

The Paradox of the Contented Female Lawyer

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This research note calls attention to some basic but rather neglected questions about life in the legal profession: Are lawyers happy in their work? Do patterns of stratification within the profession translate into differences in work satisfaction? Does satisfaction with different components of legal work vary across employment statuses and practice contexts?

Given that job satisfaction is a highly subjective phenomenon, some sociolegal scholars may question its value as an object of social scientific inquiry. I argue, however, that to ignore the question of lawyers' happiness is a mistake. Despite their limitations, studies of lawyers' work satisfaction can be useful in several ways. First, job satisfaction can be viewed as a stratification measure, complementing more traditional measures such as income and hierarchical position. If satisfaction is unevenly distributed within the profession in some systematic way (e.g., if women are less satisfied than men or if minorities less satisfied than whites), we might interpret this uneven distribution as a form of inequality and seek to explain its causes and possible remedies. Second, studies of job satisfaction can serve to confirm or refute some popular stereotypes about the profession, such as the notion that most lawyers are wealthy but miserable workaholics. Finally, job satisfaction may be implicated as an important independent variable with respect to a range of issues within the profession, including departures from the profession, job performance, work-family balance, increased mobility within the profession, the

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physical and mental health of lawyers, and their overall life satisfaction.

In this research note, I narrow my focus to the relationship between gender and job satisfaction in the law. The rapid influx of women into the profession since the 1970s raises the obvious question of how women are doing in the law at this juncture, and the ongoing discussion of women's prospects and experiences as lawyers could benefit from greater attention to the subjective dimension of this question. As Menkel-Meadow (1989a:307) states: "To the extent that success in the profession is measured almost exclusively by participation in the elite but not modal form of practice [the large firm], conventional sociological assumptions of prestige and success serve as the 'objective' measure of women's progress. But what if women defined success and satisfaction differently?" After briefly reviewing the existing literature, I present findings from a recent survey of Chicago attorneys and conclude with some suggestions for future research on gender and job satisfaction.

Past Studies of Gender and Job Satisfaction

Most studies of job satisfaction across a variety of occupational settings find no significant gender differences in satisfaction, even though women on average have inferior jobs in terms of pay, status, level of authority, and mobility prospects (Campbell et al. 1976; Bokemeier & Lacy 1986; Mottaz 1986; Crosby 1982; Austin & Dodge 1992; Firebaugh & Harley 1995). Various theories have emerged to account for this seeming puzzle, sometimes referred to in the literature as the "paradox of the contented working woman" (Jackson 1989; Phelan 1994).

One of the more popular explanations for women's equal satisfaction is that women and men have different values and therefore care about different things in jobs (Murray & Atkinson 1981; Crosby 1982; Martin & Hanson 1985; Neil & Snizek 1988; Bigoness 1988; Witt & Nye 1992). For example, women may attach more importance to relations with coworkers and less importance to pay and promotion relative to men. Other theories to account for women's high satisfaction include the idea that women may use different reference groups in assessing their satisfaction, comparing themselves only with other women or with women who stay at home rather than with all other workers (Crosby 1982; Hodson 1989; but see Loscocco & Spitze 1991). Or, women may approach their work lives with lower expectations, making satisfaction easier to achieve (Crosby 1982; Brush et al. 1987; but see Hodson 1989). Some researchers also argue that women receive a positive benefit from their multiple roles in the domestic and work spheres, such that women's satisfaction with their domestic roles as wife and mother spills over to in-

crease their satisfaction with work (Crosby 1982; Crosby 1987; but see Hodson 1989; Loscocco 1990).

The limited research on job satisfaction among lawyers shows little in the way of gender differences. Data from American Bar Association surveys in 1984 and 1990 find women with lower satisfaction, especially in private practice, but the gender difference disappears after controlling for characteristics of respondents' jobs and work environments (American Bar Association Young Lawyers Division 1991). A study by Chambers (1989) of alumni of the University of Michigan Law School finds no evidence of gender differences. The Michigan study also reveals that women with children have the highest career satisfaction, lending some support to the theory that women's domestic roles actually increase their work satisfaction. A study of graduates of the University of New Mexico Law School (Teitelbaum et al. 1991) also fails to find gender differences in overall job satisfaction, but does find that women are significantly less satisfied with the flexibility of their work schedules and the hours of work required. Most recently, a study of Canadian lawyers by Hagan and Kay (1995) finds no gender differences in overall job satisfaction, although women are more likely to report plans to look for a new job in the next year and more likely to leave the profession altogether because of work dissatisfaction.

Other scholars of the legal profession discuss the relationship between gender and job satisfaction in a more speculative manner. Holmes (1990) argues that a number of characteristics of large law firms contribute to lawyers' dissatisfaction, including overwork, hierarchy, bureaucracy, specialization, potential moral conflict, and work-family tension. In addition, Holmes contends that female lawyers in large firms experience sexist treatment and various sex-based inequalities (in promotions, pay, etc.) that further contribute to dissatisfaction. Menkel-Meadow (1989b:225–27) suggests that women's primary responsibilities for childrearing mean that children could have quite different impacts on male and female lawyers' work satisfaction and calls for more exploration of the possibility that female and male attorneys may value different rewards from their work.

Chicago Lawyers: Data, Methods, and Preliminary Findings

Here I use data from a recent survey to examine patterns of gender difference in job satisfaction and to test competing explanations for the observed patterns. The data for this analysis were collected in 1994–1995 by the Chicago Lawyers Study, a follow-up study to Heinz and Laumann's (1982) original study 20 years

earlier.¹ A random sample of lawyers was drawn from the roster of lawyers maintained by the Illinois Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission (ARDC), a government agency that keeps records on all lawyers licensed to practice in the state. The sampling frame was lawyers with business addresses in the city of Chicago.² An 82% response rate from the original random sample drawn from the ARDC list produced a total of 788 participants in the survey. The survey used in-person interviews to collect data from respondents on various topics related to their background and careers, including work setting and practice organization, clientele, substantive practice areas and work-related tasks, career history, job satisfaction, work commitment, social values, community involvements, relationships with professional colleagues, social and educational background, and income.

The current analysis includes only respondents who were practicing lawyers at the time of the survey.³ This subsample includes a total of 675 respondents, with 185 females (27%) and 490 males (73%). I limit the analysis of job satisfaction to practicing lawyers to paint a portrait of work satisfaction among lawyers who are actively engaged in the practice of law rather than work satisfaction among all legally trained professionals.

Respondents rated their satisfaction on a five-point scale, from “very satisfied” (5) to “very dissatisfied” (1), for both overall job satisfaction and 12 more specific measures: level of responsibility, recognition for their work, content of work, chances for advancement, policies and administration of their organization, salary, relations with supervisors, control over amount of work, control over manner in which work is performed, prestige of their organization, relationships with work colleagues, and opportunities to do pro bono work.

Job satisfaction is generally quite high among the practicing lawyers in the Chicago sample, and there is no significant gender difference in overall satisfaction, with women scoring an average

¹ Although the current study is in fact a follow-up to the Heinz and Laumann study, it is not a true panel study (i.e., the same set of respondents was not surveyed in the second study). In addition, the studies differ in some important respects: the samples were drawn using different methods (although the target population was the same for both), and the questionnaires were not identical (although many questions from the first study were replicated in the current study to facilitate comparisons). Perhaps the most germane difference for present purposes is that the job satisfaction questions were not asked in the earlier study.

² This sampling strategy necessarily introduces some selection bias into the sample, because some lawyers who have chosen to leave the practice of law may let their state registration lapse and will not appear on the ARDC's roster of registered lawyers. The sample did, however, include many lawyers who were no longer practicing law but who chose to maintain their registration with the state.

³ Practicing lawyers are defined as all lawyers who reported more than zero hours per week on the practice of law and who were employed in solo practice, firms, government, internal counsel offices, or public interest settings. The practicing lawyer category excludes judges, judicial clerks, legal educators, retired or unemployed lawyers, and lawyers in nonlegal positions.

of 4.13 on the five-point scale and men an average of 4.24 (see Table 1). On 8 of the 12 specific measures, however, the male and female means differ significantly, and in 7 of those 8 differences, women are less satisfied than men. Women are less satisfied than men with their level of responsibility, recognition for their work, chances for advancement, policies of their organization, salary, and control over amount and manner of work. Women are more satisfied than men with their relationships with work colleagues. These findings suggest a variation of the paradox of the contented working woman manifesting itself in the legal profession: despite being less satisfied with most specific aspects of their work, female lawyers are reporting overall job satisfaction that is equal to men's satisfaction.

Table 1. Mean Satisfaction Values by Gender, Practicing Lawyers, Chicago Lawyers Study, 1994–1995

Satisfaction Measure	Female Mean	Male Mean	Difference in Means
Overall satisfaction	4.13	4.24	-0.11
Satisfaction with:			
Level of responsibility	4.18	4.48	-0.30**
Recognition for work	3.64	3.87	-0.23*
Content of work	4.07	4.11	-0.04
Chances for advancement	3.22	3.67	-0.45**
Policies and administration	3.12	3.50	-0.38**
Salary	3.14	3.58	-0.44**
Supervisors	3.71	3.83	-0.12
Control over amount of work	3.51	3.82	-0.31**
Control over manner of work	4.12	4.31	-0.19*
Prestige of firm/organization	4.10	4.12	-0.02
Relationships with colleagues	4.40	4.22	0.18**
Opportunity for pro bono work	3.46	3.49	-0.03

* *t*-test significant at the .05 level.

** *t*-test significant at the .01 level.

Using principal components analysis (see Dunteman 1989), I transformed the 12 detailed satisfaction measures into two uncorrelated summary variables. This data reduction is useful for both practical and theoretical reasons. As a practical matter, analyzing all the measures of satisfaction individually (i.e. treating each as a dependent variable) is an unwieldy analytic strategy. Because many of these individual satisfaction measures correlate with one another, the principal components analysis permits compressing a lot of detailed satisfaction data into a smaller set of variables without losing much information. This approach is also theoretically appealing because it can produce interpretable summary variables that can then be treated as independent variables predicting overall job satisfaction and also as dependent variables measuring distinct, uncorrelated aspects of job satisfaction.

The principle components analysis of the 12 detailed satisfaction variables extracted two main components or factors from

the data.⁴ The first component is most highly correlated with the variables measuring satisfaction with salary, advancement opportunities, policies and administration of the firm, prestige of the firm, recognition, supervisors, and opportunities for pro bono work. The second component is most highly correlated with satisfaction with control over the amount and manner of work, level of responsibility, content of work, and relations with colleagues. These results are quite consistent with a theoretical distinction made in the literature between satisfaction with aspects of the job itself and satisfaction with the broader context in which the job is situated. These two components, which evolved from Herzberg et al.'s two-factor theory of job satisfaction (Herzberg et al. 1959), are variously described as job "context" and job "content," or "extrinsic" and "intrinsic" components of satisfaction (Gruneberg 1979). The first factor extracted by the principal components analysis appears to represent satisfaction with the context of work, including reward systems such as pay, promotion, and recognition for work as well as characteristics of the employing organization (its policies and prestige level) and supervisors. The second factor, by contrast, I interpret as satisfaction with the job itself, because it includes control over the amount and manner of work, level of responsibility, work content, and working relationships with colleagues.⁵

The principal components analysis assigns factor scores to each respondent, providing individual-level measures of satisfaction with job context and job content. Table 2 gives the mean factor scores by gender. (These scores are standardized, with an overall mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.) Women on average have lower scores on both factors, but the difference is statistically significant only for the context factor.

If women are significantly less satisfied than men with job context but equally satisfied with their jobs overall, might this suggest that female lawyers attach less importance to the context

Table 2. Mean Satisfaction Factor Scores by Gender, Practicing Lawyers, Chicago Lawyers Study, 1994–1995

Satisfaction Factor	Female Mean	Male Mean	Difference in Means
"Context"	-.162	.074	-.236*
"Content"	-.027	.012	-.039

NOTE: Factor scores are standardized, with an overall mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

* *t*-test significant at the .05 level.

⁴ Results of the principal components analysis are not shown but are available upon request from the author.

⁵ The measure of satisfaction with work colleagues could arguably be seen as more related to job context than job content. To the extent that lawyers work collaboratively, however, satisfaction with colleagues may in fact be tied to satisfaction with the work itself. In any case, the colleagues variable does not correlate highly with either factor in the rotated solution, so it plays a relatively minor role in the ensuing analyses.

aspects of work than men? As noted earlier, this hypothesis has been suggested in the literature on the legal profession (Menkel-Meadow 1989a, 1989b) but never directly tested. To test whether women are weighting job context less heavily than men in assessing their overall satisfaction, I use the individual-level factor scores to predict overall job satisfaction. If the context factor has a smaller effect on overall satisfaction for women than for men, this difference may resolve the seeming contradiction between women's overall job satisfaction level and their satisfaction with specific aspects of work.

Simple logistic regression models are used to predict being in the "very satisfied" category on overall satisfaction (see Table 3).⁶ In the first model, the content and context scores are used to predict high satisfaction. As we might expect, both content satisfaction and context satisfaction are significant predictors of overall satisfaction. In the second model, I add gender (a dummy variable for female) and terms for the interaction between gender and context and content scores. If women assign less importance than men to job context (or more to job content) in evaluating their overall job satisfaction, one or both interaction terms should be significant. In fact, neither interaction term is significant, indicating that satisfaction with job content and job context have similar effects for both men and women in terms of their overall job satisfaction. Thus, the Chicago data fail to support the hypothesis that women and men place different value on the context and content aspects of their work.

Table 3. Logistic Regression Models Predicting High Overall Job Satisfaction, Practicing Lawyers, Chicago Lawyers Study, 1994–1995

Model 1		Model 2	
Independent Variables	Logistic Coefficient	Independent Variables	Logistic Coefficient
Context factor	0.8987*	Context factor	1.0000*
Content factor	1.3633*	Content factor	1.3943*
Constant	-0.6296*	Female	0.4078
		Female by context	-0.1866
		Female by content	-0.0842
		Constant	-0.7705*
-2 log-likelihood	478.186	-2 log-likelihood	475.343
Model chi-square ^a	153.656*	Model chi-square ^a	2.843
	(2 d.f.)		(3 d.f.)

^a For model 1, the model chi-square gives the improvement over the constant-only model. For model 2, it gives the improvement over model 1.

* $p < .001$.

⁶ Because the overall satisfaction measure is highly skewed, with most respondents reporting being "satisfied" or "very satisfied," linear regression is an inappropriate method for predicting this measure. This problem is resolved by using logistic regression and treating the overall satisfaction measure as a dichotomous variable: respondents are either "very satisfied" or not.

Next, I treat context and content satisfaction as dependent variables. Using multiple regression analysis, I seek to determine (1) what predicts these two dimensions of satisfaction (2) whether the predictors have similar effects for women and men, and (3) whether the significant effect of gender on context satisfaction disappears after controlling for other significant predictors. The control variables, described in the Appendix, can be grouped into three main categories. Individual-level variables are time in the profession, law school performance, law school prestige, marital status, parenthood, race/ethnicity, and liberalism. Job-level variables are income, hierarchical position, time in the organization, "task dissonance" (measuring the distance between preferred and actual work tasks), and prestige of practice areas. Organization-level variables cover practice setting and size of organization.

Table 4 presents the context and content satisfaction models, for all practicing lawyers, for women only, and for men only. In the general context model (including all practicing lawyers), law school performance, income, and prestige of practice areas all have significant positive effects. Economic liberalism and task dissonance significantly reduce context satisfaction in this model. Practice setting is also a significant predictor, with government and internal counsel lawyers significantly less satisfied with job context than their counterparts in law firms. After controlling for these other significant effects, gender does *not* have a significant effect on context satisfaction, suggesting that women's lower average context satisfaction is explained by their lower income and their overrepresentation in government and internal counsel settings. Of course, to account for women's lower satisfaction with job context in this way is not to diminish its significance. The obvious next question, beyond the scope of this research note, is why women continue to earn less and to work disproportionately in settings that produce lower context satisfaction.

There are only a few significant predictors in the general model of content satisfaction. Task dissonance, not surprisingly, reduces satisfaction with job content. Organization size also reduces content satisfaction: as organization size increases, content satisfaction declines. And practice setting again matters, but in a different way. Although government and internal counsel settings reduce context satisfaction (relative to the law firm setting), government and public interest settings increase content satisfaction compared with the firm setting. Clearly, the choice of practice setting involves trade-offs between different aspects of job satisfaction. Government lawyers are less happy with the context of their job compared with firm lawyers but are more happy with the content of their work.

Taken together, these models indicate that the job characteristics that lead to context and content satisfaction are quite dif-

Table 4. OLS Regression Models of Context and Content Satisfaction, Practicing Lawyers, Chicago Lawyers Study, 1994–1995

Independent Variables	Context Satisfaction			Content Satisfaction		
	Full Sample	Females Only	Males Only	Full Sample	Females Only	Males Only
Individual Level						
Female	-.05 (.12)	—	—	-.01 (.13)	—	—
Years in profession	.01 (.01)	-.04 (.03)	.01 (.01)	.01 (.01)	.04 (.04)	.01 (.01)
Top 10%/law review	.28** (.11)	.67** (.20)	.13 (.06)	.04 (.12)	-.14 (.28)	.08 (.13)
High-status law school	-.08 (.11)	-.13 (.23)	.00 (.13)	-.04 (.13)	-.07 (.33)	-.05 (.13)
Married	-.09 (.13)	-.16 (.20)	-.05 (.16)	.06 (.14)	.02 (.28)	.02 (.17)
Children	.07 (.12)	.51* (.23)	-.06 (.15)	-.01 (.14)	.03 (.34)	.02 (.15)
Minority	-.06 (.17)	.08 (.25)	-.09 (.23)	-.15 (.18)	-.35 (.36)	-.02 (.22)
Economic liberalism	-.14* (.07)	-.24 (.16)	-.09 (.08)	-.15 (.08)	.09 (.23)	-.20* (.08)
Job Level						
Income	.00* (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Senior-level position	.06 (.12)	.01 (.28)	.08 (.14)	.18 (.14)	-.14 (.41)	.20 (.14)
Years in organization	-.01 (.01)	.04 (.04)	-.01 (.01)	-.01 (.01)	.01 (.05)	-.01 (.01)
Task dissonance	-.03* (.01)	-.04 (.03)	-.03* (.02)	-.06*** (.02)	-.04 (.04)	-.06*** (.02)
Prestige of practice areas	.40** (.13)	.02*** (.24)	.20 (.15)	-.05 (.14)	.21 (.34)	-.04 (.15)
Organization Level						
Solo practice	.28 (.19)	.57 (.46)	.28 (.21)	.13 (.21)	1.01 (.66)	-.05 (.21)
Government	-.54** (.17)	-.54 (.28)	-.53* (.23)	.62** (.19)	-.05 (.40)	.96*** (.23)
Internal counsel	-.33* (.15)	-.66* (.26)	-.24 (.18)	.04 (.16)	-.14 (.37)	.14 (.18)
Public interest law (Ref. category: Firm)	-.79 (.56)	-.01 (1.05)	-1.28 (.67)	1.43* (.62)	.18 (1.52)	1.68* (.68)
Organization size	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)	-.00*** (.00)	-.00 (.00)	-.00*** (.62)
Constant	-.76 (.52)	-2.48* (1.03)	-.26 (.61)	.92 (.58)	-.97 (1.48)	1.10 (.62)
F statistic	5.44***	4.59***	2.88***	2.93***	0.64	3.81***

NOTE: Table reports unstandardized coefficients (standard errors in parentheses).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

ferent. Money and prestigious areas of practice improve context satisfaction but have no effect on content satisfaction. Organization size affects content satisfaction but not context satisfaction. The impacts of practice setting also differ in the two models. Only task dissonance has a similar effect in both models, reducing satisfaction across the board.

The models were also run separately for male and female lawyers to check for variables that might predict satisfaction for one gender but not the other. Space does not permit a detailed review of these gender-specific models, but one theoretically relevant finding deserves attention. In the context satisfaction models, children have a significant positive effect for women but not for men. This finding provides at least tentative support for the “role spillover” theory discussed earlier, which asserts that women’s satisfaction with their role as mothers spills over to increase their work satisfaction. (It is unclear why this spillover effect would appear for context but not content satisfaction.) Of course, this explanation is a bit counterintuitive given all the concern over work-family tension (too often identified as exclusively a women’s issue), and it implicitly assumes that women with children are in fact happy with their parenting role.

In light of Hochschild’s (1997) interesting recent work on the “time bind” facing working parents, I would like to propose an alternative explanation to role spillover. In her ethnographic work on corporate workers’ strategies for balancing work and family, Hochschild finds a “cultural reversal of workplace and home” (p. 201) and concludes that most parents do not take advantage of corporate work-family policies because they feel more “at home” at work and tend to view their home life as a demanding workplace. In particular, many of Hochschild’s informants reported feeling more competent and more appreciated in their work roles than in their home roles. Could a similar dynamic be at work among the mothers in the Chicago sample? Perhaps these respondents feel underappreciated in their domestic roles, so the rewards and recognition afforded by the work role provide a satisfying contrast. Being a parent simply does not have the same cultural valence for men, who rarely take primary responsibility for childrearing in heterosexual couples. Thus, children may not boost men’s satisfaction with work rewards and recognition in the same way they do women’s satisfaction.

In summary, the Chicago satisfaction data support some theories accounting for the paradox of the contented female lawyer but fail to support others. The logistic regression analysis did not support the notion that women value the context aspects of their jobs less than men do. The positive effect of children on women’s but not men’s context satisfaction provides tentative support for the role spillover hypothesis, but I have argued that an alternative interpretation of this finding is possible. Unfortunately, the Chicago data are not amenable to testing some other theories that might account for women’s high levels of job satisfaction, including theories about gender differences in comparison groups or expectations.

Directions for Future Research

I conclude by briefly discussing some empirical, methodological, and theoretical considerations that should guide future research on lawyers' job satisfaction. There are a few gaping holes in our empirical evidence on lawyers' job satisfaction. We need to know more about the role of individual needs, values, and expectations in shaping lawyers' assessment of their work satisfaction. We also should try to learn more about the kinds of comparison groups lawyers have in mind when they assess their own satisfaction, although this sort of information may be particularly difficult to obtain given that research subjects may not even be aware that they are comparing themselves with others. With respect to gender, better data on the role of values and expectations might help resolve the paradox of the contented female lawyer. We also need more empirical evidence on the role of job satisfaction as an independent variable in the legal profession, especially in this period of flux and evolution in professional roles and career processes. If mobility is in fact increasing within the legal profession, what role does job satisfaction play in accounting for more frequent job shifts? To what extent is dissatisfaction driving lawyers (and especially female lawyers) out of the profession entirely? And for those who continue to practice, what if any relationship exists between job satisfaction and work performance?

Students of the legal profession also must become more methodologically sophisticated in their approach to lawyers' job satisfaction. Based on my own frustrations in working on this topic, I offer several concrete suggestions for those who wish to incorporate job satisfaction issues into their future research on lawyers. First, we need longitudinal studies that track changes in individuals' satisfaction over time and allow examination of the interplay between satisfaction and various career processes. With the notable exception of Hagan and Kay's (1995) work on Canadian lawyers, most studies of satisfaction (including the Chicago study) employ cross-sectional designs that give us a snapshot of people's job satisfaction at a single point in time. In addition, many of these cross-sectional studies do not include ex-lawyers in their sampling frames. This omission obviously creates a certain amount of upward bias in satisfaction estimates, because the stayers are likely to be happier than the leavers.

We should also explicitly consider the possible response effects associated with various ways of obtaining satisfaction data. Past research on survey administration has established that in-person interviews and self-administered questionnaires can produce dramatically different responses on threatening questions or on those where a "socially desirable" answer seems evident (Bradburn 1983). Does this kind of social desirability bias apply to questions about job satisfaction posed to highly educated pro-

professionals such as lawyers? A study that randomly assigns respondents to self-administered versus in-person surveys could resolve this issue.

We should also broaden our repertoire of research tools applied to the complex issue of satisfaction. Large-scale surveys have certain obvious benefits but also serious limitations. We need more open-ended questions that allow respondents to explain what job satisfaction means to them and how they evaluate it. For example, rather than just gathering quantitative ratings of satisfaction with various parts of work and then trying to infer which parts of work matter most to overall satisfaction, researchers should ask lawyers what *they* think is most important in determining their work satisfaction. More purely qualitative approaches, such as ethnographies and in-depth interviewing, could also shed light on many unanswered questions.

Finally, the study of the legal profession would benefit from more vigorous theoretical debate about the importance and interpretation of job satisfaction research. What are the pros and cons of using direct satisfaction measures to gauge social inequality within the profession? Isn't the notion of satisfaction implicit in many of the more commonly used stratification measures? We think money makes people happy, so we measure income differences. Similarly, we assume that prestige breeds contentment, so we measure prestige differences among practice settings and substantive areas of law. Are these assumptions about the linkages between traditional stratification measures and subjective experiences of lawyers always warranted? If so, why aren't female lawyers significantly less satisfied than male lawyers in terms of overall job satisfaction? This research note has not provided final resolution of the paradox of the contented female lawyer, but perhaps it will inspire others to grapple with these perplexing questions and to design research strategies to find more satisfying answers.

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Appendix Description of Measures

Variable	Metric	Description	Mean Values for Practicing Lawyers		
			All	Females	Males
Individual Level					
Female	Binary	Whether respondent is female	0.27	1.00	0.00
Years in profession	Years	Year of survey minus year of respondent's law school graduation	13.84	8.30	15.94
Top 10%/law review	Binary	Whether respondent was in the top 10% of his or her law school class and/or made law review	0.27	0.25	0.28
High-status law school	Binary	Whether respondent's law school was an elite/prestige law school ^a	0.26	0.21	0.29
Married	Binary	Whether respondent is married	0.72	0.51	0.80
Children	Binary	Whether respondent has any children	0.60	0.35	0.69
Minority	Binary	Whether respondent is a minority, defined as Latino/a or nonwhite	0.08	0.14	0.06
Economic liberalism	1–5	Five-point scale composed of seven Likert-scale items measuring liberalism on economic issues: 1 is most conservative, 5 is most liberal ^b	3.03	3.27	2.93
Job Level					
Income	Dollars	Midpoint of income category selected by respondent, from 20 possible categories	132,434	77,936	152,929
Senior-level position	Binary	Whether respondent is in a supervisory-level position (e.g., partner in a firm, supervising attorney in internal counsel department)	0.57	0.31	0.67
Years in organization	Years	Number of years respondent has been employed by current employer	8.18	4.98	9.40

Task dissonance	0–36	Constructed variable that sums absolute values of difference between respondent's rankings (on a five-point scale) of their preference for nine different work tasks and the frequency with which they perform those tasks. High task dissonance indicates frequent performance of disliked tasks and/or infrequent performance of preferred tasks.	8.08	8.31	8.00
Prestige of practice areas	1–5	Average of the prestige rankings of the respondent's substantive areas of practice (e.g., divorce), weighted by time spent in each practice area. Prestige rankings derived from aggregate responses of all random sample respondents	3.25	3.21	3.27
Organization Level					
Solo	Binary	Whether respondent is in solo practice	0.15	0.10	0.17
Government	Binary	Whether respondent is in government practice	0.09	0.17	0.06
Internal counsel	Binary	Whether respondent works as internal counsel in an organization	0.12	0.20	0.09
Public interest law	Binary	Whether respondent works in public interest law setting (e.g., public defenders, legal services)	0.02	0.05	0.01
Firm (omitted category)	Binary	Whether respondent works in a law firm	0.62	0.48	0.67
Organization size	Number of lawyers	Total number of lawyers practicing in respondent's firm/organization	85.11	98.84	79.98

^a Based on the classification of law schools used in the original Chicago lawyers study (see Heinz & Laumann 1982). Contact the author for a list of the law schools in the elite/prestige category.

^b Cronbach's alpha = 0.77. For information on the items composing this scale, contact the author.