

Alexa Prickett

Professor Wagner

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Question #1

Dear Alexa,

Why do I want to become a lawyer? Because I want to be able to help people in need in an area that is so difficult for most people. Values that I hold include fairness, kindness, and respect, personally and professionally. I want to treat the people that I work alongside and for with respect and honesty and I would hope for the same in return. As the oath of admission to the Colorado Bar states, "I will treat all persons whom I encounter through my practice of law with fairness, courtesy, respect and honesty; I will use my knowledge of the law for the betterment of society and the improvement of the legal system" (Oaths, 1). I want to be able to work with individuals who need my help to better their lives, society, and the legal system and I want to work with individuals with courtesy and respect to better their lives.

Right now, I have an idea of what I want to do for my legal career, but I am open and flexible to my ideas changing. As of now, I am looking into prosecution or maybe family law. As Professor Karen Steinhauser said, "Always evaluate if where you are is where you want to be... find your philosophy and a firm you want to be in, find your right fit" (Steinhauser). I know that I am thinking of prosecution and family law right now, but I want to be flexible to change and I want to be open in finding the right fit for me.

I think working in a legal career will support and fulfil my personal and professional values because I want to be able to help people with legal issues especially since the legal world is something most people know very little about. I think a legal career supports my personal values because I am someone who cares about rules but also honesty, courage, and more. Also, I know I have my own morals that some fields of law don't coincide well with. I know that criminal defense is a field of law that I struggle working in because of my morals so I know that I should put my focus in a different direction. As Kendall Godley talked about, he knew that he had his own morals that didn't follow along with the world of criminal law, and he turned to transactional law because he knew it would help him with what he wanted to do in the future with opening a bank. A legal career will also support my professional values because I have strong ethics, integrity, accountability, and I will use these values and characteristics to help others.

A legal career might challenge my personal and professional values because sometimes it is hard for me to leave my work at work and to not bring it home with me. My personal and professional values make me work so hard and I know they will make me work extremely hard for my clients, but I am scared that I won't be able to turn off that switch when I leave work and not let it control my personal life. When Dan Volkosh talked, he mentioned how he has gotten better at separating his work life and his personal life and how he has a lot of privacy due to past experiences. I know that I have values in me that tell me to not bring work home with me, but I can see how that might be difficult for me in the future. I do think that you were meant to be a lawyer and I am ready to see where my life takes me in this field.

Sincerely,

Alexa

Question #2

When a Supreme Court Justice is working on and as a part of the Supreme Court of the United States, there are many behaviors, norms, practices, traditions, and more that convey how a Supreme Court Justice works as a soloist as well as a part of the orchestra that is the Supreme Court. One example of how a member of the Supreme Court acts as a part of an orchestra are the traditions and behaviors that occur for junior justices and senior justices. David O'Brien states, "At conference, some junior justices have been said to experience a 'freshman effect.' That is, because senior justices speak first, newly appointed members may be somewhat circumspect... Justice Thomas agrees that it took 'three to five years to adjust to the work of the Court.' Calling his first years his 'rookie year'" (O'Brien, 260). There are traditions, spoken and unspoken, throughout the Supreme Court that the members follow without question, which results in junior justices having a "freshman effect." For example, when the Justices are in conference, it is the most junior justice that grabs the coffee for the table and the one to answer the door when someone knocks. These are just some examples of many traditions that all the Justices within the Supreme Court have followed for years, resulting in their well-oiled machine, similar to an orchestra.

Another example of how members of the Supreme Court work as an orchestra are the similar backgrounds of the majority of the Supreme Court Justices. Not every Supreme Court member throughout history has the same background but there are many norms throughout their backgrounds that result to them becoming a Justice. For example, many Supreme Court Justices graduated from either Harvard Law or Yale Law, many were a federal appellate court judge in the Washington D.C. Circuit, and many also clerked for Supreme Court Justices in the past.

There are also guidelines that they follow when they are a judge. Technically, there isn't a code of conduct for the members of the Supreme Court but most of them still follow these codes of conduct since they would have previously followed them already when they were judges. The Congressional Research Service lists what the Code of Conduct instructs federal judges to do, including "Uphold the integrity and independence of the judiciary; avoid not only impropriety but the appearance thereof; perform the duties of their offices fairly, impartially, and diligently; avoid extrajudicial activities that would be inconsistent with the obligations of judicial office; and refrain from political activity" (Congressional Research Service, 2). Most Supreme Court Justices still follow these codes of conduct which allows them to work together with similar rules and backgrounds, like an orchestra.

Members of the Supreme Court do work as a part of an orchestra, but they can be soloists too. One example of how a justice can act as a soloist is how justices who disagree with the result of the case can write dissenting opinions on their own. O'Brien quoted Justice Frankfurter in his book which said, "The Court is an institution in which every man is his own sovereign" (O'Brien, 123). When Justices are dissenting an opinion that the majority made, multiple can write their opinions together but, if one dissenting Justice has a slightly different opinion than the other dissenters, they can write their own dissenting opinion with their own ideas. Each Justice is able to have their own opinion within their group decision and as Frankfurter stated, every justice is their own sovereign, they are their own leader.

Another example of how a member of the Supreme Court can be a soloist is being a leader within the group of Justices. O'Brien says, "Still, any justice may assume task or social leadership. He or she also may assert a third kind of leadership – policy leadership. Justices demonstrate policy leadership by persuading others to vote in ways (in the short and long run)

favorable to their policy goals” (O’Brien, 261). Any Justice can be a leader, not just the Chief Justice. Justices can be a leader and a soloist by persuading or swaying some of the other Justices to join their side. They can work on their own and try to bring some of the other Justices on to their side by describing their own ideas and reasoning for why they casted their vote the way they did. O’Brien did state that some Justices deny the possibility of some Justices persuading others, but some can possibly be swayed when hearing reasonings from the other Justices.

As I quoted earlier, Frankfurter once stated, “The Court is an institution in which every man is his own sovereign” (O’Brien, 123). Every Justice is able to be their own sovereign and their own soloist within the institution of the Supreme Court in multiple ways, but institutions also organize actors into a collective with their history, norms, practices, and traditions which allow them to act together as an orchestra as well.