classic definitions and new directions' (2000) 25(1) *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 54; Edward Deci, 'Effects of externally mediated rewards on intrinsic motivation' (1971) 18 *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 105; Christos Korgan et al, 'The development of academic self-efficacy among first-year college students in a comprehensive public university' (2013) 10 *Higher Education in Review* 11.

<sup>9</sup> Kathryn Bartimote-Aufflick et al, 'The study, evaluation, and improvement of university student self-efficacy' (2015) 41(11) *Studies in Higher Education* 1.

<sup>10</sup> Weihua Fan and Cathy Williams, 'The effects of parental involvement on students' academic self-efficacy, engagement and intrinsic motivation' (2010) 30(1) *Educational Psychology* 53.

<sup>11</sup> Fang Fang, Brian McCall and Binglin Zhong, 'How does family background influence students' choice of subjects for the National College Entrance Examination?' (2021) 41(6) *Higher Education Research & Development* 1885; Kathryn Wentzel et al, 'Peer and teacher supports in relation to motivation and effort: A multilevel study' (2017) 49 *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 32.

Consider an environment where a student is provided positive reinforcement by family, educators and social groups, which accordingly increases their self-efficacy and self-confidence to enrol in a law degree and to pursue a career in law.<sup>12</sup> The attainment of such new knowledge would better inform not only law schools, but also secondary schools – who engage more closely with parents and caregivers – leading to more confident, enthusiastic and motivated first year law students. The social networks referred to in this study comprise distinct sets of actors (commencing students, direct family members, educators, social groups) who interact and communicate with one another.

While literature has established the important role of parents and caregivers, gaps remain.<sup>13</sup> In 2015, Corey highlighted that experiences of parental pressure had not been directly explored yet within existing career exploration literature.<sup>14</sup> In her study of University of Toronto undergraduate students in their 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> year, she asked about the amount of time they spent searching for information related to their academic future and also whether they felt their parents put pressure on them to think, feel or act in a certain way toward their career future.<sup>15</sup> One participant noted pressure to go to university but not to go into a certain field,<sup>16</sup> whilst two others indicated parental pressure to specifically pursue engineering or medicine.<sup>17</sup> Alika studied 100 randomly selected senior secondary school students in the United States and considered the influence of parents and peers on career choice in the engineering profession.<sup>18</sup> She found no significant relationship between parental and peer group influence on career choice in

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<sup>12</sup> See, eg, Korgan et al (n 8).

<sup>13</sup> See, eg, Weihua and Williams (n10); Fang, McCall and Zhong (n 11); Wentzel et al (n 11); See also, Irene Kleanthous, 'Bourdieu applied: Exploring perceived parental influence on adolescent students' educational choices for studies in higher education' in Mark Murphy (ed) *Social Theory and Education Research: Foucault, Habermas, Bordieu and Derrida* (Routledge, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, 2022) 201, 206. The author discusses data from a study in 2012 which explored perceived parental influence amongst 6 adolescent students in Cyprus who were about to make their choices for future studies in Higher Education. The majority of students in the study denied parental influence on their decision-making but they drew on their parents' capital before making their choices future studies; See also Kristinn Hegna and Ingrid Smette, 'Parental influence in educational decisions: young people's perspectives' (2017) 38(8) *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 1111 - 1124. In this quantitative Norwegian study 2029 youth were surveyed at the end their last compulsory year of schooling in year 10 about parental influence on choice of upper secondary education in a context of a strong cultural normative value placed on young people's autonomy; See also Steve Entrich, 'The Decision for Shadow Education in Japan: Students' Choice or Parents' Pressure' (2015) 18(2) *Social Science Japan Journal* 193. This work does not examine parental pressure relating to specific degree choice but instead shadow education (outside of formal schooling) which is seen as increasing career choice.

<sup>14</sup> Pamela Corey, 'Examining the influence of parental pressure and perceived control on young adults' career exploration' (Master of Arts, University of Toronto, 2015) 21.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid 156-163.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid 70.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid 71.

<sup>18</sup> Henrietta Alika, 'Career Choice in Engineering: The Influence of Peers and Parents Implication for Counselling' (September 2012) 46(3) *College Student Journal* 537.

engineering amongst the participants.<sup>19</sup> Workman found that several students out of a study of 12 students attending a mid-size public Midwestern University saw their parents as a positive influence on their choice of major and more broadly their career decision making processes.<sup>20</sup> A study by Haywood and Scullion found that parents play an important role in their child's higher education choice. However, they participate in the process as parents wishing to maintain a relationship with their child, rather than as consumers seeking to influence choice of a particular course of university.<sup>21</sup> Despite literature recognising the important role that teachers play in influencing student career choices, it remains relatively silent on degree choices.<sup>22</sup> Hence, in an Australian context this article seeks to explain the extent to which these extrinsic factors moderate the relationships between intrinsic antecedents, satisfaction with the choice to study law and, subsequently, intention to pursue a career in law.

This article offers several practical and theoretical contributions to legal education literature. First, it identifies the important intrinsic drivers that lead to a student's overall satisfaction with their decision to enrol in a law degree and subsequent intention to pursue a career in law. Understanding the effects of a student's self-efficacy and self-confidence on their satisfaction with choice of degree may encourage law educators to better support students in their first year, potentially generating greater wellbeing. Secondly, it offers deeper insights into the moderating roles of external influencers, such as family, educators and friends on a student's decision. Understanding the impact of these influencers will enable law schools to adapt recruitment strategies to target the key influencers of student choice.<sup>23</sup> Finally, from a theoretical perspective, this work adopts a *services* marketing framework to examine the factors that influence a student's decision to enrol in a law degree.<sup>24</sup> Grönroos has indicated *services* have three basic characteristics: (1) it is physically intangible, (2) it is an 'activity' rather than a 'thing', and (3) production and consumption are simultaneous.<sup>25</sup> In this context, a law degree is considered a *service* a student chooses to undertake. By taking this position, we employ status-attainment

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Jamie Workman, 'Parental Influence on Exploratory Students' College Choice, Major, and Career Decision Making' (Spring 2015) 49(1) *College Student Journal* 23.

<sup>21</sup> Helen Haywood and Richard Scullion, 'It's quite difficult letting them go, isn't it?': UK parents' experiences of their child's higher education choice process' (2018) 43(12) *Studies in Higher Education* 1.

<sup>22</sup> Penueli Mghweno, Leonard Mghweno and Peter Baguma, 'Access to guidance and counseling services and its influence on students' school life and career choice' (2015) 3(2) *International Journal of Educational Research and Reviews* 38.

<sup>23</sup> Rachel Brooks 'Young people's higher education choices: The role of family and friends' (2003) 24(3) *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 283.

<sup>24</sup> Demetris Vrontis, Alkis Thrassou and Yioula Melanthiou, 'A contemporary higher education student-choice model for developed countries' (2007) 60(9) *Journal of Business Research* 979; Christopher Lovelock and Paul Patterson, *Services marketing* (Pearson Australia, 2015).

<sup>25</sup> Christian Grönroos, 'An applied service marketing theory' (1982) 16(7) *European Journal of Marketing* 30.

theory.<sup>26</sup> We use this theory to examine the intrinsic and extrinsic factors to explain student satisfaction with their choice to enrol in a law degree and their subsequent law career aspirations.<sup>27</sup> The tenets of status-attainment theory suggest individuals who have been conditioned (by family, friends, educators) to attain high social status will seek to consume products or engage in services that are congruent with the desired social status. Erlanger found lawyers graduating universities and entering the profession had been shaped by status-attainment throughout their lives.<sup>28</sup> They had been influenced by family, friends and educators to excel academically, athletically and socially; growing up in high socio-economic status households that were also status seeking. Similarly, Lena et al found occupational inheritance (at least one parent being a lawyer) predicted undergraduate academic performance and the quality of law school attended.<sup>29</sup>

## II LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The higher education sector has transformed from a centrally funded, non-marketised entity into a highly marketised service within a competitive and dynamic global environment. To compete in a competitive market, many universities have adopted marketing frameworks.<sup>30</sup> The economic theory of rational choice<sup>31</sup> (or rational expectations) infers individuals are rational and have access to full information, which enables them to calculate the most optimal choice.<sup>32</sup> However, for this calculation to take place, the costs, risks and benefits must be clear, which are often not clear in relation to degree choice due to the intangibility, heterogeneity and inseparability of tertiary experience.<sup>33</sup> Simply, unlike a physical product that can be experienced and tested first before a choice is made to purchase, a student must make that choice before enrolling. Hence, there is a need for self-confidence and self-efficacy. In contrast to an economic approach, a status-attainment theoretical framework suggests this decision-making

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<sup>26</sup> Archibald Haller and Alejandro Portes, 'Status attainment processes' (1973) 46(1) *Sociology of Education* 51.

<sup>27</sup> Vrontis, Thrassou and Melanthiou (n 24).

<sup>28</sup> Howard S Erlanger, 'The allocation of status within occupations: The case of the legal profession' (1980) 58(3) *Social Forces* 882.

<sup>29</sup> H F Lena et al, 'Professional status at midcareer: The influence of social and academic origins on lawyers' achievement' (1993) 8 *Sociological Forum* 365.

<sup>30</sup> Luminita Nicolescu, 'Applying marketing to higher education: Scope and limits' (2009) 4(2) *Management & Marketing* 35; Walesska Schlesinger, Amparo Cervera-Taulet and Carmen Perez-Cabanero, 'Sticking with your university: The importance of satisfaction, trust, image, and shared values' (2017) 42(12) *Studies in Higher Education* 2178.

<sup>31</sup> Limor Gabay-Egozi et al, 'Curricular choice: A test of a rational choice model of education' (2010) 26(4) *European Sociological Review* 447.

<sup>32</sup> Winship Fuller, Charles Manski and David Wise, 'New evidence on the economic determinants of postsecondary schooling choices' (1982) 17(4) *Journal of Human Resources* 477.

<sup>33</sup> Syed Muhammad Fazal-e-Hasan et al, 'Managing relationships: Insights from a student gratitude model' (2021) 62(1) *Research in Higher Education* 98.

process is influenced by intrinsic and extrinsic factors experienced throughout the student's life.<sup>34</sup> Given the intangible nature of higher education products, adopting a purely economic lens overlooks the scope of students' affective responses and offers limited insight into students' positive emotional, attitudinal and behavioural intentions.<sup>35</sup>

Earlier research has broadly explored the processes (predisposition, search, choice) through which students choose a college and the factors (race, gender, income, access) that influence these processes.<sup>36</sup> Missing from these earlier works is an examination of intrinsic psychological factors that may play a role in affecting this choice. Specific to degree choice, rather than more broadly college/university choice, those studies that have examined intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of degree participation have done so principally to identify correlations with mental health, well-being and academic performance.<sup>37</sup> In contrast to these earlier studies, this article provides a comprehensive model that offers tertiary institutions a deeper understanding of various untested intrinsic antecedents and extrinsic moderators that impact on students' decisions to undertake a law degree, and intentions to pursue a career in law. Bergersen and Perna specifically call for research to consider the educational aspirations, achievement, and attainment of school leavers.<sup>38</sup> As Perna points out, adopting a purely economic lens to examine students' decisions and behaviours overlooks their affective responses to other factors, such as habitus, community and higher education contexts, and broader social and economic elements.<sup>39</sup>

### A *Intrinsic Factors*

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their ability to organise and execute a required course of action to achieve a desired result,<sup>40</sup> whereas self-confidence refers to one's belief in their self and overall abilities.<sup>41</sup> While self-efficacy has been found to be related to academic achievement,<sup>42</sup> there is scant research examining the role of

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<sup>34</sup> Vrontis, Thrassou and Melanthiou (n 24).

<sup>35</sup> Fazal-e-Hasan et al (n 33).

<sup>36</sup> Amy Bergerson, 'College choice and access to college: Moving policy, research, and practice to the 21<sup>st</sup> century' (2009) 35(4) *ASHE Higher Education Report* 1.

<sup>37</sup> Tani and Vines (n 7).

<sup>38</sup> Bergerson (n 36) 1; Laura Perna, 'Differences in the decisions to attend college among African Americans, Hispanics, and whites' (2000) 71(2) *Journal of Higher Education* 117, 119.

<sup>39</sup> Laura Perna, 'Understanding the relationship between information about college prices and financial aid and students' college-related behaviors' (2006) 49(12) *American Behavioral Scientist* 1620; See also Fazal-e-Hasan et al (n 33).

<sup>40</sup> Albert Bandura, *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control* (Freeman, 1997); Linjia Zhang, Yi Jiang and Shuyu Chen, 'Longitudinal Interrelations among Self-efficacy, Interest Value, and Effort Cost in Adolescent Students' English Achievement and Future Choice Intentions' (April 2023) 73 *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 102176.

<sup>41</sup> Krista White, 'Self-confidence: A concept analysis' (2009, April) 44(2) *Nursing Forum* 103.

<sup>42</sup> Huy Phuong Phan, 'Relations between informational sources, self-efficacy and academic achievement: A developmental approach' (2012) 32(1) *Educational Psychology* 81; Heta Tuominen-Soini, Katarina Salemla-Aro and Markku Niemivirta,



self-efficacy in students' intentions to undertake tertiary studies. While self-confidence has been examined for medical,<sup>43</sup> and engineering<sup>44</sup> students, there has been no empirical work to understand how these variables impact on students' choice to commence a law degree. While Larcombe et al. found undergraduate law students who achieved strong results in their first semester of study expressed higher levels of self-confidence, this current research examines students' motivations prior to commencing their degree, for example, in high school.<sup>45</sup> Arguably, a student who attains strong academic performance in their high school education would experience increased self-efficacy and self-confidence, which would enable them to objectively assess their ability to successfully undertake and complete a law degree.<sup>46</sup> With this in mind, we hypothesise the following:

**H1:** A commencing student's self-efficacy has a positive and significant impact on satisfaction with their choice to enrol in a law degree.

**H2:** A commencing student's self-confidence has a positive and significant impact on satisfaction with their choice to enrol in a law degree.

## B Outcomes of Choice

There is consistent agreement among education and social psychologists that most human behavior is goal-directed and planned.<sup>47</sup> The theory of planned behavior<sup>48</sup> and the theory of reasoned action<sup>49</sup> have been regularly adopted to explain the relationships between intentions and actions. For some students, the goal of a law career will be the outcome of many activities, which will include for example attending classes, submitting assessments, studying cases and participating in moot courts. The theory of reasoned action assumes that individuals objectively weigh up the available information and consider the implications of their actions. In the current context, we argue there

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'Stability and change in achievement goal orientations: A person-centered approach' (2011) 36(2) *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 82.

<sup>43</sup> Mary Ann Lumsden et al, 'Assessment of personal qualities in relation to admission to medical school' (2005) 39(3) *Medical Education* 258.

<sup>44</sup> Sarah Parsons, Tony Croft and Martin Harrison, 'Engineering students' self-confidence in mathematics mapped onto Bandura's self-efficacy' (2011) 6(1) *Engineering Education* 52.

<sup>45</sup> Wendy Larcombe, Ian Malkin and Penelope Nicholson, 'Law students' motivations, expectations and levels of psychological distress: Evidence of connections' (2012) 22 *Legal Education Review* 71.

<sup>46</sup> Phan (n 42); Lazar Stankov, Suzanne Morony and Yim Ping Lee, 'Confidence: The best non-cognitive predictor of academic achievement?' (2014) 34(1) *Educational Psychology* 9.

<sup>47</sup> Taylor Acee et al, 'Relationships among properties of college students' self-set academic goals and academic achievement' (2012) 32(6) *Educational Psychology* 681; Emma Burns, Andrew Martin and Paul Evans, 'The role of teacher feedback-feedforward and personal best goal setting in students' mathematics achievement: A goal setting theory perspective' (2021) 41(7) *Educational Psychology* 825.

<sup>48</sup> Icek Ajzen, *From intentions to actions: A theory of planned behaviour* (Springer-Verlag, 1985).

<sup>49</sup> Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen, *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research* (Addison-Wesley, 1977).

is a positive relationship between a commencing student's satisfaction with their choice to enrol in a law degree, and intention to pursue a career in law. We hypothesise:

**H3:** Satisfaction with the choice to enrol in a law degree has a positive and significant impact on a student's intentions to pursue a career in law.

### C *Extrinsic Moderating Factors*

Emergent research has found students' choices to be driven by complex external relationships.<sup>50</sup> The principles of social network theory indicate individuals operate within a social setting comprising groups and/or organisations.<sup>51</sup> The social networks referred to in this article comprise distinct sets of actors (commencing students, direct family members, educators, social groups) who interact and communicate with one another.<sup>52</sup> Direct family members, i.e. parents or caregivers, play an important role in their child's choice of degree.<sup>53</sup> Extant research has identified the important and influential role parents play in building a child's self-confidence and self-efficacy.<sup>54</sup> Arguably, if direct family members influence a student's choice of a specific university or college, they may also play a crucial role in their choice of degree.<sup>55</sup> While previous research has considered the direct relationship between family influence on tertiary study, to date researchers are yet to examine how family member influence might moderate the direct relationships between intrinsic antecedents, satisfaction with degree choice and outcome intentions. Put simply, it is expected positive reinforcement and emotional support from direct family members will increase prospective students' self-efficacy and self-confidence to undertake a law degree and maintain an intention to pursue a law career. We proffer a Student Choice Model (see figure 1) and hypothesise:

**H4:** Direct family members will positively moderate the relationship between a prospective student's

a) self-efficacy and

b) self-confidence,

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<sup>50</sup> Haywood and Scullion (n 21); Suzanne Beech, 'International student mobility: The role of social networks' (2015) 16(3) *Social & Cultural Geography* 332.

<sup>51</sup> Katharina Manderscheid, 'Criticising the solitary mobile subject: Researching relational mobilities and reflecting on mobile methods' (2014) 9(2) *Mobilities* 188; John Hattie, Flaviu Hodis and Sean Kang, 'Theories of motivation: Integration and ways forward' (2020) 61 *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 101865.

<sup>52</sup> Fang, McCall and Zhong (n 11).

<sup>53</sup> Clive Hunt et al, 'First-and second-generation design and engineering students: Experience, attainment and factors influencing them to attend university' (2018) 37(1) *Higher Education Research & Development* 30.

<sup>54</sup> Muh. Takdir et al, 'Role of School, Family and Community in Forming Student Self-Efficacy Through Transformation of Cultural Values' (2020) 17(4) *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology* 594; Elena-Irina Ion et al, 'Academic achievement and professional aspirations: Between the impacts of family, self-efficacy and school counselling' (2022) 28(2) *Journal of Family Studies* 587.

<sup>55</sup> Larcombe, Malkin and Nicholson (n 45).

with the student's satisfaction with their choice to enrol in a law degree. Direct family members will also positively moderate the relationship between a student's

**c) satisfaction**

with their choice to enrol in a law degree and intentions to pursue a career in law.

Despite the literature recognising the vital role that high school educators play in influencing student career choices, there is little research into the role they play in transitioning students to university.<sup>56</sup> While literature has consistently demonstrated high school students who transition to tertiary studies are influenced by social backgrounds and prior academic performance,<sup>57</sup> we hypothesise that teachers/guidance officers also play an influential role in encouraging a student's tertiary participation. In line with these ideas, we suggest that a student's interactions with teachers/guidance officers may moderate the direct relationships between intrinsic antecedents (self-efficacy, self-confidence), satisfaction with degree choice (to undertake a law degree), and outcome intentions (to pursue a career in law). Accordingly, the following hypothesis is presented for testing:

**H5:** Teachers/guidance officers positively moderate the relationship between a prospective student's

**a) self-efficacy,**

**b) self-confidence, and**

**c) satisfaction,**

and the student's choice to enrol in a law degree.

**H6:** Teachers/guidance officers positively moderate the relationship between a student's

**c) satisfaction**

with their choice to enrol in a law degree and intentions to pursue a career in law.

Social in-group members (friends, peers) also play an important role in informing students' decisions.<sup>58</sup> Sociology researchers have consistently evidenced the influencing role of these groups on behaviors and attitudes.<sup>59</sup> Research has shown the important role social networks have in influencing students' choice to study overseas<sup>60</sup> and the

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<sup>56</sup> Mghweno, Mghweno and Baguma, (n 22).

<sup>57</sup> Emer Smyth and Joanne Banks, 'There was never really any question of anything else': Young people's agency, institutional habitus and the transition to higher education' (2012) 33(2) *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 263.

<sup>58</sup> Rachel Brooks, 'My mum would be as pleased as punch if I actually went, but my dad seems a bit more particular about it': Paternal involvement in young people's higher education choices' (2004) 30(4) *British Educational Research Journal* 495.

<sup>59</sup> Peter Marsden and Noah Friedkin, 'Network studies of social influence' (1993) 22(1) *Sociological Methods & Research* 127.

<sup>60</sup> Beech (n 50).

selection of tertiary institutions.<sup>61</sup> However, social in-group members' roles in influencing students' degree choice has not yet been fully examined, albeit with two notable exceptions. Firstly, Weinland's thesis, which examined the role of friends in influencing female school-leavers to pursue a degree in engineering. Secondly, Tani and Vines' consideration of the influence of close friends on a prospective student's decision to pursue tertiary studies in general.<sup>62</sup> We proffer that positive support of friends may moderate the direct relationships between prospective students' self-efficacy, self-confidence, satisfaction with their choice to enrol in a law degree and subsequent intentions to pursue a career in law. We hypothesise:

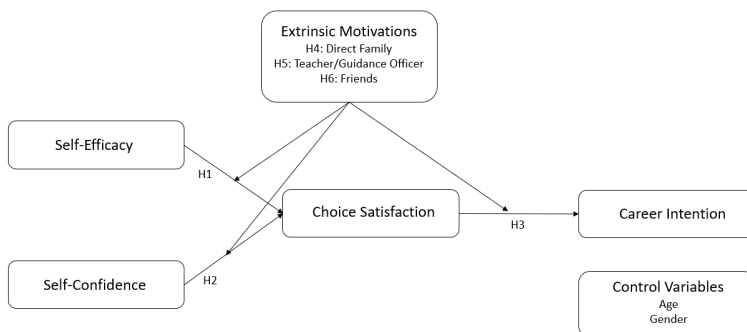
**H7:** Friends positively moderate the relationship between a prospective student's

- a) self-efficacy,
- b) self-confidence, and
- c) their satisfaction

with their choice to enrol in a law degree.

**H8:** Friends positively moderate the relationship between a student's satisfaction with their choice to enrol in a law degree and intention to pursue a career in law.

**Figure 1**  
**Student Choice Model**



<sup>61</sup> Senga Briggs, 'An exploratory study of the factors influencing undergraduate student choice: The case of higher education in Scotland' (2006) 31(6) *Studies in Higher Education* 705.

<sup>62</sup> Kathryn Weinland, 'How social networks influence female students' choices to major in engineering' (Doctoral Dissertation, Oklahoma State University, 2012); Tani and Vines (n 7).

### III METHODOLOGY

#### A *Sample and Collection Method*

To target appropriate respondents relevant to this study, an online survey was administered to 1,568 first-year students enrolled in three law schools in Australia. The survey was undertaken in the first two weeks of their semesters (March 2022) to avoid temporal biases, i.e., after assessment results.<sup>63</sup> Researchers emailed an invitation to respondents explaining the nature of the study, along with a statement confirming ethics approval to conduct the survey and a URL link to the survey. After the removal of partially completed surveys and those that failed to detect two integrity checks, a final response rate of 24.7% was achieved, resulting in 387 ( $n = 387$ ) usable surveys. The sample comprised 33% males ( $n = 127$ ) and 67% females ( $n = 260$ ). Most respondents were 18–24 years old (64%). About half of the law students who participated were from public/state high schools (51%), slightly less than half were from private high schools (46%) and the rest were from independent high schools (see Table 1).

**Table 1**  
**Description of participant sample**

	Size ( $n$ )	Percent (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	127	33
Female	260	67
<b>Age group</b>		
18–24	248	64
25–35	76	20
36–45	31	8
46–55	30	8
56–65	2	0.5
<b>Type of school</b>		
Public/State	199	51
Private	176	46
Independent	12	3

#### B *Study Measures*

Participants responded to a series of randomised, validated multi-item Likert measures on a seven-point scale, ranging from strongly

<sup>63</sup> George Gaskell, Daniel Wright and Colm O'Muircheartaigh, 'Telescoping of landmark events: Implications for survey research' (2000) 64(1) *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 77.

disagree (1) to strongly agree (7), to capture the constructs employed in this study (Appendix A). These measures included *student self-efficacy*,<sup>64</sup> *student self-confidence*,<sup>65</sup> the influence of *direct family members*,<sup>66</sup> *teachers/guidance officers* and *friends*,<sup>67</sup> *satisfaction with degree choice*,<sup>68</sup> and, *intentions to pursue a career in law*, adapted from Ajzen's<sup>69</sup> behavioral intentions scale. The influence of direct family members was measured by a multiple-choice question. Participants were asked 'Thinking about your immediate family, who influenced you the most to undertake a law degree?' The options included no direct family influences and having direct family influences (mother(s), father(s), parents equally, family/partner/spouse). This variable was coded as categorical, including with direct family influences and without direct family influences.

### C Analysis

The Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach was used to analyze the data, which is a powerful statistical tool for complex research containing mediation and two/three-way moderations.<sup>70</sup> To establish reliability, the Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha > 0.60$ ) and composite reliability (CR  $> 0.60$ ) were used. The path coefficient (PC) of measurement items and the average variance extracted (AVE) values should be higher than 0.60 and 0.50, respectively.<sup>71</sup> To examine the discriminant validity, the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio was used. HTMT ratios should be lower than 0.90 to achieve discriminant validity.<sup>72</sup> Appendix A shows all the constructs are reliable, thus convergent validity was achieved. The low HTMT ratios (Table 2) show discriminant validity was achieved. The

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<sup>64</sup> Melodie Rowbotham and Gerdamarie Schmitz, 'Development and validation of a student self-efficacy scale' (2013) 2(1) *Journal of Nursing & Care* 1; Ralf Schwarzer, *Self-efficacy: Thought control of action* (Taylor & Francis, 2014); Samuel Salami, 'Emotional intelligence, self-efficacy, psychological well-being and students' attitudes: Implications for quality education' (2010) 2(3) *European Journal of Educational Studies* 247.

<sup>65</sup> Mantz Yorke, 'The development and initial use of a survey of student 'belongingness', engagement and self confidence in UK higher education' (2016) 41(1) *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education* 154.

<sup>66</sup> Brooks (n 23).

<sup>67</sup> Graziella McCarron and Karen Inkelas, 'The gap between educational aspirations and attainment for first generation college students and the role of parental involvement' (2006) 47(5) *Journal of College Student Development* 534.

<sup>68</sup> Cor Suhre, Ellen Jansen and Evert Harskamp, 'Impact of degree program satisfaction on the persistence of college students' (2007) 54(2) *Higher Education* 207.

<sup>69</sup> Ajzen (n 48).

<sup>70</sup> Joseph Hair et al, 'Mirror, mirror on the wall: A comparative evaluation of composite-based structural equation modeling methods' (2017) 45(5) *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 616.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Jorg Hensler, Christian Ringle and Marko Sarstedt, 'A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling' (2015) 43(1) *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 115.

VIF scores should be lower than 3.3,<sup>73</sup> and our results indicate VIF scores range from 1.02 to 1.45; therefore, no common-method variance was identified.

**Table 2**  
**HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait) ratio**

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Self-efficacy					
2. Self-confidence	0.52				
3. Satisfaction with degree choice	0.63	0.35			
4. Career intention in law	0.39	0.18	0.58		
5. Guidance officers' influence	0.22	0.14	0.18	0.24	
6. Friends' influence	0.08	0.12	0.11	0.06	0.25

*D Hypotheses Testing*

As shown in Table 3, the model had good predictive relevance, explaining 35% of students' satisfaction with their choice to enrol in a law degree and 34% for their intention to pursue a law career. Students with a higher level of self-efficacy tended to show a higher level of satisfaction with their choice to enrol in a law degree (PC = 0.51,  $t = 7.61, p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, H1 was supported. Similarly, students with a higher level of self-confidence tended to show a higher level of satisfaction with their degree choice (PC = 0.11,  $t = 1.98, p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, H2 was supported. Lastly, students with a higher level of satisfaction with their degree choice showed a higher level of intention to pursue a law career (PC = 0.57,  $t = 15.10, p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, H3 was supported. Younger participants were more likely to possess an intention to pursue a law career (PC = -0.17,  $t = 3.53, p < 0.001$ ); however, age did not change participants' satisfaction with their choice to enrol in a law degree ( $p > 0.05$ ). Gender did not affect participants' intention to pursue a law career. However, gender did influence participants' satisfaction with their degree choice; females showed a higher level of satisfaction than males (PC = 0.09,  $t = 2.31, p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 3**  
**(H1, H2 and H3 tests)**

		PC	T	Note
<b>Hypothesis</b>				
H1	Self-Efficacy → Satisfaction with Degree Choice	0.51	7.61***	Supported
H2	Self-Confidence → Satisfaction with Degree Choice	0.11	1.98*	Supported

<sup>73</sup> Ned Kock, 'Common method bias in PLS-SEM: A full collinearity assessment approach' (2015) 11(4) *International Journal of e-Collaboration* 1.

	PC	T	Note
H3 Satisfaction with Degree Choice → Career Intention in Law	0.57	15.10***	Supported
<b>Control Variables</b>			
Age → Career Intention in Law	-0.17	3.53***	
Age → Satisfaction with Degree Choice	0.06	1.61 <sup>ns</sup>	
Gender → Career Intention in Law	-0.06	1.63 <sup>ns</sup>	
Gender → Satisfaction with Degree Choice	0.09	2.31*	
<b>Model Statistics</b>			
Satisfaction with Degree Choice	$R^2$	$Q^2$	
	0.35	0.28	
Career Intention in Law	0.34	0.29	

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; PC: path coefficient; T: t-test statistics. ns: not significant

Mediation analysis was conducted to understand how students' level of satisfaction impacted their choice to enrol in a law degree,<sup>74</sup> and it revealed the important role of students' satisfaction with their choice to enrol in a law degree. Neither *self-efficacy* nor *self-confidence* had a direct relationship with students' intention to pursue a career in law ( $p > 0.05$ ), however, they both had indirect effects on satisfaction with degree choice. The indirect effect from self-efficacy was positive (Indirect Effect = 0.26, Confidence Intervals [0.19,0.34]). Similarly, the indirect effect from self-confidence was positive (Indirect Effect = 0.06, Confidence Intervals [0.01,0.11]). This indicates that a student's entry into a law degree signals their intention to pursue a career in law, and this entry into law is driven by their self-efficacy and self-confidence.

H4 tested the moderating role of family influence in the relationships proposed in H1, H2, and H3. Interestingly, most students were not influenced by direct family members (60%). The main effect of family influence was tested by drawing direct relationships between family influence and satisfaction with degree choice and intention to pursue a career in law. No significant relationship was found between family influence and satisfaction with degree choice ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, students who reported direct family influence tended to have a higher intention to pursue a law career (PC = 0.11,  $t = 2.86$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The model explained 35% of the variance in the intention to pursue a career in law, but only 1% for satisfaction with degree choice. A multi-group analysis (MGA) in the software application SmartPLS was used to test the moderation effects in H4 and to compare those who had support from direct family and those who did not. As shown in Table 4, the  $R^2$  values ( $> 0.25$ ) and  $Q^2$  values ( $> 0$ ) showed good predictive relevance. Families did not influence the role of self-efficacy or self-

<sup>74</sup> Xinshu Zhao, John Lynch Jr and Qimei Chen, 'Reconsidering Baron and Kenny: Myths and truths about mediation analysis' (2010) 37(2) *Journal of Consumer Research* 197.



confidence in satisfaction with degree choice ( $p > 0.05$ ) but they did influence the role satisfaction had on participants' intentions to pursue a career in law (Welch-Satterthwait Test  $PC = -0.19, p < 0.01$ ). Accordingly, H4a and H4b were not supported. Among those who reported that their decisions were influenced by their direct family, satisfaction had a stronger relationship with their intention to pursue a career in law ( $PC = 0.70, t = 12.32, p < 0.001$ ), compared to those who were not influenced by their family ( $PC = 0.51, t = 9.45, p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, H4c was supported.

**Table 4**  
**(H4 tests)**

	Influenced by Direct Family (n=152)		Not Influenced by Direct Family (n=235)		Welch-Satterthwait Test
	PC	T	PC	T	
<b>Hypothesized relationships</b>					
Self-efficacy → Satisfaction with degree choice	0.55	4.76***	0.45	5.53***	
Self-confidence → Satisfaction with degree choice	0.18	1.90*	0.13	1.69*	
Satisfaction with degree choice → Career intention in law	0.70	12.32***	0.51	9.45***	-0.19**
<b>Control variables</b>					
Age → Career intention in law	-0.00	0.04 <sup>ns</sup>	-0.26	4.25***	-0.25**
Age → Satisfaction with degree choice	0.05	1.08 <sup>ns</sup>	0.05	0.93 <sup>ns</sup>	
Gender → Career intention in law	-0.06	1.53 <sup>ns</sup>	-0.09	1.74*	
Gender → Satisfaction with degree choice	0.10	1.88*	0.08	1.51 <sup>ns</sup>	
<b>Model statistics</b>					
Satisfaction with degree choice	$R^2$	$Q^2$	$R^2$	$Q^2$	
	0.46	0.37	0.32	0.24	
Career intention in law	0.48	0.41	0.31	0.26	

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . ns: not significant

H5 tested the moderating role of educators (teachers/guidance officers) in the relationships proposed in H1, H2 and H3. To understand the main effects, educators' influence was first entered into the model with the same control variables as the previous tests. As shown in Table 5 (see Main Effects columns), the model explains 34% variance of an intention to pursue a career in law and 6% variance of satisfaction with degree choice. Both  $Q^2$  scores were higher than 0. Students who reported a higher degree of influence from educators tended to show a

higher level of satisfaction with their choice to enrol in a degree in law ( $PC = 0.25, t = 5.83, p < 0.001$ ) and a higher level of intention to pursue law as their career ( $PC = 0.08, t = 1.89, p < 0.05$ ).

**Table 5**  
**(H5 tests)**

	Main Effects		Moderation		Note
	PC	T	PC	T	
<b>Hypothesized relationships</b>					
			0.49	8.64***	
			0.11	1.97*	
			0.58	12.12***	
	0.08	1.89*	0.05	0.85 <sup>ns</sup>	
	0.25	5.83***	0.15	3.42***	
<b>H5a</b>			-0.11	2.20*	Reversed
<b>H5b</b>			0.09	1.94*	Supported
<b>H5c</b>			0.07	1.05 <sup>ns</sup>	Not supported
<b>Control variables</b>					
	-0.13	2.50**	-0.13	2.53**	
	0.19	3.43***	0.11	2.55**	
	-0.06	1.57 <sup>ns</sup>	-0.06	1.62 <sup>ns</sup>	
	0.08	1.63*	0.09	2.30*	
<b>Model statistics</b>					
	$R^2$	$Q^2$	$R^2$	$Q^2$	
	0.06	0.05	0.38	0.30	
	0.34	0.29	0.35	0.29	

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ . ns: not significant

To test the moderation effects, self-efficacy, self-confidence and the interaction terms were added to the model (see the Moderation Columns in Table 5). The moderation items were then examined. Educators' influence significantly weakened the positive relationship between self-efficacy and satisfaction with degree choice ( $PC = -0.11$ ,  $t = 2.20$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This finding is contrary to what was hypothesized. By contrast, educators' influence significantly strengthened the positive relationship between self-confidence and satisfaction with degree choice ( $PC = -0.09$ ,  $t = 1.94$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). No interaction effect was found between educators' influence and satisfaction with degree choice on intention to pursue law as a future career ( $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, H5b was supported, but H5a and H5c were not (Refer Appendix A).

H6 tested the moderating role of friends on the relationships proposed in H1, H2, and H3. As shown in Appendix B (see the Main Effects columns), the model explains 34% variance of an intention to pursue a career in law and 1% variance of satisfaction with degree choice. Both  $Q^2$  scores were higher than 0. Students who reported a higher degree of influence from friends tended to show a higher level of intention to pursue a career in law ( $PC = 0.07$ ,  $t = 1.61$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). No relationship was found between friend influence and satisfaction with degree choice ( $p > 0.05$ ). To test the moderation effects, self-efficacy, self-confidence and the interaction terms were added to the model (Refer to the Moderation Columns in Appendix B). The moderation items were then examined. No moderation effect was found, and H6a, H6b, and H6c were not supported.

#### E *Post-hoc Analysis – Three-Way Interactions*

Due to the potential importance of influence by direct family, three-way interactions were tested using MGA. According to the  $R^2$  and  $Q^2$  values in Appendix C, the predictive relevance of both models (i.e., with family influence and without family influence) was good. The interaction between self-efficacy and the influence of teachers/guidance officers was only significant among those who were not influenced by their direct family (Welch-Satterthwait Test  $PC = -0.24$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (refer Appendix C). When students were not influenced by their direct family, teachers/guidance officers weakened the positive relationship between self-efficacy and satisfaction with degree choice ( $PC = -0.23$ ,  $t = 3.46$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The interaction between teachers'/guidance officers' influence and satisfaction with degree choice was only significant among those students who were influenced by their direct family (Welch-Satterthwait Test  $PC = -0.37$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) (refer Appendix C). When students were influenced by their direct family, teachers/guidance officers strengthened the positive relationship between satisfaction with degree choice and intentions to pursue a career in law ( $PC = 0.33$ ,  $t = 3.69$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The interaction between self-confidence and the influence of friends was only significant among those who were not influenced by their direct family (Welch-Satterthwait Test  $PC = -0.41$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) (refer Appendix C). When students were not influenced by their direct family, friends weakened

the positive relationship between self-confidence and satisfaction with degree choice ( $PC = -0.32, t = 2.19, p < 0.05$ ).

#### IV DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This article contributes to the understanding of how self-efficacy and self-confidence influence students' behavioral intentions to enrol in a law degree. Identifying that self-efficacy and self-confidence are important antecedents of choice satisfaction indicates that law schools should not only invest in support programs that nurture these intrinsic motivations, but also seek to attract potential students who already possess these traits. Potentially adding psychometric measures to assess self-efficacy and self-confidence during the recruitment stage may provide a better assessment and prediction of a student's potential satisfaction with their choice to study and pursue a career in law as well as their potential performance, over a tertiary entrance score alone. It could also assist law schools to target early intervention strategies to support student retention. Accordingly, we build on previous research that focuses on support programs that nurture intrinsic motivation in law students during their degree lifecycle,<sup>75</sup> and other research which has specifically addressed first-year attrition challenges.<sup>76</sup> We note that younger students are more likely to intend to pursue a career in law. This finding contrasts with Larcombe et al.,<sup>77</sup> who found that both graduate-entry (older) and undergraduate (younger) law students valued 'acquiring professional status' equally. An interesting new contribution from this study is that female students showed a higher level of satisfaction with choice compared to male students. This may indicate that particular attention needs to be given to supporting male students to feel confident that they made the right choice to study law. Neither self-efficacy nor self-confidence had a direct relationship with students' intention to pursue a career in law; rather, students' intention to enter the legal profession derives from their overall satisfaction with their choice to enrol in the degree. This new finding suggests that aspirations of a career in law can be fostered by focusing efforts on heightening satisfaction with discipline choice at various touchpoints in the degree offering.<sup>78</sup>

A notable finding was that the influence of teachers/guidance officers significantly weakened the positive relationship between self-

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<sup>75</sup> 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) *Student Success* 15.

<sup>76</sup> Natalie Skead and Shane Rogers, 'Do law students stand apart from other university students in their quest for mental health: A comparative study on wellbeing and associated behaviours in law and psychology students' (2015) 42-43 *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry* 81.

<sup>77</sup> Wendy Larcombe, Penelope Nicholson and Ian Malkin, 'Commencing law students interests and expectations: Comparing undergraduate and graduate cohorts' (2008) 1 *Journal of the Australasian Law Teachers Association* 227.

<sup>78</sup> Rachael Field, James Duffy and Anna Huggins, 'Teaching independent learning skills in the first year: A positive psychology strategy for promoting law student well-being' (2015) 8(2) *Journal of Learning Design* 1; Skead and Rogers (n 76).

efficacy and satisfaction with degree choice. Literature on educators' influence on higher education degree choices has been silent until now.<sup>79</sup> This new finding may suggest that teachers/guidance officers may have an unnecessarily convoluted view of the efforts required of students who seek to study law and may direct students away from the degree. Law schools should consider engaging with these professionals to ensure that they are equipped to inform students of what entering law school entails and the expectations placed upon new law students.

Conversely, the influence of teachers/guidance officers significantly strengthened the positive relationship between self-confidence and satisfaction with degree choice. Self-confidence is simply one's belief in 'self' and in one's 'abilities',<sup>80</sup> and teachers/guidance officers will have an intimate understanding of a student's academic ability. When a student presenting for advice is a high-achieving student, then it is understandable that a teacher/guidance officer would nurture and strengthen that student's belief in their overall capabilities. No effect was found between the influence of teachers/guidance officers on intention to pursue a career in law.

Importantly the interaction between the influence of teachers/guidance officers and satisfaction with degree choice was only significant among those students who were also influenced by their direct family. Supported by Crozier,<sup>81</sup> when students were positively influenced by their direct family, teachers/guidance officers strengthened the positive relationship. Where students were not influenced by their direct family, the influence of teachers/guidance officers weakened the positive relationship between self-efficacy and satisfaction with degree choice. This finding indicates the complex relationship that exists between parents and teachers. This is especially so when students are more independent (i.e., they have high levels of self-efficacy and low levels of direct family influence).

Finally, those students who reported a high degree of influence by friends showed a stronger degree of intention to pursue a career in law. This is a new finding, given that the literature considering peer influence on choices in higher education is minimal.<sup>82</sup> A potential implication is that if a student's choice is influenced more by their friends without any family influence, the role of self-confidence in their satisfaction with that choice can be diminished. It could be that these students are more susceptible to peer pressure in their high school – chasing their friend's dream will not lead to their eventual satisfaction.

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<sup>79</sup> Mghweno, Mghweno and Baguma (n 22); Karen Walker et al, 'Counsellor practices and student perspectives: Perceptions of career counselling in Australian secondary schools' (2006) 15(1) *Australian Journal of Career Development* 37.

<sup>80</sup> White (n 41).

<sup>81</sup> Gill Crozier, 'Parents and schools – Partners or protagonists?' (2002) 50(3) *British Journal of Educational Studies* 401.

<sup>82</sup> Beech (n 50).

## V CONTRIBUTIONS

This article offers several contributions to the tertiary sector and higher education literature. It identifies important intrinsic drivers that lead to students' overall satisfaction with their choices and intentions. While results indicate higher levels of self-efficacy and self-confidence lead to students' overall satisfaction with their decision, new students entering a law program for the first time may experience lower levels of these intrinsic traits. Low levels of intrinsic traits may create self-doubt and result in increased attrition rates. Accordingly, we stress the importance of induction programs and foundational units designed to strengthen resilience.<sup>83</sup> This work offers deeper insights into external influencers, such as family, teachers/guidance officers and friends, which will enable universities to adapt recruitment strategies to target these key influences. Finally, from a theoretical perspective, we present an empirical psychometric model that considers intrinsic drivers and extrinsic moderating factors to explain students' overall satisfaction with their decision to commence a law degree and their subsequent intention to pursue a law career, which may be employed in future research endeavors.

## VI LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The results of this study are bound by several limitations which may be fruitful for future research. Due to the cross-sectional nature of this research, this study does not capture any long-term changes in student self-efficacy or self-confidence, hence longitudinal research is recommended. Adopting a qualitative, exploratory research design may unearth deeper insights and a richer understanding of students' motivations to pursue a law degree.

Student data were collected from three Australian universities, where fees (in many cases) are deferred until after graduation and extracted from a graduate's income. This deferred method of payment may artificially inflate confidence and efficacy levels; thus, we caution against making generalisations across regions that offer varying higher education payment schemes.

The current study has examined two important intrinsic drivers and three extrinsic moderators of choice behavior. Moving forward, the student choice model may be extended by incorporating other contextual factors. Arguably past interactions, be those positive or negative, with the law (police), legal practitioners or the legal fraternity may influence the choice to pursue a law degree.<sup>84</sup> While previous studies have broadly examined how future career opportunities and

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<sup>83</sup> White (n 41).

<sup>84</sup> Tom Tyler, Jeffrey Fagan and Amanda Geller, 'Street stops and police legitimacy: Teachable moments in young urban men's legal socialization' (2014) 11(4) *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies* 751.

perceived incomes influence a student's choice of tertiary institution,<sup>85</sup> there is a limited understanding of how financial and career aspirations influence the choice of a degree, with none specifically examining law.<sup>86</sup> Finally, researchers have begun to unearth possible disparities between the level of active involvement of mothers and the more distant role of fathers in course choice or attitudes to higher education.<sup>87</sup> Therefore, future research should consider the moderating role of gender in parental involvement in choice of degree.

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<sup>85</sup> Matthew Wiswall and Basit Zafar, 'Determinants of college major choice: Identification using an information experiment' (2015) 82(2) *The Review of Economic Studies* 791.

<sup>86</sup> Tani and Vines (n 7).

<sup>87</sup> Wiswall and Zafar (n 85); Brooks (n 23).

## Appendix A

### Construct reliability and description

Construct	Items	PC	$\alpha$	CR	AVE	Mean	SD
<i>Self-Efficacy</i>			0.90	0.92	0.60	6.00	0.76
	1. I am convinced that I can successfully learn all the relevant subject content, even if it is difficult.	0.75					
	2. I know that I can maintain a positive attitude toward this course even when tensions arise.	0.83					
	3. When I try hard, I can learn the most difficult content.	0.80					
	4. I am convinced that, as time goes by, I will continue to become more and more capable of learning the content of this course.	0.79					
	5. I am confident in my ability to learn, even if I am having a bad day.	0.71					
	6. If I try hard enough, I can obtain the academic goals I desire.	0.77					
	7. I am convinced that I can develop creative ways to cope with the stress that may occur while taking this course.	0.74					
	8. I know I can stay motivated to participate in this course.	0.80					
<i>Self-confidence</i>			0.80	0.86	0.68	4.79	1.29
	1. I never doubt my ability to study at university level.	0.74					
	2. I feel I belong in this university law school.	0.82					
	3. I'm confident of completing my degree successfully.	0.91					
<i>Satisfaction with degree choice</i>			0.94	0.95	0.81	6.16	0.90
	1. I am satisfied with my choice to study law.	0.86					
	2. All things considered, I am happy with my decision to study law.	0.93					
	3. Of all the subjects I could have studied, I am pleased with my choice to do a degree in law.	0.97					
	4. Overall, I think a law degree is a smart choice.	0.93					
	5. My decision to study law was the right decision.	0.95					



<b>Construct</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>PC</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math></b>	<b>CR</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<i>Career intention in law</i>			0.96	0.97	0.86	5.49	1.36
	1. I will most certainly pursue a career in law in the future.	0.86					
	2. There is a strong chance that I will work in legal practice when I graduate.	0.93					
	3. I will most likely work as a practicing lawyer when I finish my degree.	0.97					
	4. I certainly see myself as a practicing lawyer in the future.	0.93					
	5. After I graduate, I intend to start working as a lawyer.	0.95					
<i>Guidance officers' influence</i>			0.95	0.96	0.83	2.00	1.43
	1. How involved were your teachers or guidance officer in your choice to do a degree in law?	0.93					
	2. How often did your teachers or guidance officer encourage you to pursue a law degree?	0.91					
	3. How regularly did you discuss with your teachers or guidance officer your intentions to enrol in a law degree?	0.93					
	4. How involved were your teachers or guidance officer in your application to this law school?	0.86					
	5. How frequently did your teachers or guidance officer discuss with you this law school?	0.93					
<i>Friends' influence</i>			0.72	0.82	0.71	1.91	1.35
	1. How involved were your friends/peers in your choice to do a degree in law?	0.65					
	2. How involved were your friends/peers in your application to this law school?	0.99					

Note: PC = Path Coefficient;  $\alpha$  = Cronbach's Alpha; CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted.

## Appendix B

### H6 Tests

		Main Effects		Moderation		Note
		PC	T	PC	T	
<b>Hypothesised Relationships</b>						
	Self-Efficacy → Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree			0.53	9.68***	
	Self-Confidence → Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree			0.12	2.21*	
	Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree → Career Intention in Law			0.57	13.22***	
	Friend Influence → Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree	-0.09	1.14 <sup>ns</sup>	0.07	1.14 <sup>ns</sup>	
	Friend Influence → Career Intention in Law	0.07	1.61*	-0.06	0.67 <sup>ns</sup>	
<b>H6a</b>	Self-Efficacy * Friend Influence → Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree			0.02	0.17 <sup>ns</sup>	Not supported
<b>H6b</b>	Self-Confidence * Friend Influence → Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree			-0.12	1.45 <sup>ns</sup>	Not supported
<b>H6c</b>	Friend Influence * Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree → Career Intention in Law			0.04	0.74 <sup>ns</sup>	Not supported
<b>Control Variables</b>						
	Age → Career Intention in Law	-0.15	3.15**	-0.14	3.06**	
	Age → Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree	0.06	1.20 <sup>ns</sup>	0.01	0.278	
	Gender → Career Intention in Law	-0.07	1.72*	-0.07	1.69*	
	Gender → Satisfaction in Choice of Law Degree	0.08	1.54 <sup>ns</sup>	0.08	2.03*	
<b>Model Statistics</b>		R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>	
	Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree	0.02	0.01	0.39	0.31	
	Career Intention in Law	0.34	0.29	0.34	0.29	

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

### Appendix C

#### Three-way Interaction Tests

	Influenced by Direct Family (n=152)		Not Influenced by Direct Family (n=235)		Welch-Satterthwait Test <sup>a</sup>
	PC	T	PC	T	
<b>H5 interactions</b>					
Self-Efficacy * Guidance Officer Influence → Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree	0.01	0.11 <sup>ns</sup>	-0.23	3.46 <sup>***</sup>	-0.24*
Self-Confident * Guidance Officer Influence → Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree	0.01	0.10 <sup>ns</sup>	0.14	2.15*	
Guidance Officer Influence * Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree → Career Intention in Law	0.33	3.69 <sup>***</sup>	-0.05	0.52 <sup>ns</sup>	-0.37 <sup>**</sup>
<b>Model Statistics</b>					
Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>	
	0.48	0.39	0.37	0.28	
Career Intention in Law	0.53	0.44	0.31	0.24	
<b>H6 interactions</b>					
Self-Efficacy * Friend Influence → Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree	0.06	0.36 <sup>ns</sup>	0.08	0.48 <sup>ns</sup>	
Self-Confidence * Friend Influence → Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree	0.09	0.70 <sup>ns</sup>	-0.32	2.19*	-0.41*
Friend Influence * Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree → Career Intention in Law	0.00	0.02 <sup>ns</sup>	0.04	0.68 <sup>ns</sup>	
<b>Model Statistics</b>					
Satisfaction of Choice in Law Degree	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>	
	0.50	0.40	0.41	0.32	
Career Intention in Law	0.50	0.41	0.30	0.26	

Note: \*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; a: only significant results of the Welch-Satterthwait Test from the multi-group analysis were reported.