
When Does Feminization Increase Equality? The Case of Lawyers

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Our analysis addresses whether the legal profession can be classified as experiencing successful feminization. Drawing on the work of Reskin and Roos (1990) and Wright and Jacobs (1994), we suggest that relatively successful feminization occurs where (1) occupational growth is rapid, (2) graduate and specialized degrees are important, and (3) wages are increasing. We develop an argument for the legal profession as a case of successful feminization with data taken from the U.S. census 1970–1990 and from a cohort of lawyers surveyed in 1984 and 1990 as part of the *National Survey of Lawyers' Career Satisfaction* (Hirsch 1992). Our results suggest that the legal profession was on the road to achieving successful gender integration and feminization during the 1980s. Overall improvements in the economic standing of female attorneys compared with males is occurring among women at or below the median in the earnings distribution and among elite lawyers at the top of the earnings distribution. There is also evidence of a persistent “glass ceiling” in the earnings distribution for women. Analyses of change in evaluations of legal work settings suggest that changes in earnings that favor women’s successful entry into law are occurring in a context of growing dissatisfaction with legal work settings. We discuss the implications of our findings for further analyses of the gender integration of male-dominated occupations.

During the 1970s and 1980s, scholars of gender inequality focused on segregation as the primary mechanism perpetuating the gender wage gap (Sokoloff 1992). Scholars were especially interested in the changing gender composition of jobs and the mechanisms for and consequences of the gradual gender integration of male-dominated occupations. In their influential book *Job Queues, Gender Queues* (1990), Reskin and Roos present a relatively pessimistic picture for women’s equality as women enter into male-dominated occupations. In their survey of occupations

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where the percentage of women rose quickly during the 1970s,¹ women gained entry because the deterioration of working conditions prompted men to leave for more attractive jobs elsewhere. They found that women were concentrated in lower paying, less desirable specialties and ranks (ghettoization). Consequently, the gender wage gap did not narrow significantly within these occupations. Reskin and Roos (*ibid.*, pp. 87–88) describe women's success in their sample of occupations as "hollow."

Wright and Jacobs (1994, hereafter Wright & Jacobs) use Reskin and Roos's perspective as a starting point for their analysis of computer professionals in the 1980s. Wright and Jacobs predicted that women's entry into computer occupations would increase ghettoization, sex segregation, earnings gaps, and departures by men. None of these predictions was supported in their analysis. The gender earnings gap narrowed, job-level segregation decreased, and deteriorating conditions were not associated with women's entry or men's exits (p. 532).² They concluded that computer work in the 1980s was in the process of integrating by gender. They mentioned medicine, law, and management as other occupations where women's representation had risen dramatically without declines in occupational status or increased within-occupation segregation.

We attempt to develop a perspective that encompasses these conflicting findings. We call feminization that occurs simultaneously with rising wages, decreased segregation, and a reduced gender wage gap "successful feminization" and feminization that occurs simultaneously with falling wages, increased segregation, and a larger gender wage gap "unsuccessful feminization." Our research question then becomes, Under what conditions does women's entry into an occupation lead to successful feminization, and under what conditions does this entry lead to unsuccessful feminization?

By considering cases of successful versus unsuccessful feminization, we suggest that occupational feminization is most likely to be successful when (1) employment growth is rapid, (2) graduate or specialized college degrees are important, and (3) wages are increasing. In this piece we show that this framework can be used to explain why lawyers feminized successfully during the 1980s, and we enlarge our analysis by looking at changes in other significant dimensions of legal work settings in addition to employment and wage growth.

¹ Reskin and Roos (1990) sample occupations where the percentage of women rose by at least 9% during the 1970s.

² Wright and Jacobs (1994:532–33) qualify their conclusions by saying that computer work may not be representative, that the time period may have been too short (1982–1989) to find support for Reskin and Roos's conclusions, and that computer work may not have reached the critical tipping point necessary to produce effects like male flight and resegregation (their sample of computer occupations was 36% female). We will return to these points in our conclusion.

Theoretical Framework

Reskin and Roos's Findings

Reskin and Roos report several distinct findings, which all contribute to their pessimistic portrait of occupational gender integration.

Continual Segregation

Reskin and Roos find continual segregation in their sample of occupations women entered; "in all cases, we found women concentrated in the lower-paying, less desirable, and dead-end positions" (1990:88). Women's gains were limited to a few specialties or settings in most cases (p. 24). In 4 of 11 cases, the occupations resegregated as women came to dominate occupations once dominated by men.

Deteriorating Working Conditions

A second important finding was that feminizing occupations tended to have deteriorating working conditions, especially falling wages for men. Reskin and Roos used three measures of wages: real income, earnings relative to the labor force as a whole, and earnings per year of education relative to the average occupation. For men, real income and relative earnings fell in six out of eight cases and relative earnings per year of education decreased in all eight (*ibid.*, Table 2.2, Table 3.1).

Male Flight

Reskin and Roos suggest that there is a causal relationship between deteriorating working conditions and the shortage of men, a situation that Wright and Jacobs refer to as "male flight." Reskin and Roos state that "most of the occupations or specialties we studied experienced a shortage of male workers during the 1970s not because they grew dramatically but because their rewards or working conditions deteriorated" (*ibid.*, p. 42) and "a primary reason the occupations we studied failed to draw or retain enough men was that their earnings declined during the 1970s, relative to those of the male labor force as a whole" (p. 44).

Persistent Inequality

Reskin and Roos also find that, "women in desegregating occupations failed to reduce substantially the wage gap between themselves and male workers" (*ibid.*, p. 88). They do not define what they consider as a substantial reduction in the wage gap. If we define a change of 10 percentage points as substantial (*cf.*

Sokoloff 1992:31),³ women's wages as a percentage of men's increased between 5 and 10 percentage points in two of their eight cases and between 12 and 15 percentage points in three other cases. These changes are larger than the average increase of 3.8 percentage points across all occupations.⁴

Reskin and Roos also claim that changes in wage gaps are less indicative of economic progress for women because wage gaps are largely narrowed by declines in real earnings for men rather than increases in real earnings for women (p. 88). In six of eight cases men's real earnings had declined (p. 83). There were two cases, bus drivers and real estate agents, in which increases in women's earnings outweighed declines in men's earnings. Bus drivers were the only case in which real income for both genders grew and the wage gap narrowed, but Reskin and Roos discounted this case because most bus drivers worked part time and their analysis was based on full-time drivers.

Overall, the combination of continued segregation, deteriorating working conditions, male flight, and persistent inequality altered or stalled women's advancement in occupations once dominated by men. The combination of these trends leads to Reskin and Roos's relatively pessimistic estimate of progress toward gender equality in the labor market.

Wright and Jacobs's Findings

Wright and Jacobs (1994) seek to apply the Reskin and Roos framework to computer occupations.⁵ They specifically test several hypotheses derived from queuing theory and analyze trends in inequality using baseline measures that predate the significant entry of women into computer work. Wright and Jacobs are especially interested in the causal mechanisms behind gender queuing theory, testing six hypotheses (pp. 515–16):

H1: When men's earnings decline relative to alternative occupations in the labor force, men's exit rates from an occupation increase. Conversely, an increase in this favorability ratio reduces men's occupation exit rates.

H2: The male-female differential in exits parallels the difference in an occupation's attractiveness to men and women relative to their occupational alternatives.

³ This choice is necessarily arbitrary. The choice of a 10-percentage-point change in one decade means that if the current gender wage gap continued to decline (Bernhardt et al. 1995), the gap would be erased in one generation (defined as three decades).

⁴ Because the Bureau of the Census changed how some occupations were coded, only eight of Reskin and Roos's cases had comparably coded data for 1970 and 1980 (Reskin and Roos 1990:Table 3.1).

⁵ Wright and Jacobs include computer programmers, computer systems analysts, other systems analysts, systems engineers, computer scientists, computer engineers, and other computer specialists in their analysis (1990: 518–19).

H3: The greater the rate of entry of women into an occupation, the greater the rate of male exit from that occupation.

H4: As an occupation feminizes, women's representation increases in low-status specialties, industries, and work activities within that occupation.

H5: Sustained entry of women into an occupation increases sex segregation within that occupation.

H6: The resulting ghettoization produces an increase in gender inequality in earnings and other rewards within an occupation.

In a related analysis, Donato (1990) in the Reskin and Roos volume provides a largely descriptive analysis of the feminization of systems analysts, one of the occupations that Wright and Jacobs sample in their analysis of computer work (see note 5). During the 1970s, the demand for systems analysts was strong, but their earnings relative to the rest of the labor force declined, and Donato (*ibid.*, p. 176) claims that this coincides with observations by other researchers that men were leaving the occupation. The substantive work of systems analysts also moved away from a primary emphasis on technical skills to an emphasis on "people skills," which played into prevailing gender stereotypes and increased women's representation.

Although Donato's results seem to support Reskin and Roos, Wright and Jacobs (using data from a 1980 census cohort of computer workers surveyed again in 1982, 1984, 1986, and 1989 taken from the National Science Foundation's Survey of Natural and Social Scientists and Engineers) found little or no support for any of their hypotheses. Specifically:

1. The rapid feminization of computer work did not lead to declines in the earnings of computer specialists relative to the rest of the labor force.
2. Men left computer work at higher rates than women, but men also entered computer work from other technical fields at higher rates than women.
3. Men were less likely to leave computer work once other relevant job characteristics were controlled.⁶
4. Declining relative earnings were not responsible for male flight from computer work.
5. Feminization by itself did not promote male flight (in specialties where women's entry was most pronounced male exits were not significantly different from other specialties).
6. There was no evidence that men abandoned computer-related college majors at faster rates than women.

⁶ Wright and Jacobs control for background, educational degrees, college majors, computer specialties, industry, the labor force earnings ratio and period effects in their analysis (1994:Table 4).

Overall, Wright and Jacobs conclude that computer work is an example of “successful integration” by gender. Their results differ from Donato’s results because Wright and Jacobs directly examine entries into and exits from computer specialties with a single cohort of computer specialists analyzed over time. Further, Wright and Jacobs’s analysis encompasses the 1980s rather than the 1970s; the 1980s were much more favorable economic times for the growth and development of professional occupations (cf. Phillips 1990). Donato, however, describes other salient changes in computer occupations that are part of a plausible explanation for the feminization of computer work.

Wright and Jacobs emphasize that computer occupations may not be representative of the labor force as a whole and call for further research on other occupations (management, law, and medicine [p. 533] as potential candidates for successful feminization. They also recommend that analyses of changing occupations move beyond the monetary dimensions of work and focus on changes in other work-related characteristics and perceptions of job incumbents. We take the preliminary steps to do this in our analysis below.

Toward a Definition of Genuine Integration and Successful Feminization

At first, the difference between Reskin and Roos and Wright and Jacobs may be a matter of definitions. Reskin and Roos conceptualize three forms of desegregation: genuine integration, ghettoization, and resegregation. They use a stringent, absolute standard for accessing advancement. Genuine integration requires integration in all specialties within an occupation as well as occupational equity between female and male coworkers of equivalent experience (Reskin & Roos 1990:71). Wright and Jacobs (1994:515) argue that it is useful to focus on trends rather than absolutes. They hold up “an integrating occupation” rather than “genuine integration” as a goal. They define an integrating occupation as having four characteristics: (1) women’s representation is moving toward parity, (2) segregation is decreasing, (3) the gender wage gap is narrowing, and (4) wages are not falling. Even with Wright and Jacobs’s less stringent definition, none of the eight cases Reskin and Roos examine would make the grade as successful cases of successful integration. In six cases men experienced falling wages (Reskin & Roos 1990:Table 3.1). In the other two cases (insurance sales and bus driving), women were overrepresented and their representation was moving away from parity (*ibid.*, Table 1.6).

It is surprising to us that the four candidates for successful occupational feminization mentioned by Wright and Jacobs (law, medicine, management, and computer work) are among the

most prized jobs in society. Why would highly desirable jobs successfully integrate and provide promising examples of potential gender equality? The queuing perspective would (if anything) predict that the most desirable occupations are the hardest to integrate successfully and represent labor market locations most zealously guarded by men (see also Tomaskovic-Devey 1993).

We suggest that a common set of characteristics can be identified among cases of successful feminization:

1. The number of jobs is growing rapidly.
2. Graduate or specialized college degrees are important for access to the occupation (and are possessed by most job incumbents).
3. Wages are increasing for both men and women, in part because employment demand outstrips supply.

We suggest that the simultaneous occurrence of all three factors benefits women. It is possible for the number of jobs to grow in an occupation without wages rising if barriers to entry are low and people can switch into the occupation easily (child care workers and security guards come to mind). Similarly, wages can rise without the number of openings increasing rapidly. Salaries of chief executive officers of large corporations can rise because of profits produced by corporate downsizing (cf. Gordon 1996). Finally, specialized degree requirements in the absence of job growth would allow employers to continue hiring from the available pool of men. In short, the presence of one characteristic without the others may not aid gender integration.

Employment growth and specialized credentials affect the intersection of labor market supply and demand. Law, medicine, and computer science all require specialized degrees, and many managers have masters degrees in business administration. When employment demand outstrips the supply of qualified men, other men cannot switch into these occupations easily (Reskin & Roos 1990:41). After women pressed for entrance into professional schools, they became an increasing part of the available labor pool. For example, in 1986, women comprised 40% of students in American Bar Association (ABA) approved law schools (Abel 1989:285). Women also tend to do well in school (cf. *ibid.*, p. 93). In occupations where education is important, employers most often will turn to women when there is rapid growth in demand. In terms of queuing theory, occupational employment growth and required expertise force employers to put trained women ahead of untrained men in the job queue. Rising wages (the third requirement for successful feminization) may partially result from employment demand overwhelming supply. This situation creates upward pressure on wages and gives women leverage in bargaining for higher wages.

Our framework leads to two observations that may seem surprising. First, the ghettoization and resegregation framework sug-

gests that women's entry is largest in male-dominated occupations and specialties that are in decline, resulting in few real economic gains for women. By contrast, we suggest that feminization increases equality in high-status occupations that are not deteriorating rather than in occupations that are in decline. In colloquial terms, "It's easier for women to get a larger share of the pie when the pie is growing quickly."

Second, elite women are the women most likely to gain equality. These women carry the advantages of class and education, and they can muster economic and legal power on their behalf. Although this idea may seem obvious when stated, the range of wages can be wider for occupations with higher salaries, and men's wage growth may outpace women's and produce larger wage gaps.

In summary, we suspect that an occupation will experience a large increase in the percentage of women and a reduction in the gender wage gap when (1) occupational growth is rapid, (2) wages are increasing, and (3) graduate or specialized college degrees are important. We explore these hypotheses using lawyers as a detailed case study. We then expand on prior analyses by taking a more systematic look at changes in the nonmonetary dimensions of work from a sample of attorneys surveyed at two points in time in the 1980s (Hirsch 1992; American Bar Association 1990).

The Importance of Lawyers as a Case Study

Lawyers are an important case for several reasons. First, the practice of law is an occupation where women have made impressive progress, as we will show. Second, it is an elite profession with high status and pay. Third, it fits Reskin and Roos's criterion for an occupation where women have made disproportionate progress that (for ease of reference), we refer to as a "rapidly feminizing" occupation. These are occupations where the representation of women increased at double or more their rate of increase in the entire labor force (Reskin & Roos 1990:16). Lawyers would not fit this definition in the 1970s, but they did fit this definition in the 1980s.

Data

In addition to published sources, this study draws on two data sets. U.S. census data for 1970, 1980, and 1990 are based on all lawyers aged 16 and older who worked in the previous year and who worked in the civilian labor force during the reference week (Roos & Reskin 1997; cf. Roos & Reskin 1996).⁷ For more detailed data about specific job settings, we use the National Survey

⁷ All samples were weighted, and negative incomes were recoded to zero.

of Lawyers' Career Satisfaction, Waves I and II (1984 and 1990) collected by Ronald L. Hirsch for the American Bar Association (Hirsch 1992; American Bar Association 1990). The 1984 study consisted of a random probability sample of 3,000 lawyers drawn from lists that included an estimated 90% of all U.S. lawyers. Young lawyers, defined as those under age 36 or those who have been members of the bar for fewer than 3 years, were oversampled and consisted of about half of the sample. The 1990 sample was based on individuals who responded in 1984 and people who became lawyers between 1984 and 1990. There were 2,281 respondents in the 1984 survey and 2,189 respondents in the 1990 survey. We weight the samples using the weights provided with the data set. These data allow us to look at other dimensions of the changing work environment for lawyers while looking at a specific longitudinal sample followed over a large span of the 1980s. Appendix A describes the sampling procedures and representativeness of the Hirsch surveys in comparison to known national sampling frames of attorneys. Appendix B lists the specific survey questions we use from the Hirsch surveys.

Changes in the Legal Profession That Favor Successful Feminization

Occupational Growth

During the second half of the twentieth century, the number of lawyers in the United States grew dramatically. In 1951, there were about 220,000 lawyers (see Table 1). By 2000, the number of lawyers will be over a million for the first time (Curran & Carson 1994:1). Sokoloff (1992) analyzed the rate of growth for 30 professional and technical occupations during the period from 1960 to 1980. The legal profession grew faster than the average profession, twice as fast as the medical profession (physicians), and almost three times as fast as the experienced civilian labor force (*ibid.*, pp. 35, 38; see also Abel 1989:77). From 1960 to 1985, the gross domestic product contributed by the legal services sector doubled, reaching \$33 billion. Legal services constituted approximately 1% of the gross domestic product and national income (Galanter & Palay 1991:40). Growth was especially fast during the 1970s, when there was a 53% rise in the production of lawyers (Abel 1989:76). The increasing demand for lawyers was driven by a growing economy in the 1960s and early 1970s, increased government regulation, and the expansion of major corporations (Epstein 1993:16).

Table 1. Number of Lawyers by Gender, 1951–2000

Year	Total (1)	Female (2)	Male (3)	% Female (4)	% Female in ABA- Approved Law Schools (5)
1951	221,605	5,540	216,065	2.5	3.1
1960	285,933	7,434	278,499	2.6	3.5
1971	355,242	9,947	345,295	2.8	9.4
1980	542,205	44,185	498,020	8.1	33.6
1991	805,872	159,377	646,495	19.8	—
2000	1,005,842	269,068	736,779	26.8	—
% Growth					
1960–1971	24%	34%	24%		
1971–1980	53%	344%	44%		
1980–1991	49%	261%	30%		

SOURCES: Curran 1995:7–8; col. (4) Curran et al. 1985:10; col. (5) Abel 1989:285.

^a Figures for 2000 are projections.

Changes in Women's Representation in the Legal Profession

Gains for female lawyers can be seen through increases in women's proportional representation. Measured progress depends on career stage, with earlier stages containing larger percentages of women than later stages.

Women have made tremendous progress as law students (see Table 1). During the 1960s, the percentage of female first-year students grew from 3.5% to about 9%. During the 1970s, the percentage nearly quadrupled (Abel 1989:285). During the 1980s, growth slowed down and flattened out. Since the late 1980s, the percentage has hovered around 42% or 43% (Curran 1995:6).

The percentage of female lawyers has also grown quickly, but has fallen short of the percentage of law students. As Table 1 suggests, the percentage of women in law virtually stood still from 1951 to 1971. During the next two decades, the percentage of female lawyers grew exponentially, more than doubling in the 1970s and again in the 1980s. This growth, however, is expected to slow down. During the 1990s, the percentage of female lawyers was expected to grow by about one-third (Curran & Carson 1994:4).

The number of female partners has grown the most slowly. In 1970, about 3% of lawyers were women; 10 years later, about 3% of partners were women. In 1980, 8% of lawyers were women; 11 years later, 10% of partners were women. But women are gradually catching up with men in the partnership ranks. In 1980, if women were promoted at the rates men were, one would have expected 2.7 times more female partners, based on the number of female lawyers. In 1991, one would have expected twice as many (Curran 1995:20).

These changes in promotion to higher positions are reflected in the Hirsch/ABA data that follow promotions from 1984 to

1990. (See Table 2.) During the 1980s, women were under-represented in partner/senior executive positions and were more widely represented in senior associate/supervisor positions. Women’s representation as partners rose 27% over 6 years. Almost half the men in the 1984 sample were already partners or senior executives, and their representation as partners rose 14.3% by 1990.

Table 2. Rank of Legal Position and Measures of Upward and Downward Mobility, Taken from the National Survey of Lawyers’ Career Satisfaction, 1984–1990

Legal Position	1984		1990	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Partner/executive	47.0	15.4	61.3	42.0
Senior associate/supervisor	17.1	22.4	12.3	22.0
Junior associate/staff attorney	20.1	46.2	4.5	15.3
Of counsel	0.5	0.0	2.2	2.7
Other	15.3	16.0	19.8	18.0
	<i>D</i> ₁₉₈₄ = 32.1		<i>D</i> ₁₉₉₀ = 21.1	
	Men		Women	
Upward mobility ^a	33.9		47.8*	
Downward mobility ^b	15.0		16.0	
Promotion to top position ^c	25.6		31.3	

SOURCE: Hirsch 1992.

^a Upward mobility is defined as movement into a higher position in 1990 from a lower position in 1984. Positions are ranked from high to low as they are listed from top to bottom in the table.

^b Downward mobility is defined as movement into a lower position in 1990 from a higher position in 1984.

^c Promotion to top position refers to promotion into partner/executive positions. Promotions reflect movement into partner/executive positions in 1990 from lower ranking positions in 1984.

* *t*-test for difference by gender significant at *p* < .05.

These aggregate statistics, however, disguise modest differences in actual promotion experiences of the 1984 cohort of attorneys. The rate of upward mobility for men and women between waves favored women, and the difference in upward mobility by gender is statistically significant. Rates of promotion to the top position (partner/senior executive) did not differ by gender, nor did the experience of downward mobility. Overall, women were promoted into higher ranking legal positions at the same or greater rates than men between 1984 and 1990, but they started from a lower representation base in 1984.

Data on segregation by setting show even more impressive gains during the 1980s. In 1980, the index of segregation (*D*) was 13.5.⁸ In 1991, the index had dropped to 6 (data drawn from

⁸ The formula for *D* is

$$D = (\sum |x_i - y_i|) / 2$$

where *x_i* is the percentage of women in the *i*th category and *y_i* is the percentage of men in the same category. More details can be found in Reskin and Roos (1990:25). The index

Curran 1995:19). Particularly impressive was the narrowing of the gap for those in private practice. In 1980, the difference was 56% of women in private practice versus 70% of men. In 1991, women were approaching parity: 70% of women and 74% of men worked in private practice.

These changes in segregation by work setting are paralleled in the Hirsch/ABA panel study of lawyers in the 1980s. The index of segregation across work settings (D) was 15.7 in 1984 and declined to 10.2 by 1990. This change is significant because it occurred over time among the same sampled cohort of lawyers whose work settings were measured in 1984 and 1990. Table 3 suggests that, in addition to changes in segregation across work settings due to cohort replacement, there was significant age and period-specific movement across work settings in the 1980s as well. Both types of movement served to reduce gender segregation across legal practice settings.⁹

Table 3. Legal Work Settings by Gender, Taken from the National Survey of Lawyers' Career Satisfaction, 1984–1990

Work Setting	1984		1990	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Private practice	80.0	66.1	81.2	72.1
Corporate counsel	8.2	11.1	8.5	12.1
Federal agency	2.6	4.1	1.4	1.8
State/local government agency	4.1	7.6	3.4	4.8
Military	0.2	0.0	0.1	0.1
Legal aid	0.4	2.3	0.3	1.8
Federal judiciary	0.5	2.3	0.6	0.0
State/local judiciary	2.3	0.6	2.3	1.8
Professor	0.6	2.9	1.3	1.2
Other	1.2	2.9	1.1	4.2
	$D_{1984} = 15.7$		$D_{1990} = 10.2$	

One of the most prominent changes in the legal profession during the past decades is the explosive growth in the number and size of big law firms. Until the 1950s, almost all lawyers worked as solo practitioners or in very small practices with one or two other lawyers (often relatives). They were neither employers or employees. In 1991, only 40% of all lawyers worked as solos or in firms of two or three lawyers.¹⁰

Even before World War II, big law firms dominated legal practice by representing important clients, hiring most new elite law school graduates, and dominating the prestige rankings of organizational forms for legal practice (Nelson 1988). During

indicates the proportion of members of one group that would have to change categories for the two distributions to be identical.

⁹ Although the numbers are not precisely comparable because Donato's figures are based on industries, in the 1980 census, computer system analysts and scientists had an index of segregation of 13.2 compared with 32.5 for all occupations (Donato 1990:173).

¹⁰ This calculation is based on data from Curran and Carson (1994:7).

the second half of the twentieth century, work settings for lawyers changed in two ways: (1) more lawyers worked outside of private practice for corporations and the government, and (2) those in private practice increasingly found themselves working in big law firms (Abel 1989:9).

Law firms grew dramatically in size and number. In the early 1960s, there were 38 firms with 50 or more lawyers (Galanter & Palay 1991:22). In 1991, there were 751 firms with more than 50 lawyers, and 13% of all lawyers were employed in firms with at least 50 lawyers, up from 5% in 1980 (see Curran & Carson 1994:7–8, 13, 16). In 1988, the largest firm had over 960 lawyers, and there were 149 firms larger than the largest firm two decades earlier (Galanter & Palay 1991:46).

One important result of this trend is that women's gains in big law firms surpassed their gains in small firms. This finding may be surprising from a ghettoization perspective since jobs in big firms are considered the most desirable and the highest paying. Although men are more likely than women to work in firms, women are more likely to be in big firms than men are. Epstein (1993:427) concluded that women "are now over represented in large firms." Curran's (1986:47–48) numbers show that in 1980, 12% of female lawyers and 7% of male lawyers were in firms of more than 50 lawyers. This outcome may be because younger lawyers are more likely to be in big firms and female lawyers are on average younger than male lawyers. In Chiu's (1996) analysis of the 1990 National Survey of Lawyers' Career Satisfaction, women were more likely to work in large law firms than men, but this difference was not statistically significant once years since graduation was controlled.

Women also have an advantage over men in terms of initial placement into big law firms. This conclusion was reached by the ABA's Commission on Women in the Profession in their study, *Women in the Law*. The report states, "Among firms of more than 50 lawyers, representation of recent female graduates was greater than that of male graduates" (Curran 1995:46). Closer inspection of their data shows that representation is about equal in firms with 51 to 100 lawyers, and women's greater representation shows up only in firms with over 100 lawyers. For graduates who entered private practice full time, 32% of women and 26% of men joined firms with more than 100 lawyers. This overrepresentation, however, only appears if the analysis is restricted to lawyers who go into private practice upon graduation from law school. If calculations of women's entry into firms with more than 50 lawyers or more than 100 lawyers are based on all female graduates from law school rather than just those who enter private practice, then the difference may be quite small.¹¹

¹¹ Curran (1995:46–47) only provides firm size information for 1991 and percentage in private practice for whites in 1992. If the distribution by firm size was the same in

Larger firms also have a higher proportion of female partners than small firms. The percentage increases monotonically with firm size, from 9% to 12% as firm size increases from 2 to 5 lawyers to more than 100 lawyers. A 1994 study of 900 large law firms found that 13% of partners were women. This result is especially interesting given that large law firms have built-in incentives to promote fewer associates to partner (cf. Kordana 1995). San Francisco ranked highest among the 14 cities studied, with 18% of partners being women.¹² Progress seems to be slower in the legal departments of corporations. In a 1992 survey of the 250 largest corporations in the United States, only 4.2% of the top legal officers had female names (Epstein 1993:431).

In summary, both horizontal and vertical segregation have decreased among lawyers. Horizontal segregation has declined more rapidly, and women are approaching parity with men in terms of distribution by setting. Vertical segregation is decreasing, but more slowly. Women are also increasingly represented in large law firms where gender gaps in earnings are lower than in small firms and promotion chances seem relatively good based on the percentage of women who are already partners. These trends all favor successful feminization.

Changes in Earnings

Apparently no previous study has provided conclusive data about changes in the income of lawyers. Most studies are based on data from individual states and different time periods, making comparison difficult (Abel 1989:161). The current study presents conclusive data for the first time by analyzing data on lawyers contained in the 1970, 1980, and 1990 Censuses (see Table 1). All our census earnings data are converted to 1989 constant dollars to facilitate comparison across decades.

Overall, changes in income depict a less linear trend than changes in integration across work settings. The results in Table 4 suggest that, in the 1970s, the average income of lawyers dropped by about one-fifth. During the 1980s, the real income of lawyers grew about 29%. Women's earnings rose by 67% and men's by 33%. Both the 1970s decline and the 1980s increase are several times greater than those experienced by all workers, whose earnings fell 3% during the 1970s and rose 5% during the 1980s.

Progress in terms of narrowing the wage gap parallels trends for earnings. When earnings fell in the 1970s the gender gap widened. Women's earnings as a percentage of men's shrank from

1991 and 1992 for whites and minorities, then among whites an estimated 18% of women and 17% of men entered firms with more than 100 lawyers. The estimates for firms with 50 or more lawyers would be 24% of women and 23% of men.

¹² These statistics on partners are found in Curran (1995:26–27).

Table 4. Mean Earnings of Lawyers and All Workers, 1969–1989 (in Constant 1989 Dollars)

	Women	Men	Both	Women	Men	Both	Women/Men Ratio
Lawyers							
1969	\$11,039	\$20,245	\$19,812	\$37,290	\$68,388	\$66,925	.545
1979	\$15,666	\$33,587	\$31,098	\$26,789	\$57,434	\$53,178	.466
1989	\$44,641	\$76,229	\$68,573	\$44,641	\$76,229	\$68,573	.586
Change 1969–1979				-28%	-16%	-21%	
Change 1979–89				67%	33%	29%	
All Workers							
1969	\$3,887	\$8,325	\$6,666	\$13,130	\$28,122	\$22,518	.467
1979	\$7,986	\$16,190	\$12,743	\$13,656	\$27,685	\$21,791	.493
1989	\$16,037	\$28,388	\$22,808	\$16,037	\$28,388	\$22,808	.565
Change 1969–1979				4%	-2%	-3%	
Change 1979–1989				17%	3%	5%	

SOURCE: Roos & Reskin 1996.

54% to 47%. During the 1980s, earnings grew and the female/male wage ratio rose by about one-quarter, from 47% to 59%. This 12-percentage-point change is substantial using our 10% criterion.

These parallel outcomes are inevitable arithmetically. If women have lower earnings than men, then the same dollar-size change in earnings will affect women more than men and the wage gap will necessarily narrow. The same dollar decrease in earnings will widen the gender wage gap as well. One can observe these results through a simple example. If women on average earn \$30,000 and men \$60,000 and if the earnings of both groups increase by \$30,000, then women's wages as a percentage of men's will rise from 50% to 67%. We highlight this because it indicates that changes in the gender wage gap can reflect changes in earnings that are not necessarily induced by changes in sexism or declines in segregation. The change in the gender wage gap observed for lawyers may (in part) reflect that average salaries for all lawyers went up and down by about the same amount in the 1970s and 1980s.

Table 5 investigates the earnings distribution further by presenting results for the mean and distribution of earnings by 10-year age cohorts in each census year. The results for each census suggest that women's economic position relative to men's declined during the 1970s and recovered during the 1980s. The overall mean, however, tells only part of the story. The gender wage ratios at one standard deviation below and one standard deviation above the mean suggest that women's position in the earnings hierarchy has improved largely through the movement of those near the bottom of the distribution toward the middle rather than movement of the top of the women's distribution toward the top of the men's. This finding is similar to that found for the labor force as a whole (see Bernhardt et al. 1995).

Table 5. Means and Earnings Distributions for Earnings of Lawyers by Age and Gender, and for All Workers, 1969-1989 (in 1989 Dollars)

	Lawyers by Age													
	Under 30				31-40				41-50				51-60	
	Women	Men	W/M	Women	Men	W/M	Women	Men	W/M	Women	Men	W/M		
1969														
Mean	30,056	35,437	.84	45,007	72,151	.60	32,445	82,897	.39	47,399	82,439	.57		
SD	21,780	26,678	—	31,257	39,300	—	35,473	46,758	—	42,466	48,893	—		
-1 SD	8,276	8,759	.94	13,750	32,851	.41	*	36,139	*	3,831	18,170	.21		
+1 SD	51,836	62,115	.83	76,264	111,451	.68	67,918	129,655	.52	75,807	120,088	.63		
1979														
Mean	22,867	29,246	.78	31,354	60,426	.51	35,391	79,402	.44	35,686	74,794	.47		
SD	16,823	20,922	—	23,047	33,925	—	30,436	42,283	—	31,146	42,749	—		
-1 SD	6,044	8,324	.72	8,307	26,501	.31	4,955	37,119	.13	4,540	32,045	.14		
+1 SD	39,690	50,168	.79	54,438	94,351	.58	65,827	121,351	.54	66,832	117,543	.56		
1989														
Mean	32,264	38,890	.83	49,850	74,010	.67	53,644	94,234	.56	47,356	98,476	.48		
SD	23,078	28,190	—	35,817	48,355	—	42,666	58,767	—	37,941	60,867	—		
-1SD	9,196	10,700	.85	14,033	25,655	.54	10,978	35,407	.31	9,415	37,609	.25		
1 SD	55,342	67,080	.83	85,667	122,365	.70	96,310	153,001	.62	85,297	159,343	.53		
% change, 1969-1979														
at the mean	-31%	-19%		-30%	-16%		9%	3%		-25%	-9%			
at -1 SD	-27%	-5%		-40%	-19%		*	-10%		18%	43%			
at +1 SD	-23%	-19%		-29%	-15%		-3%	-6%		-12%	-2%			
% change, 1979-1989														
at the mean	41%	33%		59%	22%		52%	19%		33%	32%			
at -1 SD	52%	28%		69%	-3%		123%	-5%		107%	17%			
at +1 SD	39%	34%		57%	30%		46%	26%		28%	36%			

* Not calculated because the standard deviation is larger than the mean.

Table 5 also provides a breakdown of the earnings distribution of men and women by age cohorts. As expected, the amount of gender inequality in earnings is considerably lower among young lawyers compared with older lawyers. The systematic improvements for younger lawyers does not occur until the 1980s. There is improvement in the mean gender earnings ratio for all age groups except for the oldest (lawyers 51–60 years old), with the largest improvements going to those lawyers 41–50 years old.

There are also interesting differences and shifts in the earnings distribution across age groups. The 1970s saw a deterioration of women's position relative to men's not only at the mean for lawyers under age 40, but also at one standard deviation above and below the mean. These changes are followed by even larger improvements for all but the oldest age group during the 1980s, with the largest changes coming below the mean of the earnings distribution.

Figures 1 through 5 provide more detail regarding the relative changes in earnings distributions of male and female attorneys over the census years. We restrict these distributions to lawyers who worked 35 or more hours per week during the previous year to partially control for hours worked.¹³ The figures report earnings by decile from the 10th to the 90th percentile and the earnings of the top 1% of attorneys by gender and census year.

Figure 1 presents earnings distributions for lawyers employed full time in 1970. This figure provides a clear sign of serious inequality in the lower end of the earnings distribution. The earnings at the first decile of the men's distribution would lead to placement in the middle of the third decile of the women's distribution. Men's earnings at the fourth decile would earn placement in the seventh decile of the women's earnings distribution. Similarly, men's earnings in the seventh decile of the earnings distribution would receive placement in the ninth decile of the women's distribution. Overall, the 1970 data give the appearance of an "earnings ceiling" for women. Men's earnings grow considerably above the fifth decile, and women's earnings grow considerably less. Women earn 52% of what men earn at the ninth decile, but they earn 60% of what men earn at the sixth and seventh deciles. The gaps at the lower end of the distribution are slightly wider than that (female/male earnings ratio goes from .45 in the first decile to .54 at the fifth decile, which is the median of the earnings distribution). At the elite end of the earnings distribution (the top 1%), however, women earned 79% of what men earned in 1970.

Figure 2 presents census earnings distributions for lawyers employed full time in 1980. This figure still displays signs of an

¹³ Figures for all lawyers look very similar to those presented and lead to similar conclusions. These figures are available from the authors on request.

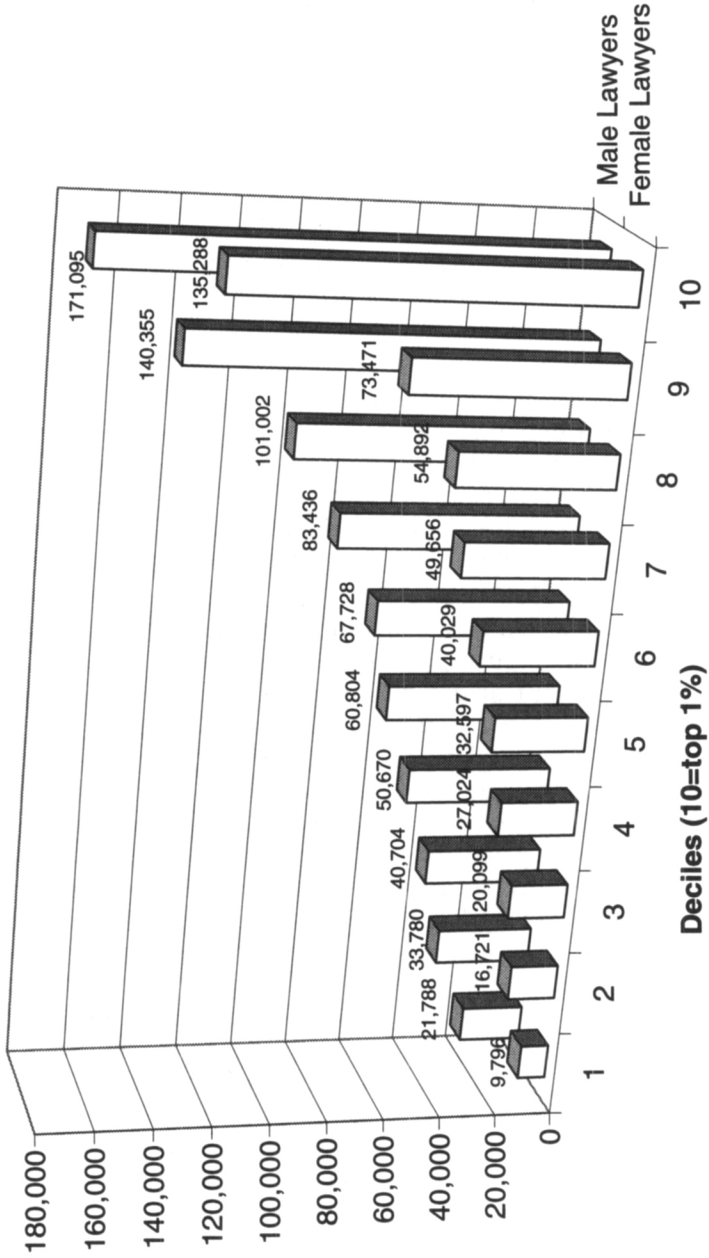


Fig. 1. Earnings distribution for lawyers employed full time, 1970 (in 1989 dollars)

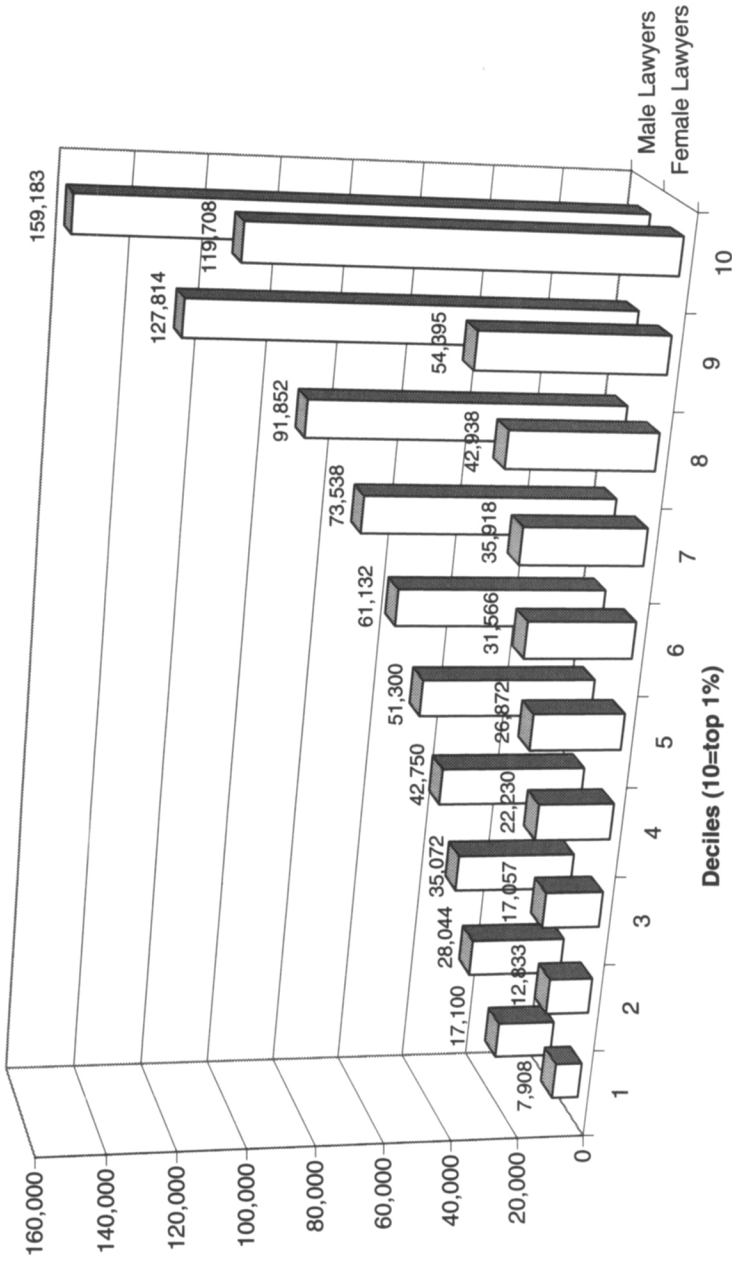


Fig. 2. Earnings distribution for lawyers employed full time, 1980 (in 1989 dollars)

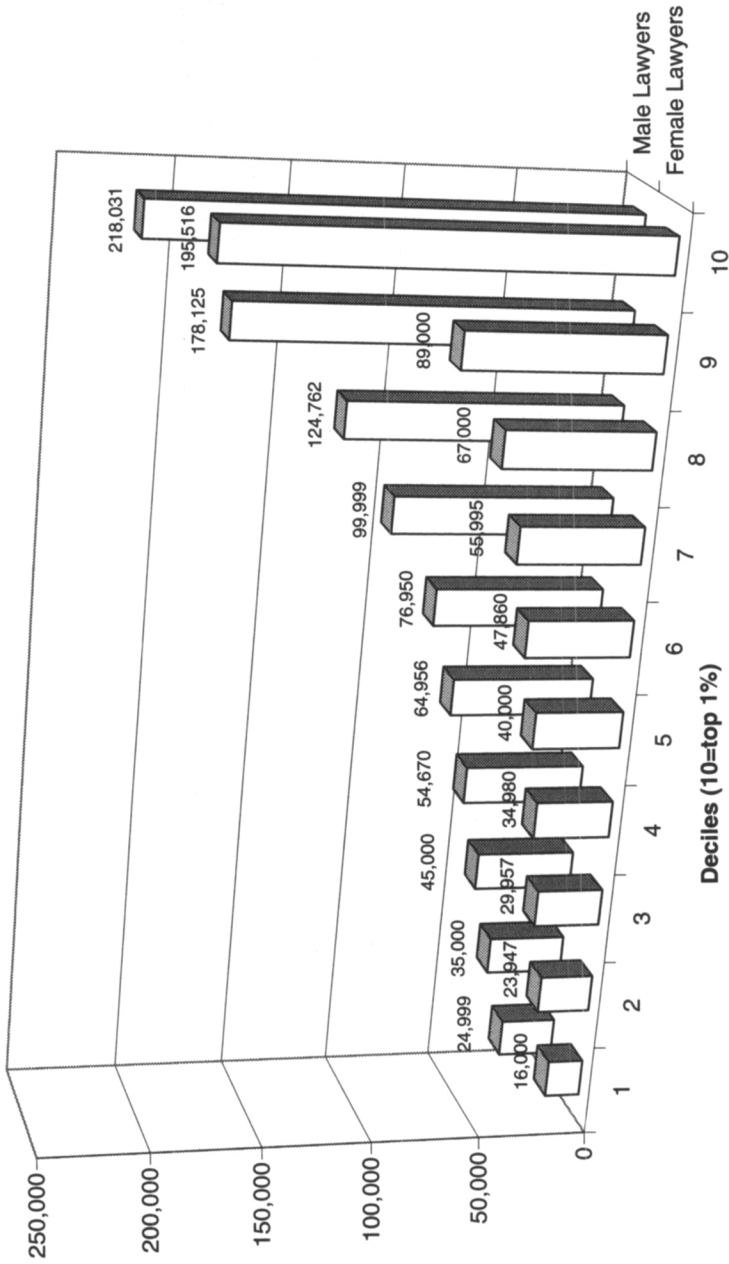


Fig. 3. Earnings distribution for lawyers employed full time, 1990 (in 1989 dollars)

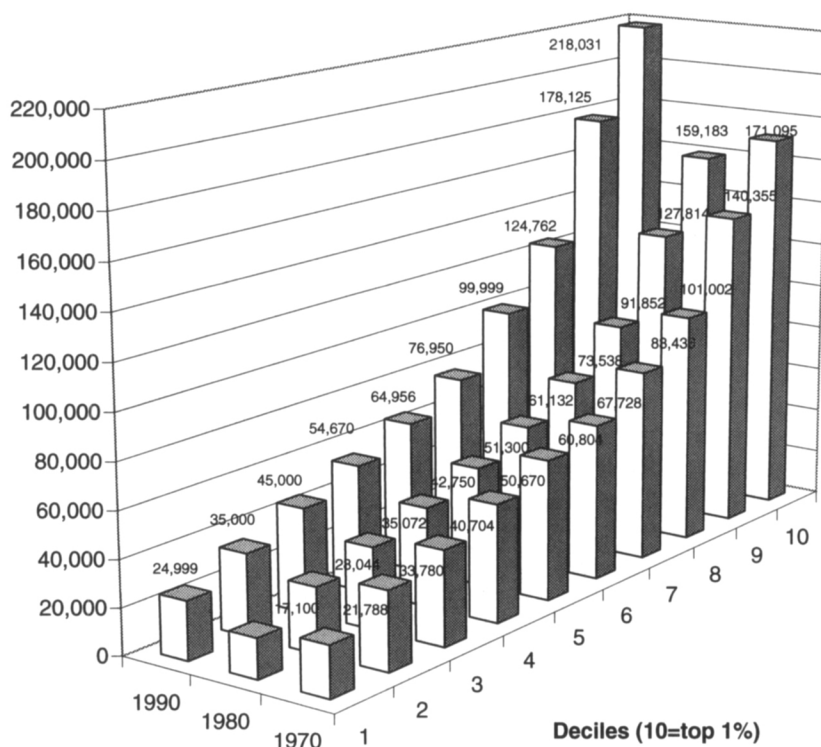


Fig. 4. Comparisons of earnings distributions for male attorneys employed full time across census years (in 1989 dollars).

“elevator shaft” earnings effect (a substantially lower earnings gap at the very top of the earnings distribution compared with earnings just below that). The earnings gap improves at every decile up to the seventh and then flattens considerably. Women earn 52% of what men earn at the sixth decile but only 42% of what men earn at the ninth decile. Once again, the most favorable gender earnings gap occurs among relatively elite wage earners; women earn 75% of what men earn at the top 1% of the earnings distribution. This figure reinforces the impression that gender inequality in the earnings of lawyers (for all but a small elite) worsened in the 1980s.

Figure 3 presents census earnings distributions for lawyers employed full time in 1990. This figure suggests that there were considerable improvements in gender earnings gaps in the bottom 60% of the earnings distribution as well as improvements at the very top. Above the sixth decile, there is still evidence of a “ceiling” on earnings for women that persists for all but the top 1% of wage earners. The earnings gap at the top 1% level declined considerably as women report earnings that are 90% of those men report at this elite level.

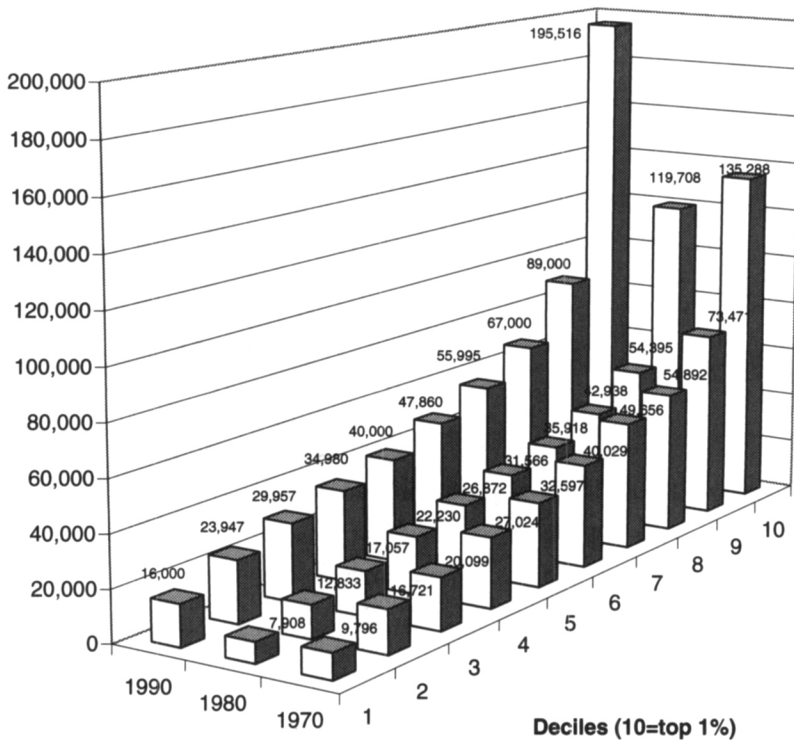


Fig. 5. Comparisons of earnings distributions for female attorneys employed full time across census years (in 1989 dollars).

Overall, these results support the conclusion that gender based earnings gaps have declined, especially during the relatively favorable economic climate of the 1980s. As with results for income change in the overall labor force (Bernhardt et al. 1995), however, the biggest changes are confined to the lower two-thirds of the earnings distribution for women. All the gender gaps narrow between 8% and 14% in the lower two-thirds of the earnings distribution between 1980 and 1990. We find evidence, however, of narrowing at the top among relatively elite lawyers as well. This finding supports our thesis that improvements in and expansions of the legal profession will disproportionately benefit elite women. But the results also provide some evidence for the existence of a “glass ceiling” with regard to earnings; earnings in the sixth to ninth deciles in the earnings distribution almost uniformly present a more unequal picture with regard to the gender earnings gap compared with the earnings distribution at the median and below, and this picture persists across census years.

To complete our discussion of earnings distributions, Figures 4 and 5 combine the results for men and women across decades so that relative gains and losses from 1970 to 1990 can be identified. Figure 4 presents earnings distributions across decades for

men. Consistent with the general portrayal of stagnation during the 1970s, there were declines at all parts of the earnings distribution between 1970 and 1980. By 1990, however, incomes throughout the range had grown, and the earnings of male lawyers in the seventh decile and above ballooned considerably. Figure 5 presents earnings distributions across decades for women. Here there are declines from 1970 to 1980 in every category of the earnings distribution as well, but the declines in the seventh to ninth deciles are especially serious, suggesting that movement into law was accompanied by stagnated earnings growth during the 1970s for women. By 1990, earnings in all deciles had risen considerably, and the earnings among the top 1% of female attorneys had grown substantially.

From the standpoint of evaluating our thesis regarding successful feminization, the combined results in Figures 4 and 5 suggest that improvements in the earnings deciles where the gender gap narrowed considerably were not produced by declines in the earnings of male attorneys. The earnings of both men and women grew in real dollars from 1980 to 1990, but the earnings of women below the sixth decile in the earnings distribution showed greater improvement than comparable earnings gains for men.¹⁴

Together, these results suggest that examining only mean differences in earnings by gender presents (at best) a deceptive picture of the changing earnings distributions and relative economic fortunes of male and female lawyers. Our figures suggest that much of the closing of the gender gap in earnings among lawyers was driven by change during the 1980s in earnings distributions below the median and in the relatively large growth in earnings among the elite 1% of all lawyers.

Table 6 examines gender earnings differentials controlling for hours and weeks worked, class of worker, marital status, race, and age. This analysis is designed to examine how the gender gap in earnings grows or shrinks across the decades as a percentage of men's mean earnings with relevant determinants of earnings controlled.¹⁵ This analysis is closer to a conventional analysis of gender earnings gaps.

The results in Table 6 support three conclusions:

¹⁴ This improvement can be seen by comparing the decile income figures across years for women. Earnings at the first decile of the 1990 earnings distribution in Figure 5 would be placed near the top of the second decile of the 1980 earnings distribution. Earnings in the fourth decile of the 1990 earnings distribution would have placed women near the top of the sixth decile of the 1980 earnings distribution. Although men's earnings profile improved from 1980 to 1990, the improvement for men was considerably less over the decade.

¹⁵ Although the census provides the most comprehensive data on earnings, this analysis is only illustrative because we cannot control for a number of relevant indicators known to affect earnings, such as firm size and job tenure.

Table 6. Unadjusted and Adjusted Gender Gaps for Lawyers' Earnings, 1969–1989

	1969	1979	1989
Unadjusted gender gap	\$31,098	\$30,645	\$31,588
As a percentage of men's mean earnings ^a	45.5%	53.3%	41.4%
Adjusted gap adjusting for:			
(1) Hours worked	\$24,407	\$25,910	\$28,090
Gap as % of men's mean earnings	35.7%	45.1%	36.8%
(2) (1) + weeks worked	\$20,891	\$22,165	\$25,709
Gap as % of men's mean earnings	30.5%	38.6%	33.7%
(3) (2) + class of worker (private sector = 1)	\$17,588	\$20,684	\$23,508
Gap as % of men's mean earnings	25.7%	36.0%	30.8%
(4) (3) + age and age ²	\$19,416	\$14,056	\$16,488
Gap as % of men's mean earnings	28.4%	24.4%	21.6%
(5) (4) + marital status (married = 1) and race (nonwhite = 1)	\$16,677	\$12,921	\$15,277
Gap as % of men's mean earnings	24.4%	22.5%	20.0%

^a Men's mean earnings are taken from Table 4. All gender gaps are statistically significant.

1. The unadjusted earnings gap grew during the 1970s and declined during the 1980s.
2. The gap shrinks the most when we control for age in our analysis, especially in 1980 and 1990.
3. The gap at the mean becomes a smaller percentage of men's mean earnings over time from 1980 to 1990.

These results need to be interpreted in the context of the rising within-occupation earnings inequality displayed in Figures 1 through 5. In contexts where earnings inequality is growing rapidly (as it did in the 1980s), the earnings gap at the mean did not grow but actually shrank as a percentage of men's mean earnings. The female-to-male earnings ratio in 1990 moves from .58 to .80 as controls are added to the models in Table 6, and this move occurred in a context where earnings and earnings inequality were rising for both men and women.

The group that experienced the largest percentage increase in salaries may be associates in big firms (cf. Abel 1989:161; Kordana 1995; Rebitzer & Taylor 1995). In the late 1960s, the supply of associates contracted, both because law graduates chose graduate work to secure draft deferments and because the activist spirit led students to eschew corporate law. The result was that in 1968, the Cravath, Swaine, and Moore firm raised starting salaries by almost 50%, forcing other firms to follow. The salaries of other associates and partners also had to be raised. The growth of big firms continued to outstrip the supply. Almost two decades later, Cravath again introduced a shock into the recruitment market by raising salaries 23% to \$65,000 in 1986 (Galanter & Palay 1991:56–57).

Corporations also began to open and expand in-house corporate legal departments to provide permanent legal staff. Law firms were hired for the more competitive and risky transactions,

such as litigation and takeovers (cf. Leicht & Fennell 1997). Consequently, the practice of law became more competitive in big law firms. In 1975 and 1977, U.S. Supreme Court decisions that struck down minimum fee schedules and bans on advertising increased competition as well. In the 1980s, law firms placed more emphasis on “rainmaking,” the generation of new business by bringing in clients. Some firms even hired marketing directors, a position unheard of before 1980. The heightened value placed on rainmaking in law firms led to declining promotion rates among legal associates (cf. Galanter & Palay 1992:49–50; Kordana 1995).¹⁶

Is There Evidence of Male Flight?

So far, we have made the case for successful feminization of the legal profession by presenting information on the increased representation of women in the profession, gradual integration across work settings, and narrowing gender gaps in earnings in a context where earnings and earnings inequality are growing for men and women. Men could still be leaving the legal profession in response to feminization, however. Tables 7 and 8 address this question.

Table 7 provides the earnings ratio of lawyers compared with the entire labor force, which Reskin and Roos used to measure declining attractiveness. Most of the data are not consistent with a male flight hypothesis. Men continued to enter the occupation in high rates while women gained a larger share. Table 7 suggests that the legal profession declined in attractiveness during the 1970s, but increased in attractiveness during the 1980s. The result parallels changes in income rather than the percentage of women in the occupation. This result supports the conclusion that the attractiveness of an occupation tends to reflect overall market pressure on wages rather than feminization alone.

Further evidence regarding the male flight hypothesis is provided by the Hirsch/ABA data. These data document movements into and out of the legal profession during the 1980s. Table 8 suggests that women were more likely to enter legal positions in 1990 from other labor market locations, but both men and women were equally likely to leave legal positions between 1984 and 1990. Only the entrance difference is statistically significant,

¹⁶ This pressure also led to increased hours in law firms. A study commissioned by the American Bar Association (1990:52) concluded that lawyers were concerned about the increase in hours and that job satisfaction had decreased during the 1984 to 1990 period. In the analysis of the National Survey of Lawyers' Career Satisfaction, job satisfaction fell 5% for men from 1984 to 1990 and was unchanged for women (see Chiu 1996 and results presented below). This change may seem small until we recall that salaries increased 29% during the 1980s. Job satisfaction may have declined more if salaries had not grown dramatically.

Table 7. Labor Force Earnings Ratios for Lawyers, 1969–1989

Earnings Ratio	Female Lawyers to Female Labor Force			Male Lawyers to Male Labor Force		
	1969	1979	1989	1969	1979	1989
Labor force earnings	2.84	1.96	2.78	2.43	2.07	2.69
Labor force earnings to education	2.40	1.67	2.28	1.79	1.52	1.98

SOURCES: Roos & Reskin 1996, 1997.

Table 8. Movements into and out of Legal Positions by Gender, Taken from the National Survey of Lawyers' Career Satisfaction, 1984–1990

Job Status	1984		1990	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Legal position	93.0	88.0	88.2	85.2
Retired	2.1	0.5	6.2	1.6
Nonlegal position	4.7	8.4	5.0	9.0
Unemployed	0.3	3.1	0.6	4.2
		Men		Women
In legal position in 1990, not in 1984		2.6 ^a		4.8
Left legal position in 1990, in legal position in 1983		7.5		7.5

^a *t*-test for difference by gender significant at $p \leq .05$.

which provides (at best) weak support for the male flight hypothesis.

In summary, changes in the legal profession in the 1970s were quite different from changes during the 1980s. During the 1970s, the percentage of women lawyers nearly tripled, but real income and the female/male wage ratio dropped. Overall gains for women were ambiguous, and this picture of unclear progress fits Reskin and Roos's conclusions. The decade of the 1980s, however, was one of relatively successful integration for lawyers. The percentage of women more than doubled, and segregation decreased while real income and the female/male wage ratio both increased. Much of the earnings gains of women relative to men occurred in the bottom half of the earnings distribution, but this occurred in a context where earnings were rising for both men and women. The gender earnings gap also narrowed considerably for elite women in the top 1% of the earnings distribution. Finally, men and women were equally likely to leave legal positions during the 1980s, and women were slightly more likely than men to accept legal positions from other labor market locations.

Our survey and analysis so far have addressed differences in the relative economic standing of male and female lawyers during the 1970s and 1980s. None of our analysis, however, addresses the overall quality of legal work environments. Fortunately, the Hirsch/ABA data allow us to assess changes in the evaluation of legal work settings through their panel study of at-

torneys' working lives in 1984 and 1990. We turn to a discussion of other dimensions of legal work settings below.

Changes in the Quality of Legal Employment

In addition to examining changes in the relative earnings of male and female attorneys over time, the National Survey of Lawyers' Career Satisfaction allows for a preliminary examination of changes in the nonmonetary characteristics of jobs among a sampled cohort of attorneys. Table 9 looks at percentage differences in responses to questions about lawyers' work settings in 1984 and 1990 and assesses the statistical significance of differences by gender and over time.

There are four overall conclusions we derive from Table 9:

1. There is substantially more trending in reactions to work settings than there are gender differences in perceptions of work settings.
2. The trend over time is toward more unfavorable evaluation of legal work settings by both men and women.
3. Three of the four gender differences that persist across the two waves of the survey deal with "bread and butter" workplace issues such as the evaluation of financial rewards, advancement opportunities, and the intention to change jobs. Women are significantly less likely to describe good financial rewards and opportunities for advancement as "very descriptive" of their work setting, although the overall trend is generally toward more favorable evaluations for both men and women.
4. Job satisfaction displays consistent gender differences, with women reporting lower job satisfaction than men (using the overall job satisfaction question) and significant declines on the job satisfaction scale between 1984 and 1990.

There is also a decline in the percentage of men who report that they are respected and treated as colleagues in their work setting (Table 9, row 10). Both men and women report significant declines in their evaluations of this dimension, but the decline over time in men's evaluation is large enough that it produces convergence between men and women by 1990.

Further evidence of the overall trend in the quality of legal work settings can be gleaned from looking at differences in evaluations over time for men and women. Of the 21 dimensions of work settings measured in the National Survey of Lawyers' Career Satisfaction, men report 1989 work environments less favorable on 15 dimensions and more favorable on four dimensions, and two dimensions (both job satisfaction indices) are unchanged. Women report declines in the favorability on 14 dimensions of their work setting and improvements in two dimensions, and five

Table 9. Indicators of Change in Nonmonetary Dimensions of Work Settings by Gender, Taken from the National Survey of Lawyers' Career Satisfaction, 1984–1990

Indicators	1984		1990	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
% planning to change employment in the next few years	.20*	.44	.11*†	.26†
"The financial rewards are great" ^a	.11*	.08	.19*†	.13†
"Substantial assistance is available from clerical personnel"	.20	.21	.11†	.13†
"Substantial assistance is available from paralegals and junior attorneys"	.10	.08	.07†	.08
"I have enough time to spend with my family"	.15	.18	.09†	.10†
"I have enough time for myself"	.12	.13	.14†	.12
"The opportunity for me to advance is very good"	.23*	.18	.29*†	.21
"Atmosphere is warm and personal"	.35	.31	.46†	.44†
"Advancement is determined by the quality/quantity of one's work"	.22	.20	.08†	.11†
"I am respected and treated as a professional colleague by my superiors"	.34*	.28	.21†	.21†
"Political intrigue and backbiting are almost nonexistent"	.21*	.15	.25*†	.16
"Level of pressure/tension on the job is minimal"	.65	.66	.05†	.04†
"I have considerable control over the cases/matters I handle"	.65	.64	.21†	.23†
"The opportunity for professional development is very good"	.64	.64	.16*†	.21†
"I have considerable input into management decisions"	.61	.61	.22†	.21†
"The intellectual challenge of my work is great"	.65	.65	.45†	.43†
"Pressures from clients regarding costs of services is minimal"	.59	.58	.07*†	.11†
"Superiors provide frequent instruction or training"	.43*	.54	.02†	.04†
"Superiors provide frequent feedback on my work"	.44*	.55	.02*†	.06†
Overall job satisfaction ^b	.35*	.27	.31*	.22
Job satisfaction factor scale ^c	-.07*	.46	.03*	-.13†

* *t*-test for differences by gender within years significant at $p < .05$.

† *t*-test for differences between years within gender significant at $p < .05$.

^a Percent responding that the statement was "very descriptive" of their job. See Appendix B for a description of the exact wording and responses used.

^b "In thinking about your current job, overall how satisfied or dissatisfied were you or did you feel neutral?" Percentage of respondents reporting that they were "very satisfied."

^c See Appendix B for a description of the items used as components of the job satisfaction factor scale. The reliability for this scale (alpha) is .97 in 1984 and .94 in 1990. Changes in job satisfaction were calculated by multiplying the factor score by a constant and subtracting the 1990 value from the 1984 value.

dimensions are unchanged. The evaluation of financial rewards is one of the few that is trending upward as the gender difference in evaluations by job incumbents persists.

Conclusions and Implications

We have suggested a way to reconcile the conflicting findings of Reskin and Roos and Wright and Jacobs by focusing on three characteristics of jobs that provide the context for successful feminization: (1) rapid employment growth, (2) specialized degree requirements, and (3) increasing wages. We defined “successful feminization” as a process where women’s entry into traditionally male-dominated occupations is accompanied by decreased workplace segregation, rising wages, and a declining gender earnings gap. This definition parallels Wright and Jacobs’s definition of integrating occupations.

Our analysis sought to expand on conventional analyses of feminization by examining the dispersion of earnings by gender in the legal profession and by taking a preliminary look at differences in nonmonetary dimensions of legal work settings. Our results show the following:

1. Substantial growth in the legal profession was accompanied by growth in the representation of women, especially after 1970.
2. Segregation by position and legal work setting declined substantially in the 1980s.
3. The earnings of lawyers declined in real dollars during the 1970s and rebounded in the 1980s.
4. Gender gaps in earnings at the mean mirror the overall rise and fall in the earnings of lawyers rather than the rise and fall in women’s representation in the profession.
5. The gender earnings gap adjusted for hours and weeks worked, class of worker, age, marital status, and race declined to 20% as the earnings of men and women rose.
6. Gender earnings gaps at the mean and the distribution of earnings are generally more favorable for younger lawyers than older lawyers.
7. Declines in the earnings gap are driven by substantial improvements in the bottom half of the earnings distribution for women and among elite women lawyers in the top 1% of the earnings distribution.
8. There is no evidence that gender earnings gaps declined because men’s earnings declined or stagnated.
9. There is evidence that the relative appeal of the legal profession in terms of earnings ratios compared with the general labor force declined during the 1970s and rebounded in the 1980s.

10. There is little evidence that increased representation by women has prompted increasing exits from the legal profession by men.
11. Evaluations of legal work settings during the 1980s reveal consistent declines in favorable evaluations of work settings for both male and female lawyers.

Taken together, our results suggest one potential difference between Reskin and Roos's conclusions and Wright and Jacobs's results. Reskin and Roos's analysis of occupational change in the 1970s generally paints a pessimistic picture of the prospects for improving gender equality by integrating male-dominated occupations. Wright and Jacobs's analysis of change within computer occupations in the 1980s paints a much more optimistic picture of the prospects for gender equality.

Our survey and results suggest that feminization of the legal profession was not successful in the 1970s but was successful in the 1980s. During the 1970s, the number of lawyers grew, but women's entry coexisted with falling wages and a widening gender gap, results that fit with Reskin and Roos's pessimistic conclusions. During the 1980s, women's entry coexisted with rising wages, a narrowing gender gap, and decreased segregation in positions and work settings. Our 1980s results fit with Wright and Jacobs's more optimistic conclusions about the prospects for gender equality, especially in relatively elite occupations.

One important conclusion from our study is that rapid feminization can coexist with improving economic conditions, rather than just deteriorating economic conditions. It is possible for the percentage of women, real income, and the female/male wage ratio all to increase simultaneously. This confluence of factors was not observed in Reskin and Roos's case studies. This result can actually be observed in Wright and Jacobs's study of computer workers, but the result were not highlighted in their study because they focused their attention on male exits. In their study, men's earnings rose 8% after adjustment for inflation from 1982 to 1989, and the female/male earnings ratio rose from 59.1% to 64.5% during the same period (calculated from their Table 1). They also mention that computer work is the third-fastest growing occupation in the United States during the 1990s.

There are four other factors that may help explain why lawyers and computer workers in the 1980s did not fit Reskin and Roos's model. Reskin and Roos drew their case studies from the 1970s. Two relevant conditions changed from the 1970s to the 1980s. The women's movement matured, and the U.S. economy moved out of a recession and into a boom. It is possible that the overall economic boom was more important than rising wages in a specific occupation. Further, our framework has not discussed the role of the women's movement, except indirectly through public pressure placed on big firms to hire women.

Third, there could be a difference between occupations that have become highly feminized, even predominantly female, versus those that are at a low degree of feminization. In 1991, women were only about 20% of lawyers and 36% of computer workers (Wright & Jacobs 1994:532). A larger percentage of women may be necessary to reach a "tipping point," such that the cycle of male flight and declining wages is triggered. For the Reskin and Roos (1990:Table 2) case studies in the 1970s, pharmacists appeared to have the lowest percentage of women at 24% in 1980. Although computer workers, at 36% female in 1991, may seem highly female compared with pharmacists in 1980, the tipping point may be rising as the women's movement ages and the percentage of women in the entire labor force increases. Further, where the tipping point is and how fast it shifts may vary across the occupational spectrum. Because women in high-status occupations derive respect from their class advantage and high level of education, the stigma of working with women that produces male flight may be weaker among lawyers than in most occupations.

Finally, perhaps occupations are more likely to integrate successfully when many of the new jobs are in large organizations. Other analyses of lawyers report that relatively large law firms pay associates and partners substantially more than their productivity would warrant (see Rebitzer & Taylor 1995). The advantages that women lawyers experience in larger law firms may exist across occupations, or at least professions. A study of software specialists found that in organizations with fewer than 100 employees, women's salaries were about 50% of men's, but in those with at least 500 workers, women's salaries were about 80% of men's (Donato 1990:173).

There are four issues that we think reflect avenues for future research into the changing fortunes of women's pursuit of workplace equality through entry into male-dominated occupations. First, the contrasting results for the 1970s and 1980s suggest that change in the relative fortunes of men and women should be examined in different economic climates. Our results suggest that women's gains in the legal profession may be vulnerable to economic downturns, but the mass entrance of women into the legal profession coincided with the relative stagnation of the U.S. economy in the 1970s. Will new economic downturns lead to setbacks?

Second, our results still suggest that there is a "glass ceiling" in the earnings of female lawyers. This ceiling appears around the seventh decile of the earnings distribution and persists or worsens for all but the elite 1% of the earnings distribution. Future analysis should systematically examine the causes of this "ceiling effect"; perhaps the increasing hours required to pursue a successful legal career put a damper on women's earnings

above the median (cf. Harvard Law Review 1996; Landers et al. 1996). Perhaps the persistence of this ceiling reflects differences in the age distribution of male and female lawyers. Our findings do show that elite women at the top of the earnings distribution are approaching earnings parity with men, but that does not explain why there is relative stagnation in other earnings levels above the median.

Third, more systematic analyses of earnings distributions for occupations need to be conducted. The 1980s, in particular, had near record increases in peacetime earnings and income inequality (Phillips 1990). Much of this inequality occurred as earnings for large segments of the labor force stagnated. Examining earnings and earnings gaps across groups at the mean does not get at changes caused by the increased dispersion in the tails of the earnings distribution. Earnings dispersion needs to be investigated systematically in other occupational contexts where incumbents vary in specialized skill requirements, employment growth and decline, and overall earnings growth and decline.

Fourth, we do not have systematic evaluations of legal work settings in the 1970s comparable to the Hirsch/ABA data for the 1980s. Hence, we cannot draw conclusions about whether or not the perception of legal work settings has changed substantially across decades. Our results, however, are consistent with the idea that evaluations of legal work settings are becoming less favorable even in the context of rapid employment and earnings growth. Although these results do not present a consistent picture of differences in the evaluations of work settings by gender, they do suggest that women are becoming less satisfied with legal work overall (see also Chiu 1998) and that legal practice norms may be fragmenting (cf. Leicht and Fennell 1997).

In summary, we have proposed that one way to reconcile conflicting findings about successful versus unsuccessful feminization is to look at the coexistence of rapid occupational growth, rising wages, and specialized credentials. We have shown how these factors may have facilitated the successful feminization of the legal profession during the 1980s. Future studies can explore the relative importance of these factors in promoting women's entry, desegregation across settings and specialties, a narrowing of the gender wage gap, and other changes in how work is experienced by men and women.

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Appendix A

Details of the National Survey of Lawyers' Career Satisfaction, 1984 and 1990 (from Hirsch 1992)

The purpose of this data collection was to assess career satisfaction among young lawyers throughout the United States. The survey instruments were designed to include as many factors as possible that might affect lawyers' job satisfaction. The 1984 survey solicited information on lawyers' job descriptions, educational background, psychological characteristics, and basic demographics. The 1990 survey asked questions identical to those in 1984 and added items to deal with contemporary workplace issues like part-time work and sexual harassment in the workplace.

Lawyers were sampled from three target groups: lawyers over 36 years old who were ABA members, ABA members under 36 years old (excluding law students), and all lawyers from the nonmember files kept by the ABA. A random probability sample was drawn to represent each of these three groups. In the 1990 survey, the 1984 respondents were reinterviewed and a systematic random sample was taken of all lawyers admitted to the bar after 1983. This latter subsample is excluded from our analysis so that we may focus on changes over time in the same sampled cohort of lawyers. The 1984 survey had a 76.9% response rate and the 1990 survey had a 67.4% response rate.

Nonresponse analyses by the ABA show significant levels of nonresponse among retired lawyers and slight underrepresentation of private practice lawyers, overrepresentation of lawyers in government settings, and overrepresentation of junior associates/staff attorneys. The weighting system corrects for nonresponse bias and results in samples that are representative of the entire legal profession from which the samples were drawn. The ABA's nonresponse analysis suggests that these response biases do not pose a threat to the generalizability of statistical analyses.

Appendix B Survey Questions Used to Assess Characteristics of Lawyers' Jobs and Job Satisfaction in the National Survey of Lawyers' Career Satisfaction, 1984 and 1990, with a Description of the Factor Analysis of the Job Satisfaction Questions

The following phrases will be descriptive of your current employment to a greater or lesser extent. For each phrase, please indicate:

- (a) the extent to which it describes your job using a 4-point scale ranging from "very descriptive to just the opposite";

FOR EXAMPLE:	VERY DESCRIPTIVE	SOMEWHAT DESCRIPTIVE	NOT VERY DESCRIPTIVE	JUST THE OPPOSITE
INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE IS GREAT . . .	1	2	3	4

If the statement is true, you would circle "1"; if there was a fair amount of challenge, you would circle "2"; if not much, you would circle "3"; and if there was no challenge, you would circle "4."

- (b) whether you are satisfied, dissatisfied, or feel neutral about this aspect of your work.
 IF A PARTICULAR PHRASE IS NOT APPLICABLE TO YOUR JOB SETTING, CIRCLE CODE "5" FOR "NA" AND GO TO THE NEXT PHRASE.

	VERY DESCRIPTIVE	SOMEWHAT DESCRIPTIVE	NOT VERY DESCRIPTIVE	JUST THE OPPOSITE	NA
1. THE FINANCIAL REWARDS ARE GREAT . . .	1	2	3	4	5
2. SUBSTANTIAL ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE FROM CLERICAL PERSONNEL . . .	1	2	3	4	5
3. SUBSTANTIAL ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE FROM PARALEGALS AND JUNIOR ATTORNEYS . . .	1	2	3	4	5
4. USUALLY I WORK ON SEVERAL CASES AT A TIME . . .	1	2	3	4	5
5. I HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO SPEND WITH MY FAMILY . . .	1	2	3	4	5
6. I HAVE ENOUGH TIME FOR MYSELF . . .	1	2	3	4	5
7. THE OPPORTUNITY FOR ME TO ADVANCE IS VERY GOOD . . .	1	2	3	4	5
8. ATMOSPHERE IS WARM AND PERSONAL . . .	1	2	3	4	5
9. ADVANCEMENT IS DETERMINED PRIMARILY BY THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF ONE'S WORK . . .	1	2	3	4	5
10. I AM RESPECTED AND TREATED AS A PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUE BY MY SUPERIORS . . .	1	2	3	4	5

	VERY DESCRIPTIVE	SOMEWHAT DESCRIPTIVE	NOT VERY DESCRIPTIVE	JUST THE OPPOSITE	NA
11. POLITICAL INTRIGUE AND BACKBITING IS ALMOST NONEXISTENT . . .	1	2	3	4	5
12. LEVEL OF PRESSURE/TENSION ON THE JOB IS MINIMAL . . .	1	2	3	4	5
13. I HAVE CONSIDERABLE CONTROL OVER THE SELECTION OF CASES/MATTERS I HANDLE . . .	1	2	3	4	5
14. I HAVE TOTAL RESPONSIBILITY ONCE I AM GIVEN A CASE/MATTER . . .	1	2	3	4	5
15. THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS VERY GOOD . . .	1	2	3	4	5
16. I HAVE CONSIDERABLE INPUT INTO MANAGEMENT DECISIONS . . .	1	2	3	4	5
17. STATUS/PRESTIGE WITH COLLEAGUES OUTSIDE OF MY FIRM/JOB SETTING IS HIGH . . .	1	2	3	4	5
18. THE INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE OF MY WORK IS GREAT . . .	1	2	3	4	5
19. PRESSURES FROM CLIENTS RE: COST OF SERVICES IS MINIMAL . . .	1	2	3	4	5
20. SUPERIORS PROVIDE FREQUENT INSTRUCTION OR TRAINING . . .	1	2	3	4	5
21. SUPERIORS PROVIDE FREQUENT FEEDBACK ON MY WORK . . .	1	2	3	4	5
22. THE SKILLS I LEARNED IN LAW SCHOOL ARE VERY USEFUL IN THIS JOB . . .	1	2	3	4	5

(b)

	SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SATISFIED
1. THE FINANCIAL REWARDS ARE GREAT . . .	1	2	3
2. SUBSTANTIAL ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE FROM CLERICAL PERSONNEL . . .	1	2	3
3. SUBSTANTIAL ASSISTANCE IS AVAILABLE FROM PARALEGALS AND JUNIOR ATTORNEYS . . .	1	2	3
4. USUALLY I WORK ON SEVERAL CASES AT A TIME . . .	1	2	3
5. I HAVE ENOUGH TIME TO SPEND WITH MY FAMILY . . .	1	2	3
6. I HAVE ENOUGH TIME FOR MYSELF . . .	1	2	3

	SATISFIED	NEUTRAL	SATISFIED
7. THE OPPORTUNITY FOR ME TO ADVANCE IS VERY GOOD . . .	1	2	3
8. ATMOSPHERE IS WARM AND PERSONAL . . .	1	2	3
9. ADVANCEMENT IS DETERMINED PRIMARILY BY THE QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF ONE'S WORK . . .	1	2	3
10. I AM RESPECTED AND TREATED AS A PROFESSIONAL COLLEAGUE BY MY SUPERIORS . . .	1	2	3
11. POLITICAL INTRIGUE AND BACKBITING IS ALMOST NONEXISTENT . . .	1	2	3
12. LEVEL OF PRESSURE/TENSION ON THE JOB MINIMAL . . .	1	2	3
13. I HAVE CONSIDERABLE CONTROL OVER THE SELECTION OF CASES/MATTERS I HANDLE . . .	1	2	3
14. I HAVE TOTAL RESPONSIBILITY ONCE I AM GIVEN A CASE/MATTER . . .	1	2	3
15. THE OPPORTUNITY FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IS VERY GOOD . . .	1	2	3
16. I HAVE CONSIDERABLE INPUT INTO MANAGEMENT DECISIONS . . .	1	2	3
17. STATUS/PRESTIGE WITH COLLEAGUES OUTSIDE OF MY FIRM/JOB SETTING IS HIGH . . .	1	2	3
18. THE INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE OF MY WORK IS GREAT . . .	1	2	3
19. PRESSURES FROM CLIENTS RE: COST OF SERVICES IS MINIMAL . . .	1	2	3
20. SUPERIORS PROVIDE FREQUENT INSTRUCTION OR TRAINING . . .	1	2	3
21. SUPERIORS PROVIDE FREQUENT FEEDBACK ON MY WORK . . .	1	2	3
22. THE SKILLS I LEARNED IN LAW SCHOOL ARE VERY USEFUL IN THIS JOB . . .	1	2	3

Principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation conducted on-the-job satisfaction questions from the 1984 and 1990 waves of the survey. All responses were recoded so high scores reflected greater job satisfaction. We use the resulting factor scores from the first extracted factor in our comparisons of job satisfaction change from 1984 to 1990.

The 1984 factor analysis produced a factor that emphasized workplace opportunities and control over work activities. Loadings above .30 were found for items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, and 21 of the above. The reliability coefficient for this factor scale (α) was .97.

The 1990 factor analysis produced a factor that also emphasized control over workplace opportunities and control over work activities. Loadings above .30 were found for items 8, 10, 11, 16, 20, and 21 of the above. The reliability coefficient for this factor scale (α) was .93.

Source: Hirsch 1992.