



All Things Being Equal

by [Jessica S. Grigsby](#) on 11/11/10

Plaintiff's lawyers are a mostly male bunch. And when I say, "mostly male," I'm not so much commenting on their gender, but on the spectrum of maleness – Plaintiff lawyers tip the scale to one side to the nearly, "good 'ole boy" order. My real life experienced of how I arrived at this stereotype: 1) Last year I attended my first Plaintiff's Lawyers Statewide Conference. I walks a very successful plaintiff's lawyer who'd I put in his late sixties (for the sake of my burgeoning career, I will refrain from identifying him by name). On the arm of his ridiculously shiny three piece suit was...count them, not one, not two, but three buxom blondes who appeared to be all of twenty- two, and I can safely say after overhearing the conversation, were not in law school. They were also not his daughters; they were not his granddaughters. 2) The first time I appeared in court with the partner of my firm, the bailiff stopped me as I walked through the swinging doors to counsel table and told me that as his secretary, I wasn't allowed at counsel table and I'd have to sit in the gallery 3) As part of our plaintiff's lawyer's listserv someone mistakenly posted the question, "who's good on knees" – presumably asking if anyone knew of an orthopedic surgeon in town. One of the good 'ole boys who hit "Reply to All" responded, "my girlfriend." 4) I was given the grand tour of a lawyer's sprawling office, and when I inquired as to why there was a stuffed warthog mounted in the men's bathroom, he retorted, "because we are male-chauvinist pigs." On any given day, I frequently walk into a room of trial lawyers as the only female in the room. What's worse, the stereotype that a Plaintiff lawyer should be male, has spilled over into the clientele who believe that in order to do my job I must look like that guy on T.V. who says, "The insurance companies have lawyers working hard on their side, and so should you." I've had clients actually say to me, "no offense to you sweetheart, but I don't want you to get bullied by the men."

The truth about Plaintiff lawyering in general, it's a tough group to break in with, but once you do the work itself is totally conducive to women attorneys. The skills necessary to manage a household and necessary to manage a large client case load are pretty damned similar. You always have one kid getting into to trouble, one who is ultra sensitive and you will have to treat gently when you give him bad news, and one who, no matter how much you call, never calls you back! Both jobs require you having to attend to a million fires a day without anyone every seeing you break a sweat. Plus, bonding with juries and understanding the motivations of when people will step-up and help, is something with which women are uniquely attuned. So, I've used my oddity as a female in a male-dominated profession as a benefit. It's not always easy working with the boys, but what I lack in flannel and gun-toting, I make up in good ole feminine whiles.