EXPLAINING WHY LAWYERS WANT TO LEAVE THE PRACTICE OF LAW*

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ABSTRACT

This study integrates the methodological and substantive contributions from two streams of publications that examine lawyers' attitudes towards work. It uses interview data from ex-lawyers in combination with the job satisfaction and commitment literature to develop a model of lawyers' job dissatisfaction and desire to leave law. The interview data proved instrumental in identifying relevant work-related factors that explain lawyers' work attitudes and the multivariate analysis used to test this model on a larger sample of lawyers revealed that some factors suggested by the interviews may not be as important as assumed. The findings of this study show it is important to recognize the contributions of both streams of publications in this area.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, two very different views of lawyers' attitudes towards their work and the legal profession have emerged. One suggests that significant numbers of lawyers are highly dissatisfied with the practice of law and are leaving the profession (e.g. Arron, 1989; Bainbridge, 1989; Brockman, 1994; Dart, 1988). The other contends that most lawyers are generally satisfied with

This literature is also marked by methodological and substantive divisions. In one stream, we find journalistic reports and biographical accounts that include popular books such as *Running From the Law: Why Good Lawyers are Getting out of the Legal Profession* (Arron, 1989), articles in lawyer trade publications with titles like “Can the Law Practice be Fun? No: The Hours are Long, the Stress is Incredible and Those Aren’t the Worse Parts” (France, 1993) and headlines that read “Lives of the Living Dead: Associates Rate Canada’s Law Factories” (*Canadian Lawyer*, 1990). These studies typically rely on lawyers’ first-hand reports of their personal experiences practicing law or interviews with a small number of lawyers. Such publications are important in identifying potential sources of lawyer dissatisfaction, such as the excessive time demands of practicing law, the difficulties of juggling work and family and the stresses associated with billable hours and working with other lawyers (Arron, 1989; Altman, 1991; France, 1993).

The second stream tends to be more academically oriented and usually relies on larger, representative samples and more structured data collection techniques (e.g. close-ended questionnaires). Some of these researchers use quite sophisticated statistical techniques (e.g. Hagan & Kay, 1995; Hull, 1999; Kay, 1997; Mueller & Wallace, 1996), whereas others present relatively simple analyses (e.g. Brockman, 1994; Chambers, 1989; Heinz et al., 1999; Schrimsher, 1998; Stanford Law Project, 1982, 1988). Many of these studies generally rely on demographic variables (e.g. gender, race), human capital measures (e.g. education, experience) or employer characteristics (e.g. work setting, number of lawyers) in predicting lawyers’ satisfaction and/or departures from law (e.g. Brockman, 1994; Chambers, 1989; Hagan & Kay, 1995; Heinz et al., 1999; Hull, 1999; Kay, 1997).

Few attempts have been made to integrate these literatures on lawyers’ attitudes towards practicing law. And, while each may be limited in certain methodological respects, together they are complementary in contributing to our understanding of lawyers’ work attitudes. The first stream of publications may identify important determinants of lawyer satisfaction but its findings tend to lack generalizability. In addition, many of these studies focus on exploring why men and women’s satisfaction levels differ or why women are more likely to leave law in comparison to men. The second stream also shares this limitation in its focus on documenting gender differences in satisfaction levels and departure rates (Brockman, 1994; Heinz et al., 1999; Hull, 1999; Kay, 1997). In doing so, both streams convey little information as to why it is that both male and female lawyers may be dissatisfied with law or deciding to leave the
profession. As well, the more academic studies generally fail to assess lawyers’ day-to-day work experiences by ignoring the experiences voiced by lawyers in the more journalistic publications and the relevant variables contained in the broader literature on job satisfaction and commitment.

To integrate these two streams, this paper relies on two different methodologies to generate and test a model of lawyers’ dissatisfaction and desire to leave law. In doing so, this paper combines the methodological and substantive contributions from both streams of literature.

Methodologically, this study makes use of in-depth interviews with ex-lawyers and a large-scale, mail-out survey of practicing lawyers. Telephone interviews were conducted with lawyers who had voluntarily left the practice of law.¹ The object of this exploratory stage of research was to allow ex-lawyers to explain in their own words why they decided to leave the legal profession. This part of the project highlights the importance of taking seriously lawyers’ voices in describing their own personal experiences practicing law. Following the interviews, the next stage of this study involved sending a mail-out questionnaire to lawyers currently practicing law. The objective of this second stage of research was to operationalize the issues identified in the interviews as well as collect a larger, more representative sample suitable for multivariate analyses. Substantively, this paper links the factors identified by the lawyers who have left law to the broader sociological literature on job satisfaction, commitment and quit behavior. The literature on job satisfaction in particular, and workers’ attitudes in general, emphasizes how employee’s work experiences influence their attitudes towards work (Kalleberg, 1977; Oldham & Hackman, 1981; Porter, Lawyer & Hackman, 1975). Based on this literature, measures of relevant work experiences were also included in the questionnaire component of this study.

**PROPOSED MODEL OF LAWYERS’ DESIRE TO LEAVE THE PRACTICE OF LAW**

Since it is extremely difficult to locate lawyers who have left the Bar (Wallace, 1994; Brockman, 1992, 1994), and when they are located, the accuracy of their recollections may decline significantly over time, in the second stage of this study I chose to study what affects lawyers’ dissatisfaction with their job and their desire to leave the legal profession before they have actually quit.² Previous studies show that job satisfaction and commitment are important factors that affect lawyers’ decision to continue or quit practicing law (Dart, 1988; Hagan & Kay, 1995; Kay, 1997).
As indicated above, specific factors affecting lawyers' job dissatisfaction and desire to leave the profession were identified from the results of the interview data collected in the first stage of this study and the job satisfaction and commitment literature. These factors include: (1) the degree to which professional expectations are met; (2) the intrinsic and professional rewards received from practicing law; (3) the work demands associated with practicing law; and (4) whether one perceives alternate career opportunities. Figure 1 presents the proposed model, which identifies the specific variables examined in this paper and their hypothesized effects on lawyers' job dissatisfaction and desire to leave the practice of law.

![Proposed Model of Lawyers' Dissatisfaction and Desire to Leave the Practice of Law](image)

**Fig. 1.** Proposed Model of Lawyers’ Dissatisfaction and Desire to Leave the Practice of Law.

*Note:* (+) indicates that the factors are expected to increase lawyers’ job dissatisfaction and desire to leave law.

(-) Indicates that the factors are expected to decrease lawyers’ job dissatisfaction and desire to leave law.
Job Dissatisfaction and Desire to Leave

The early literature on occupations suggested that professional work is highly rewarding, both intrinsically and extrinsically, and characterized by a single, clear-cut career path (Greenwood, 1957; Larson, 1977). Moreover, it was assumed that those who have successfully managed to acquire the training and skills necessary to enter a profession are subsequently devoted to a life-long career in that occupation (Purvis, 1973). More recently, however, evidence challenges the widely held assumption of the “one life-one career imperative” among higher-status, professional occupations (Arron, 1989; Evans & Laumann, 1983; Neapolitan, 1980). More and more studies are reporting the growing dissatisfaction, stress and frustrations that professionals face in their day-to-day work lives, evidenced not only by their increasing departures from their jobs but from their careers as well.

This paper examines lawyers’ desire to leave the practice of law, which is reflective of their commitment to their legal career. As a form of career commitment, it refers to the desire to maintain membership in one’s chosen occupation. Specifically, desire to leave the practice of law is defined as the degree to which lawyers would like to leave the legal profession. It is important to distinguish desire to leave from intent to leave — while a number of lawyers may desire or want to leave the practice of law, a smaller proportion may actually intend to do so and even fewer actually quit. Consequently, desire to leave law reflects more of the affective aspects of commitment than the calculative or continuance aspects (Mobley, 1982; Mowday, Steers & Porter, 1979).

In explaining why workers change or quit careers, dissatisfaction with one’s job has been found to be an important factor (Kay, 1997; Neapolitan, 1980; Rhodes & Doering, 1983). Specifically, job dissatisfaction is generally treated as a mediating factor such that workers’ on-the-job experiences influence their degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their job, which in turn, affects their desire to leave their specific job or ultimately their career. Job dissatisfaction is defined as the extent to which lawyers dislike their job.

Professional Expectations

There is a considerable body of literature that suggests that job dissatisfaction is a direct function of the perceived discrepancy between what an employee expects from a job and what he or she actually receives or experiences (Kalleberg, 1977; Scarpello & Vandenberg, 1992). In this study, professional expectations refer to the degree to which lawyers’ expectations of the practice of law are met by their actual day-to-day work experiences.
Research on the professional socialization and training of law students suggests that there is a notable absence of opportunity for law students to play the lawyer role, and as a result, law students often graduate without any prior contact with legal work (Bucher, Stelling & Dommermuth, 1969). Law students learn to think like a lawyer, but in isolation of actual lawyering experience, they really have no idea of how to "act like a lawyer" (Kennedy, 1982).

In several studies of lawyers who have left the practice of law, ex-lawyers report that they expected the focus of law to be working with and helping clients and that they were disappointed when they found, instead, they were more concerned with putting in enough hours to meet billing quotas or generate or maintain clients (Wallace, 1994; Arron, 1989; Dart, 1988; Nielson, 1995). Comments provided by two ex-lawyers who were interviewed in the first stage of this study illustrate these concerns.

Law school is not particularly good at preparing you for practicing law. I was surprised at how grinding it is, how time consuming—it's all consuming and pretty demanding. You don't help people much and spend most of your time on minutiae details and push paper and you're not helping clients directly.

When I went to law school, I thought it'd be a really intellectual profession, but it's very much more a business and practical. It's not intellectually challenging like you'd think it'd be. It's much more business oriented. You need to be aggressive, like in any other business. The same types of people who get ahead in business, get ahead in law.

It is hypothesized that the less lawyers' professional expectations are met by the realities of practicing law, the more dissatisfied they will be with their job and the more they will want to leave law. Professional expectations are examined in this study in two different ways: the degree to which lawyers' expectations regarding the practice of law have been met (met expectations) and the degree to which they feel that law school adequately prepared them for the realities of practicing law (law school preparation).

**Intrinsic and Professional Rewards**

The ex-lawyers who were interviewed in the first stage of this study identified a number of intrinsic and professional rewards that they felt were important in influencing their attitudes towards practicing law. These include how much variety, social value, collegiality and autonomy they experienced in their work. Research on job satisfaction and commitment also reports that intrinsic rewards are generally highly valued by employees and important in affecting their attitudes towards their work and career (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Kalleberg, 1977; Mottaz, 1985; Wallace, 1995a).
Professional work in general, and legal work specifically, is expected to be non-routine and uncertain (Nelson, 1988). Lawyers who have left the practice of law report that challenging, interesting and stimulating work (variety) was important in making their work more enjoyable (Altman, 1991; Wallace, 1994; Dart, 1988). Comments from several of the ex-lawyers surveyed in the first stage of this project illustrate how they found the practice of law to be boring, tedious and highly redundant. For example, they described the most dissatisfying aspect of law as follows: “The really boring, redundant, technical work.”; “It’s boring. You pay such tedious attention to detail.”; and “The tedium. You never saw that aspect of it on Perry Mason did you?”.

Lawyers who have left law also suggest that the service component of legal work, such as working with and helping clients (service oriented work), was important in affecting their attitudes towards their job (Altman, 1991; Arron, 1989; Wallace, 1994; Nielson, 1995). These reports are consistent with the literature on professionals that suggests that they internalize a norm of altruism or belief in public or community service (Wilensky, 1964). A recent study shows how a high level of professional service orientation is particularly important in understanding professional commitment (McDuff & Mueller, 2000). The following comments are two ex-lawyers’ responses to questions about the most satisfying aspect of their jobs, which illustrate the importance of service-oriented work.

Dealing with people who present initially as being in great distress and working with them to get through a difficult time in their lives.

I enjoyed helping people and resolving their problems when I could. . . When I could solve problems for people that they couldn’t solve on their own.

Collegiality is an aspect of professional work that reflects the extent to which lawyers work together and that is expected to enhance lawyers’ job satisfaction and desire to continue practicing law (Wallace, 1995a). As a result of their shared socialization in law school, lawyers are taught to value working in a collegial and cooperative work environment (Heinz & Laumann, 1982). Increasing segmentation throughout the legal profession, however, threatens the cohesiveness, camaraderie and cordiality among lawyers and has been argued to contribute to dissatisfaction with their work (Altman, 1991; Cooper & Humphreys, 1996; Kaye, 1988).

The last intrinsic, professional reward identified by ex-lawyers as important in affecting their work attitudes refers to the amount of autonomy or discretion they had over how they performed their work. Autonomy is generally regarded as an essential defining characteristic of professional work (Engel, 1970; Wallace, 1995a). Lawyers, similar to other professionals, justify their autonomy because
the interpretation of their work is complex and cannot be reduce to a set of routine procedures (Nelson & Trubek, 1992). As well, autonomy is an important intrinsic quality of work that strengthens the bond of the worker to the firm (Halaby & Weakliem, 1989). Lawyers who are not granted sufficient autonomy and discretion in performing their work are expected to be more dissatisfied with their job and more likely to consider leaving law (Heinz et al., 1999).

Work Demands

Interviews with lawyers conducted in other studies as well as this one suggest that the generally demanding nature of practicing law contributes to dissatisfaction and may cause lawyers to consider leaving the legal profession (Altman, 1991; Arron, 1989; Bainbridge, 1989; Brockman, 1992; Dart, 1988; Hagan & Kay, 1995; Wallace, 1994). This is consistent with reports in the general job satisfaction literature that shows that stressful work experiences, such as excessive job demands and pressures and role overload, significantly reduce job satisfaction (Ducharme & Martin, 2000).

In this study, work demands are examined in terms of the amount of work overload, work-nonwork conflict and profit-driven focus lawyers experience from practicing law and the average number of hours they work per week. Work overload refers to the extent to which the demands of a job are felt to be excessive (Wallace, 1999). The long hours, feelings of being overwhelmed by perceived time pressures and deadlines, in combination with the feeling that there is insufficient time to do one’s job, are aspects of work overload that illustrate the all-encompassing nature of practicing law (Kessler, 1997; Wallace, 1997, 1999). The following quote illustrates how one ex-lawyer interviewed in the first stage of this study found the hours and stress associated with being overwhelmed by work to be very dissatisfying.

The hours and the stress - mainly the stress. I personally never felt I had enough time to do the required amount of research. I felt constantly that you can only do about half of the amount of research you should and the rest of the time you’re flying by the seat of your pants. It’s not right for the clients when you’re dealing with their lives. You do the work and then a partner signs it and I know that I wouldn’t put my name on it.

The degree to which work-related stress overflows into one’s nonwork life is also expected to have a negative effect on lawyers’ work attitudes. Work-nonwork conflict refers to the degree to which work-related stress invades one’s nonwork life, such that workers think or worry about work after they have left work (Bainbridge, 1989; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Wallace, 1997, 1999). Research suggests that work-nonwork conflict influences not only one’s job satisfaction, but marital satisfaction and overall life satisfaction as well.
(Aryee, 1992; Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). A number of ex-lawyers interviewed in the first stage of this project explained how the demanding and stressful nature of practicing law can have a negative effect on their lives outside of work. One offered the following advice to those just entering the legal profession:

Don’t let the profession get in the way of your life and your personal relationships, especially with your spouse and kids if applicable. You spend so much time at work and on your career and before you know it, it’s too late and you’ve lost your spouse.

The increasing profit-driven focus associated with practicing law is reflected in the predominant theme throughout the literature that the practice of law has become the business of law, because the profession has become more competitive and profit oriented (Galanter & Palay, 1991; Nelson, 1988). This profit-driven focus is characterized by a shift away from helping clients and collegial relations among lawyers to growing competition among lawyers, maximized billing of clients and, in short, more emphasis on making profit (Wallace, 1997, 1999). A number of ex-lawyers raised their concerns about the emphasis placed on profits and the bottom line. Their comments are in response to being questioned about the most dissatisfying aspect of practicing law.

Practicing law as a business requires a “bottom line” orientation and the concept of billable hours. You’re driven by the bottom line.

Business pressures. The firm didn’t want you to do legal aid or research because it cost them valuable time and money. The pressures to bill and put in long hours.

Lastly, work demands are also examined in terms of the average number of hours worked per week because lawyers are renowned for the long hours they work (Bainbridge, 1989; Dart, 1988; Nelson, 1988; Spangler, 1986; Wallace, 1997). In the interviews conducted with ex-lawyers, the hours demanded by the practice of law was the most common source of dissatisfaction. For example, they referred to “putting in the long hours”, “the time commitment” or simply “the hours” as the most dissatisfying aspect of practicing law. Excessive work hours are also expected to contribute to lawyers’ job dissatisfaction and desire to leave the legal profession.

Alternate Career Opportunities

The possibility of unemployment and being unable to get a job in another occupation outside of law is argued to deter lawyers from leaving the practice of law (Arron. 1989; Kay, 1997; Wallace, 1994). Neapolitan (1980) reports that the lack of alternative occupational opportunities was the major reason cited for not actually changing careers, even when highly dissatisfied with one’s job.
This highlights the critical difference between intent to leave one’s occupation and desire to leave – lawyers may have a strong desire to leave the practice of law, but because they perceive limited or no alternate career opportunities they may have no intention of actually quit their current job or career. While alternate job/career opportunities are relevant to intent to quit or actual quit behavior (Scarpello & Vandenberg, 1992), they are not likely related to desire to leave law, but included to ensure that no theoretically relevant variables are excluded from the model.

Control Variables

Certain individual and job characteristics that may be associated with lawyers’ dissatisfaction and desire to leave law are controlled for in this analysis. The individual characteristics include gender, marital status, number of preschool children and work motivation. The job characteristics include work setting, profession tenure and earnings.

Basically, it is expected that women, lawyers who are married, and lawyers with preschool aged children will be more dissatisfied with and less committed to the practice of law than men, lawyers who are not married and those who do not have young children at home (Brockman, 1992, 1994; Hagan & Kay, 1995). While much of the recent research on lawyers suggests that women are less satisfied with the legal profession and leaving the profession in greater proportions than men (Abel, 1989; Brockman, 1992, 1994; Kay, 1997), other research suggests that women in law are just as satisfied or more satisfied compared to their male colleagues (Chambers, 1989; Hagan & Kay, 1995; Heinz et al., 1999; Hull, 1999; Mueller & Wallace, 1996). Marital status and presence of preschool-aged children are also included to see whether lawyers with family ties and obligations are more dissatisfied and less committed to the profession. The literature and interviews suggest that having familial commitments to a spouse and small children exacerbate the difficulties of balancing one’s work and nonwork life, given the demanding nature of practicing law (Adam & Baer, 1984; Epstein, Sauté, Oglensky & Gever, 1995; Kaye, 1988; Liefland, 1986; Stanford Law Project, 1982). The presence of preschool-aged children is included as a control variable because of the greater commitment of both time and energy that they require on the part of working parents (Aryee, 1992). Lastly, lawyers who are intrinsically motivated by their work, who feel that their work is central to their life, are expected to be more satisfied with, and ultimately more committed to, the practice of law (Mueller, Wallace & Price, 1992; Wallace, 1995a).

Lawyers’ work setting is examined in terms of whether they work in a law firm or not. The literature suggests that law firm practice represents the core of
the profession, whereas working in employment settings reflects the periphery (Abel, 1989; Heinz & Laumann, 1982). It is expected that lawyers who are not working in law firms (e.g. corporate or government offices), where the organizational structure is less consistent with professional ideals and norms of organization, will be more dissatisfied with, and less committed to, the practice of law compared to those working in law firm settings (Heinz et al., 1999; Wallace, 1995b). Profession tenure, or the number of years they have practiced law, is also taken into account, where it is expected that the longer lawyers practice law the more satisfied and committed they are to the profession. Earnings is also included for control purposes. Several studies suggest that extrinsic rewards, such as pay, are not that important in influencing one’s desire to change careers, but rather may become a significant obstacle to actually changing careers (Neapolitan, 1980). It has been suggested that the high salary that lawyers generally earn acts as “golden handcuffs” (Arron, 1989) that deter dissatisfied lawyers from actually quitting the practice of law (Kessler, 1997). Consequently, while earnings may be related to satisfaction with one’s job, it is not expected to be a significant determinant of desire to leave the practice of law.

**DATA AND METHODS**

*The Sample*

In 1994, the second stage of this study involved mailing questionnaires to approximately 1,300 lawyers who were actively practicing law in the City of Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Using the local 1994 Legal Directory, a stratified, systematic sampling strategy was used to select respondents. In order to get a more balanced picture of the work experiences of both men and women practicing law, the sampling frame was stratified by gender such that equal numbers of surveys were sent to male and female lawyers.

A total of 512 surveys were returned, with 261 (51%) completed by male lawyers, indicating that virtually equal proportions of male and female respondents were obtained. Two factors probably contributed to the response rate of 39%. First, the survey was conducted during the summer due to the nature of the funding of the project. Second, according to the local Law Society, the specific population under study had received numerous surveys in recent years.

Two different comparisons illustrate the representativeness of this sample, despite the response rate. First, other large-scale surveys of lawyers indicate that approximately 80% of lawyers are satisfied with their job (e.g. Chambers, 1989; Hagan & Kay, 1995; Heinz et al., 1999). Approximately 80% of the lawyers in this sample indicated they are enthusiastic about their job and they
enjoy their job. This suggests that sample selection bias has not affected this dependent variable. Second, in determining whether the sample is representative of the total number of practicing lawyers in the City of Calgary, I compared select characteristics of the 512 lawyers who participated in the study with all 2,808 lawyers practicing in Calgary at the time of the survey. The only information available on lawyers practicing in Calgary consists of a breakdown of male and female lawyers by four major work settings (i.e. law firm, solo practitioner, corporation and government). This information was provided by the local Law Society, and unfortunately data were not available for other relevant characteristics. After adjusting the female sample size for over-sampling, I conducted a chi-square test and found that there is no statistically significant difference between the gender by work setting distribution of the 2,808 lawyers in Calgary and that of the survey participants. Based on the results of these comparisons, it is concluded that the participants are representative of the larger pool of lawyers from which they were drawn along these characteristics. This suggests that the findings reported here are applicable, or generalizable, to not only the lawyers who participated in this survey, but the other lawyers practicing in the City of Calgary as well.

Of the lawyers included in the analysis, 79% are married and 27% have preschool-aged children. Most of the lawyers who participated in this survey work in private practice in law firms as associates (27%) or partners (29%), in solo practice (13%) or as independent practitioners in an association with other lawyers (7%). Participants also work in corporations (14%) or in government (5%). The remaining 5% of the sample work in a wide range of other employment settings. The average annual earnings of those who participated is $96,000 and the average length time they have practiced law is approximately 11 years.

The Measures

Many of the variables included in the questionnaire were measured by several Likert items that were used to form a single score for each variable. In many cases respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which the statements described their own experiences or attitudes on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). An “(R)” indicates the item was reverse coded. The single score obtained for each variable represents the average scores that were calculated by summing the responses for the relevant statements and dividing this sum by the number of statements for the particular factor. Reliability coefficients (Cronbach’s alpha) are reported for the multiple item measures.
Desire to Leave the practice of law refers to the degree to which a person wants to leave the practice of law. It is measured by three statements constructed for this study that include: I would like to work in an occupation other than the legal profession; I would be reluctant to leave the legal profession (R); and I would like to continue working in the legal profession (R) (α = 0.87). Job Dissatisfaction refers to the extent to which the individual dislikes his or her job and is measured by three statements adapted from Brayfield and Rothe (1951): I definitely dislike my job; Most days I am enthusiastic about my job (R); and I find real enjoyment in my job (R) (α = 0.86).  

Met Expectations taps the degree to which the practice of law meets the individual’s original expectations. It is measured by four statements written for this study that include: My experiences practicing law have been close to what I originally expected; Practicing law has lived up to the expectations I had when I first entered the profession; Generally, practicing law has not been what I thought it would be (R); and All in all, I am disappointed with my experiences practicing law (R) (α = 0.89). Law School Preparation is measured by a single item constructed specifically for this study: Law school prepared me well for the realities of practicing law.

Variety is defined as the degree to which one’s work tasks are highly varied and is measured by the statement: My job has lots of variety. Service Oriented Work refers to the degree to which one’s work is socially important by helping others. It is measured by the following three items: By practicing law, I feel I am making a difference in people’s lives; By practicing law, I am able to work with and help people who need my assistance; and My work practicing law is important to society (α = 0.75). Collegiality reflects the amount of cooperation among colleagues in the legal profession and is measured by the item: My colleagues are willing to make an extra effort to help another lawyer with a case or technical problem. Autonomy is defined as the amount of freedom to make decisions about one’s job. It is measured by three statements adapted from Hackman and Oldham (1980) that include: I am my own boss in almost every work-related situation; I make my own decisions in regards to how I do my work; and Most of my decisions are reviewed by other people (R) (α = 0.76).

Work-Nonwork Conflict taps the extent to which work-related stress invades the person’s nonwork life. It is measured by three items adapted from Fimian, Fastenau and Thomas (1988) that include: I often think about work when I’m not at work; It takes a long time for me to relax after I leave work; and I often have bad dreams that are work related (α = 0.63). Work Overload reflects whether the amount of work required in the job is excessive. It is measured by the following four statements adapted from Cook, Hepworth, Wall and Warr (1981): I do not have enough time to get everything done in my job; My
workload is too heavy in my job; I have to work very quickly to get everything done in my job; and I do not have enough time to do my work to the best of my abilities (α = 0.81). Profit-Driven Focus taps the extent to which the practice of law is business oriented. It is measured by three items developed specifically for this study: The practice of law is primarily concerned about generating profit; The practice of law involves a “bottom line” orientation; and To succeed in the legal profession you must be aggressive and business oriented (α = 0.64). Hours per Week is measured by a single question asking how many hours a week the respondent works on average.

Alternate Career Opportunities refers to the perceived availability of alternate jobs outside the legal profession. It is measured by three statements adapted from Scharpello and Campbell (1983) that include: I have too few alternate career options to consider leaving the legal profession, even if I wanted to (R); Finding another job outside the legal profession would not be difficult for me; and My legal training and experience would be valuable for securing a job outside the legal profession (α = 0.73).

Gender (Male) is coded 1 for male lawyers and 0 for female lawyers. Marital Status (Married) is coded 1 for respondents who are married (including cohabitation) and 0 for respondents who are single (never married), separated/divorced and widowed. Preschool Children is measured by a single question that asks how many children are currently living at home who are under six years of age. Work Motivation taps the extent to which work is a central part of a person’s life. It is measured by two statements adapted from Kanungo (1982): Some of the best things that happen in my life involve my work; and My work is central to my very existence (α = 0.67).

Work Setting is coded 1 for working in a law firm and 0 for all other work places. Professional Tenure was computed by taking the year since called to the bar from the survey date. Earnings is measured by taking the natural logarithm of the respondents’ total annual earnings from the practice of law for the 1993 tax year, before taxes and other deductions were made.

The Analysis

Path analysis, using ordinary-least squares (OLS) regression analysis was used to estimate the hypothesized relationships among the variables under study as depicted in Fig. 1. All variables were entered simultaneously into the equations.

Interaction tests were conducted to determine whether there are statistically significant gender differences in the effects of the determinants on either job dissatisfaction or desire to leave law. OLS was used to estimate two equations, one for job dissatisfaction and one for desire to leave, which included all of
the determinants, a dummy variable for gender, and cross-product gender-interaction terms for all of the determinants included in the model. F-tests were computed to determine whether the increment in the proportion of variance explained was significantly improved by the addition of the gender-interaction terms. In both cases, the improvement was not statistically significant and the models are therefore considered to be additive ones.

The results presented in Table 1 show the estimates of the direct effects of all of the variables on both job dissatisfaction (Eq. 1) and desire to leave the practice of law (Eq. 2). The results presented in Fig. 2 reflect all of the direct effects that are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Because it is likely that the determinants not only affect desire to leave directly, but also indirectly via job dissatisfaction, it is important to examine the indirect (Eq. 3) and total (Eq. 4) effects of these variables. I computed the indirect and total effects of each determinant on desire to leave via job dissatisfaction following the technique proposed by Alwin and Hauser (1975) for the decomposition of effects. The indirect effects represent the products of the direct effects of each determinant on job dissatisfaction by the direct effect of job dissatisfaction on desire to leave law (i.e. $\beta = 0.45$). The total effects represent the sum of the direct and indirect effects on each determinant of desire to leave. Because the indirect and total effects on desire to leave are not estimated by the statistical package used (i.e. SPSS), significance tests are not available for Eqs (3) and (4). Comments that were written by respondents on the questionnaires used in the second stage of this study are also presented below to provide additional support and illustration for the statistical findings.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Table 1 and Fig. 2 show that lawyers who are very dissatisfied with their jobs also want to leave the practice of law ($\beta = 0.45$).\(^9\) Moreover, job dissatisfaction is the most important determinant of desire to leave law, both in terms of its direct (Eq. 2) and total effect (Eq. 4). As one lawyer stated: "The reward comes from the work, but you must be truly committed."

**Professional Expectations**

The findings also indicate that the degree to which lawyers’ expectations have been met is the most important factor affecting job dissatisfaction ($\beta = -0.42$) and the second most important affecting desire to leave law ($\beta = -0.22$). That is, the less lawyers’ expectations of the practice of law have been met by their work experiences, the more dissatisfied they are with their job and the more they want to leave the practice of law. As one solo practitioner suggested: "This
Table 1. Path Analysis Results (Standardized Regression Coefficients) for the Determinants of Lawyers' Job Dissatisfaction and Desire to Leave the Practice of Law (N = 445).

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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Met Expectations</td>
<td>-0.421***</td>
<td>-0.220***</td>
<td>-0.189</td>
<td>-0.409</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law School Preparation</td>
<td>-0.128***</td>
<td>0.035</td>
<td>-0.057</td>
<td>-0.022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic &amp; Professional Rewards</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety</td>
<td>-0.173***</td>
<td>-0.035</td>
<td>-0.078</td>
<td>-0.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Oriented Work</td>
<td>-0.111**</td>
<td>-0.066*</td>
<td>-0.050</td>
<td>-0.116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collegiality</td>
<td>-0.062*</td>
<td>0.036</td>
<td>-0.028</td>
<td>0.008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>-0.009</td>
<td>-0.030</td>
<td>-0.004</td>
<td>-0.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Demands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work-Nonwork Conflict</td>
<td>0.174***</td>
<td>0.063*</td>
<td>0.078</td>
<td>0.141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Overload</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.086**</td>
<td>0.017</td>
<td>0.103</td>
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<tr>
<td>Profit Driven</td>
<td>0.054*</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
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<td>-0.085*</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>-0.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternate Career Opportunities</td>
<td>-0.071*</td>
<td>-0.048</td>
<td>-0.032</td>
<td>-0.080</td>
</tr>
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<td>Control Variables</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (Male)</td>
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<td>0.078*</td>
<td>0.056</td>
<td>0.134</td>
</tr>
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<td>Marital Status (Married)</td>
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<td>0.004</td>
<td>-0.019</td>
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<td>Preschool Children</td>
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<td>-0.035</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work Motivation</td>
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<td>-0.109**</td>
<td>-0.117</td>
<td>-0.226</td>
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<td>Work Setting (Law Firm)</td>
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<td>Profession Tenure</td>
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<td>Earnings (Log)</td>
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<td>-0.024</td>
<td>0.044</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Dissatisfaction</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>R²</td>
<td>0.618</td>
<td>0.585</td>
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</table>

* p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; *** p < 0.001 (one-tailed test).

is a great career choice – just forget the preconceived stereotypes, i.e. “LA Law.” An associate remarked that: “Most lawyers that are dissatisfied with being a lawyer are disillusioned by the business aspects.” The findings reported in Table 1 also show that the better law school prepares students for the realities of practicing law, the less dissatisfied they are with their job (β = −0.13), but that law school preparation has no significant effect on their desire to leave law. Two respondents commented as follows:
Let's just say private practice has been a real eye-opener for me – those who receive recognition are those with the highest billings, not the most competent and qualified. I can truly say law school did not prepare me for that.

Law school never told me I would have to work 14 to 16 hour days, day after day, month after month, or that client demands would overrule family plans.

These remarks, in conjunction with the statistical findings, illustrate the importance of having expectations consistent with the realities of everyday legal practice in order for lawyers to be satisfied with their job. The comments from both the interviews and questionnaires suggest that the most unexpected aspect of practicing law is the disappointment resulting from its business-oriented or “bottom-line” pressures. Lawyers are generally surprised by the underlying driving force for profit in the profession, which is typically associated with extreme time commitment and an emphasis on generating profit. The notion of unmet expectations is related to work demands, which are also identified as important in contributing to lawyers’ job dissatisfaction and desire to leave law and discussed below.

Intrinsic and Professional Rewards

The results show that the amount of variety in one’s job is the intrinsic reward that has the strongest impact on reducing lawyers’ job dissatisfaction (β = −0.17), but has no significant direct impact on their desire to leave law. The results also show that if lawyers feel they are making a difference in people’s lives and that their work is important to society (i.e. that their work is service oriented), they are less dissatisfied with (β = −0.11), and less likely to want to leave (β = −0.07), the practice of law. Several lawyers noted that their greatest satisfaction comes from serving their clients well and from the “people contact” of the job. For example:

There clearly is a sense of satisfaction and pride that arises from public service and assisting the public.

I can’t imagine a better profession to engage in . . . . The most rewarding thing is the accomplishment of a satisfactory result for a client. This together with the constant variety means the practice of law never becomes stale or routine.

Law is a stressful profession but helping clients and bringing about a resolution in adversarial situations is rewarding.

Collegiality significantly reduces job dissatisfaction (β = −0.06) but neither increases nor decreases lawyers’ desire to leave law. Many lawyers, however, in both the interviews and questionnaires indicated their concern over the growing competitiveness among lawyers. For example, two of the survey participants wrote:
Fig. 2. Path Analysis Results (Standardized Regression Coefficients) for the Determinants of Lawyers' Dissatisfaction and Desire to Leave Law.

Note: All coefficients are significant at the 0.05 level (one-tailed test).

My biggest disappointment in the legal profession is the lack of courtesy between lawyers, especially among the more junior lawyers. There's too much competitiveness.

My two disappointments with the profession are the competitiveness which limits the information exchange necessary for professional development and the difficulty to take time off.

It is possible that collegiality, or competitiveness, does not affect desire to leave law directly, but rather functions to operate more indirectly through unmet expectations and stress. That is, if lawyers experience considerable competitiveness among their colleagues, it is unexpected and it contributes to work-related stress, which in turn, contributes to job dissatisfaction and desire to leave law. This is discussed further below.

Respondents were asked to indicate the degree to which they exercise discretion and make their own decisions in regards to how they do their work.
The questionnaire findings show that autonomy is not important in affecting lawyers’ job dissatisfaction or desire to leave law.

Work Demands

According to Table 1 and Fig. 2, work-nonwork conflict contributes to both greater dissatisfaction (β = 0.17) and a stronger desire to leave law (β = 0.06). Both men and women indicated in their questionnaire comments that they want a “balanced life” between their work and nonwork life and that many find practicing law very incompatible with having a social life or family life outside of work. For example:

I'm presently looking to leave private practice . . . the bottom line – after nine years in private practice, “I want a life.”

The personal life/work time conflict is the greatest problem and causes a great deal of negative feelings and a negative attitudes towards the work . . . Today, these rewards are not as certain or lucrative as in the past and lawyers are looking instead for a decent lifestyle with free time.

In addition, lawyers who feel overwhelmed by time pressures and deadlines or exorbitant work demands are more likely to want to leave the practice of law (β = 0.09). Work overload does not, however, have a significant effect on lawyers’ job dissatisfaction. Several respondents wrote the following comments that illustrate the problems of excessively demanding work and heavy work loads:

Too many hours, too little money, too high risk, too little security, too much guilt.

Love my work, but find it very stressful and demanding.

I constantly feel guilty about the quality and quantity of my work (and lack thereof). I can’t abide conflict – some days I have to wonder what masochistic streak convinced me I should choose this profession.

Emphasis on securing profits also contributes to lawyers’ dissatisfaction with their jobs (β = 0.05), but has no direct effect on their desire to leave the practice of law. Rather, it appears that stress overflow and excessive demands are more important determinants than the emphasis on profit itself. As one lawyer noted: “The practice of law is changing to a more competitive, business, profit oriented profession. This has an adverse affect on the nature of the practice.”

The lawyers who participated in this survey work almost 50 hours per week on average, with the majority working between 40 and 60 hours per week. The findings presented in Table 1 indicate that the number of hours worked per week
has no effect on job dissatisfaction but does have a significant negative effect on desire to leave ($\beta = -0.09$). Working long hours may be the result of pressures from work demands or individual choice due to the importance of one’s career (Wallace, 1997). Given that the more hours worked results in less desire to leave the practice of law, it suggests that the latter explanation may be more appropriate here. It appears that it is not the actual amount of long hours that are especially relevant to job dissatisfaction but, as indicated above, whether lawyers feel that their work demands are excessive or beyond their control.

Alternate Career Opportunities

The results indicate that lawyers who believe that they can pursue an alternate career outside the legal profession tend be less dissatisfied with their job and view their work in a slightly more positive light ($\beta = -0.07$) than lawyers who do not feel that they have alternate career options. As expected, the findings suggest that alternate career opportunities has no effect on whether lawyers’ want to leave the practice of law.

Control Variables

The findings indicate that, when all else is held constant, that is, when all the other factors examined above are held the same for men and women (e.g. variety, hours worked per week, work-nonwork conflict), men are more dissatisfied with their jobs than women ($\beta = 0.13$). That is, contrary to what some of the research on lawyers suggests, female lawyers are more satisfied with their jobs than male lawyers.\(^{10}\) This is consistent with other research, however, that generally indicates that women tend to be more satisfied with fewer job rewards than men, or that women are more satisfied with less (Hodson, 1989; Mueller & Wallace, 1996; Phelan, 1994). Women are also less likely to want to leave the practice of law compared to men ($\beta = 0.08$), when all the factors included in the analysis are held constant. As one female partner in a law firm noted: “There are growing opportunities for women since I started. Things are getting better all the time.” Marital status and presence of preschool-aged children were included to see whether they are important in affecting lawyers’ attitudes towards work and neither affects lawyers’ job dissatisfaction or desire to leave law.\(^{11}\) The implications of these findings are discussed in greater detail below.

The findings show that lawyers who regard work as being central to their life are significantly less dissatisfied with their jobs ($\beta = -0.26$) and less likely to want to leave law ($\beta = -0.11$). Following met expectations, work motivation
is the next most important factor in affecting lawyers’ dissatisfaction and desire to leave law. A partner noted:

Ultimately, satisfaction with the law as a career may depend on your own individual ability or chaotic situation, as it is highly unlikely that your clients, firm, profession, family or even the Minister of National Revenue will ever voluntarily ask for less of a time commitment from you.

Turning next to the three job characteristics, only work setting has a significant effect such that lawyers working in law firms are more dissatisfied with their jobs than lawyers working on other settings ($\beta = 0.08$). As expected from previous results on lawyers who have left law, earnings also has no effect, suggesting that other rewards, such as variety and helping clients, are more important in affecting how satisfied lawyers are with their jobs and how much they want to leave the practice of law.

The results presented in Eqs (3) and (4) of Table 1 illustrate the important mediating role that job dissatisfaction plays in affecting lawyers’ desire to leave the practice of law. For example, the total effects of met expectations, variety, social value of work, stress overflow, gender and work motivation on desire to leave are significantly greater than the direct effects, as a result of the indirect effects they have via job dissatisfaction.

**CONCLUSIONS**

This study set out to integrate the methodological and substantive contributions from two streams of publications that examine lawyers’ attitudes towards work. In doing so, it used interview data collected from ex-lawyers in combination with the job satisfaction and commitment literature to develop a model of lawyers’ job dissatisfaction and desire to leave law. The findings of this study suggest that it is important to recognize the contributions of both streams of publications in this area.

First, whereas some publications suggest that there is a widespread morale crisis afflicting the legal profession, others suggest that lawyers are generally satisfied with the practice of law. The results reported in this paper support this latter conclusion. Overall, the lawyers in this study appear to be quite satisfied with practicing law and the majority is not considering leaving the profession. For example, most of the lawyers in this study reported that they enjoy practicing law and two-thirds indicated that they would like to continue working in the legal profession. Or, as two lawyers stated: “A very satisfying career in a supportive profession . . .”; and “I enjoy my job every minute of every day. I feel constantly privileged to have become a lawyer.”
Second, the interviews conducted in the first stage of this project, as well as those carried out in other studies, identified potentially relevant work-related factors that might explain lawyers' attitudes towards their work and careers. As indicated at the onset of this paper, much of the academic research that uses survey data does not take into account lawyers' work experiences as reported by lawyers themselves or as suggested in the broader literature on job satisfaction and worker attitudes. The findings from this study show that intrinsic and professional job rewards and work demands significantly influence lawyers' dissatisfaction and desire to leave law. It appears that when lawyers' work is sufficiently challenging and serviced oriented, while not overly demanding or conflicting with their nonwork life, lawyers are more satisfied with and committed to the practice of law. In addition, the results from the interviews with ex-lawyers suggested that they felt law school had not adequately prepared them for the practice of law and they felt there was a considerable incongruence between what they expected from practicing law and what they actually experienced. The results from testing the model with survey data show that lawyers are more satisfied and committed if earlier on in their career they formed realistic expectations of the practice of law. This factor has been largely neglected in both streams of publications on lawyers' work attitudes.

Third, the results of this study indicate that, when all else is equal, women are more satisfied with their jobs and have a stronger desire to continue practicing law than men. Although this finding appears contrary to what some of the research on lawyers suggests (e.g. Abel, 1989; Brockman, 1992, 1994; Menkel-Meadow, 1989), it is consistent with other research on lawyers (e.g. Chambers, 1989; Hagan & Kay, 1995; Heinz et al., 1999). It is also consistent with the more general job satisfaction literature that generally indicates that women tend to be more satisfied with fewer job rewards than men or that women are more satisfied with less (Hodson, 1989; Mueller & Wallace, 1996; Phelan, 1994).

This broader literature refers to "the paradox of the contented female worker" (Crosby, 1982), which shows that although women often experience worse work conditions (e.g. lower pay, less autonomy) than their male counterparts, they report that they are just as satisfied as men, if not more so. This situation is called a paradox because the job satisfaction literature clearly shows that less rewarding work situations result in more dissatisfaction. Thus, women should be more dissatisfied than men, but they are not. While various theoretical explanations have been posed in the literature and received mixed empirical support (e.g. see Crosby, 1982; Hodson, 1989; Phelan, 1994; Mueller & Wallace, 1996 for reviews), one plausible explanation that has not received much attention is that of gender differences in self-selection out of the legal profession. That is,
if it is easier for women to leave the practice of law and if they do so at a higher rate than men, then the likely result is that more of the most unhappy women have left whereas more of the unhappy men have remained (Heinz et al., 1999). The results of several studies suggest the greater ease at which women may leave law temporarily or permanently (e.g. to take care of family and/or rely on their husbands for support) (Wallace, 1994; Brockman, 1992) and the higher rates at which women leave law (Brockman, 1992; Hagan & Kay, 1995; Kay, 1997). Future research is required to investigate these issues more thoroughly.

The results of this study also suggest that some of the factors identified in journalistic reports and biographical accounts may not be as important in influencing lawyers’ work attitudes when they are examined using a larger, more representative sample and in the context of a properly specified model. For example, although reports from lawyers emphasize that the increasing profit-driven focus and demanding hours of practicing law are undesirable aspects of the job (Altman, 1991; Arron, 1989; Bainbridge, 1989; Brockman, 1992; Dart, 1988; Kessler, 1997; Wallace, 1994), the survey results suggest that they are not that important in affecting lawyers’ dissatisfaction or desire to leave the profession. It appears that lawyers are not deterred by hard work and generating profits. Their work attitudes are, however, more significantly affected by excessive work loads and work-nonwork conflict, both of which may be associated with a profit-driven focus and working long hours. In moderation, it seems that lawyers tolerate the drive for profits and the demand for long hours and it is only when these reach extraordinary levels, for example when they feel overwhelmed or they interfere with their nonwork life, that they impact on lawyers’ satisfaction and commitment.

In addition, the findings of this study challenge reports in the journalistic literature regarding how lawyers’ work hours impact on their attitudes towards their careers (Bainbridge, 1998; Dart, 1988). Specifically, the results show that working longer hours does not affect lawyers’ job dissatisfaction and is related to a stronger desire to stay in law rather than a stronger desire to leave law. This suggests that perhaps working long hours is more a matter of individual choice reflecting involvement in one’s career (Wallace, 1997) and the considerable control lawyers’ exercise over the scheduling of their work time (Seron & Ferris, 1995; Spangler, 1986). In contrast, the extent to which work invades lawyers’ nonwork life and the degree to which they feel overwhelmed by perceived time pressures and work demands, which negatively affect their work attitudes, reflect pressures that fall outside the individual lawyer’s control. Because lawyers cannot directly confront or affect these pressures, as they can with the scheduling of their work hours, these pressures and demands appear to have more significant effects on lawyers’ emotional well being and attitudes towards the practice of law (Wallace, 1999).
Along related lines, the presence of preschool children is not important in affecting lawyers' job dissatisfaction or desire to leave law, which is contrary to various studies that have suggested that young children amplify the time demands and pressures with practicing law, especially for women (Adam & Baer, 1984; Liefland, 1986; Stanford Law Project, 1982; Kaye, 1988). These studies, however, are somewhat dated and are often based on anecdotal data. In contrast, in more recent multivariate analyses, Kay (1997) concludes that the presence of children does not have a direct impact on women's exits from the practice of law and Wallace (1999) finds that having preschool-aged children significantly reduces feelings of work-nonwork strain for female lawyers. These more recent findings may reflect the growing use and ability of lawyers to pay for child care and domestic services that may help alleviate their child care demands (Pollock & Ramirez, 1995; Wallace, 2000). Contrary to the traditional assumption that professionals who have young children experience more work-family strain, the high earnings associated with practicing law may make it possible to purchase goods and services that help parents cope with their child-care responsibilities. Under such conditions, having a prestigious professional career and raising young children may contribute to a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment of multiple roles (Chambers, 1989; Hagan & Kay, 1995; Hull, 1999; Wallace, 2000). Future research may examine in greater detail the types of childcare arrangements that lawyers use and how they influence their satisfaction with their job and desire to continue practicing law.

The findings of this study also raise a number of issues for future research. First, considerable attention has been devoted to why lawyers leave the practice of law, whereas the implications of dissatisfied lawyers wishing they could leave law, but who continue to practice, has been largely neglected. This may have serious consequences for not only the well-being of the lawyers involved, but their clients and employers as well. Second, the findings regarding male and female lawyers' work attitudes are contrary to some of the older literature on lawyers, but more consistent with findings based on broader samples. This suggests that reports examining female lawyers' work experiences that tend to rely on small samples, bivariate statistics or unspecified models may exaggerate or misrepresent gender differences in job satisfaction and/or flight from law. Third, the cross-sectional design of this study limits the kinds of causal inferences that can be drawn. In interpreting the results of this study, several alternate causal linkages are implied that suggest a significantly more complex process than the one modeled here. For example, work hours, emphasis on profits, work overload and work-nonwork conflict may have considerably more complicated causal interrelationships in affecting lawyers' work attitudes. Future research stemming from both streams of publications in this area should
incorporate longitudinal analyses in order to better understand the complex processes and factors that influence lawyers' attitudes towards their work and careers.

NOTES

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the 94th Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association in Chicago, Illinois (August 5–10, 1999). Direct all correspondence to Jean E. Wallace, Department of Sociology, The University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive N.W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada, T2N 1N4 (email: jwallace@ucalgary.ca).

1. Refer to Wallace (1994) for a detailed description of this study.

2. This approach, of studying satisfaction, commitment and intentions to stay, rather than actual quit behavior, is well-established in the turnover literature (Mueller, Wallace & Price, 1992).

3. In addition, certain individual and job characteristics are included as control variables. These include lawyers’ gender, marital status, the number of preschool-aged children they have, as well as their work motivation. Three job characteristics that are included as control variables are work setting, law experience and earnings.

4. Work commitment has been examined in numerous ways, primarily in terms of employees’ commitment to organizations, careers, jobs and work. The preponderance of commitment literature focuses on some form of organizational commitment, which refers to workers’ attachment or loyalty to their employing organization (Mueller et al., 1992).

5. Related terms include career salience, professional commitment, professionalism and occupational commitment (Mueller et al., 1992).

6. There are two dominant conceptualizations of commitment in the literature that distinguish between the affective, emotional aspects of commitment and the emotionally neutral, calculative aspects. Intent to stay is portrayed as affectively neutral and reflects how workers weigh the costs of leaving versus staying and is labeled calculative or continuance commitment (Mueller et al., 1992). Desire to stay is more consistent with affective identification with the profession than a more instrumental, calculative assessment of the utility of remaining with the profession.

7. The computed chi-square is 8.485 (5df), and the critical chi-square is 11.07 (5df), \( p < 0.05 \).

8. Due to the strong correlation between desire to leave and job dissatisfaction \( (r = 0.72) \) confirmatory factor analysis was conducted and confirmed that the two scales are empirically distinct.

9. The standardized path coefficients (\( \beta \)) allow us to assess the direction and relative strength of each individual variable’s effect on job dissatisfaction and desire to leave the practice of law, after controlling for the other variables in the model. That is, the effects of all of the other variables are statistically held constant so that the path coefficients reflect the effect of a particular variable net of all others included in the analysis. Statistically significant effects are marked by asterisks. Significant levels indicate how likely the relationships observed are to have occurred by chance. The minimum criterion for statistical significance that is typically used is \( p < 0.05 \) which means that the relationship occurs 5% of the time or less by chance and is therefore considered statistically significant. Path coefficients that are statistically significant at
the 0.05 level, which is the minimum level of significance reported in Table 2, are marked by a single asterisk. The path coefficients that are presented in Table 2 are standardized, which makes it possible to compare the relative magnitudes of the effects of the various independent variables that are measured in different units. The size of the regression coefficient reflects the strength of their effect such that coefficients closer to zero have relatively weak effects, whereas larger coefficients represent stronger effects. The sign of the coefficient reflects whether the relationship is negative or positive. A negative relationship means that the independent variable is changing in the opposite direction of the dependent variable. For example, in Table 2 the coefficient reflecting the effect of met expectations on job dissatisfaction (β = -0.42) indicates that the more lawyers’ expectations are met, the less dissatisfied they are (or the less lawyers’ expectations are met, the more dissatisfied they are). As well, this is the largest coefficient contained in Eq. (1), which indicates that this is the most important predictor of lawyers’ job dissatisfaction. A positive relationship means that the independent variable and the dependent variable are changing in the same direction. For example, the coefficient for work-nonwork conflict (β = 0.17) indicates that the more work-nonwork conflict into other aspects of lawyers’ lives, the more dissatisfied they are (or the less stress overflows into other aspects of their lives the less dissatisfied they are). In terms of the magnitude of this path coefficient, it suggests that work-nonwork conflict has a moderate effect on lawyers’ job satisfaction, relative to the other variables included in Eq. (1).

10. When the average (i.e. mean) levels of job dissatisfaction and desire to leave for men and women are compared, men and women are equally dissatisfied with their jobs (the dissatisfaction means are 2.34 and 2.27, respectively) and similarly desire to leave law (the desire to leave means are 2.63 and 2.54, respectively). This finding is based on simply comparing the mean levels for men and women, without taking into account any other factors, and is often how researchers compare male and female lawyers’ satisfaction levels. It is seriously flawed, however, in that it does not statistically control, or hold constant, other factors that are relevant to men and women’s satisfaction and commitment. This is accomplished by including all relevant factors in the multiple regression analyses, which is the approach taken here.

11. In addition to the global gender-interaction tests reported above, individual interaction tests were conducted specifically for those variables that the interview data and literature suggest should be particularly relevant for women’s satisfaction and commitment. Specifically, I estimated separate equations for job dissatisfaction and desire to leave that included only one gender-interaction term at a time. That is, I tested to see whether the presence of preschool-aged children, marital status or work-nonwork conflict had different effects for men and women. The results of these tests revealed no significant gender interactions.

REFERENCES

Explaining Why Lawyers Want to Leave the Practice of Law


