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Women in Private Practice

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WOMEN IN PRIVATE PRACTICE

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A recent survey conducted by the American Bar Association (ABA) revealed that females account for 40-50 percent of law school enrollment and around 22 percent of our nation's lawyers. While there is no evidence of direct wage discrimination, 54 percent of female lawyers (and 29 percent of male lawyers) feel that men have a greater chance of becoming involved with firm management.

Using Dr. Barbara Bergmann's model of labor market overcrowding as a theoretical framework, this study proposes that stereotypes and society's perceptions about what is "normal" actually divide the legal labor market into two separate labor markets--one for male and the other for female lawyers. My research analyzes two separate samples. First, a sample of 45 lawyers from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) is examined for evidence of wage and attitudinal differences among males and females. Second, data on four hundred randomly selected lawyers was obtained from the Martindale-Hubbell Law Directory (MDH), and it is studied with respect to educational background, experience, areas of practice and in-firm status.

Unlike the ABA survey, my results indicate that significant wage differences do exist for young lawyers. OLS regression and cross-tab analysis of the NLSY data reveals that, even after controlling for experience, females attorneys earn \$16,539.18 less than their male colleagues. This is consistent with Bergmann's theory. LOGIT regression and cross-tab analysis of the MDH sample offers further support. While my results do not find significant evidence of crowding in the specific areas of practice, they do reveal that some crowding may be present with respect to partnership status. Specific findings will be presented at the conference.