

Reading Notes

Gender Gaps in Performance: Evidence from Young Lawyers

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The authors use data from After the JD, a national, longitudinal survey of lawyers in the United States to study the gender gap in the performance of lawyers in the US and the determinants. Azmat and Ferrer used two methods to measure gender gap in the performance. One is the Hours Billed, and the other is the New Client Revenue. This paper found that male lawyers bill 153 more hours per year than female lawyers, and they bring in more than twice as much new client revenues as female lawyers. The mechanism authors proposed is as follows: first, after having children, due to the division of labor of society and family, women pay more for raising children; The second is that female tend to have less aspirations of growing into senior positions or a partner than men.

The data is from After the JD, which is conducted in 2002 and 2007 separately. Large number of lawyers work for private law firm, the authors mainly focus on the lawyers who bill hours. Using this data, the two measurement mentioned above can both be quantified. First, hours billed, the authors use lawyers' total number of hours billed. Second, new client revenue, the authors use responses about the revenue attributed to new clients "personally brought". Besides, this dataset has many detailed variables which are great controlled variables, like educational variables, regional variables.

With the longitudinal survey data of lawyers, Azmat and Ferrer document the existence of gender difference in performance. The authors use linear models (OLS) with many controlled variables to test three main hypotheses, employer discrimination in the workplace, the presence of children because female usually take more family issues, and career concern factors. The authors propose that they are the determinants for the gender gap in performance. Based on the theoretical foundations mentioned above the authors conduct empirical research. First, they estimate the impact of target hours. The authors assume that male and female lawyers could have different billing

requirements. However, the results show no significant influence. Second, they estimate the impact of having children. Azmat and Ferre find that having young children does not affect the number of working hours of male lawyers, while female lawyers with young children bill about 200 fewer hours per year. Third, they estimate the impact of other factors. The authors find that aspirations are significant parts to explain the gender differences of the revenue of female and male.

In conclusion, focusing on the legal profession, the authors examine gender differences in performance. They find that there exists large gender gap in performance and promotion in lawyers area. What's more, they further explore the determinants for the gender gap and find main causes for it. One reason is that the presence of young children in the family contributes to the gaps in performance because females always spend more time on their household issues. Another reason for the gender gap is the aspirations because it shows that female tend to have less incentive of growing into senior positions or a partner than men, which is the part of career concerns.

From my perspective, I think the limitation of this paper are as follows. First, Asking for a score on a scale of 1 to 10 is highly subjective and the standard varies from person to person. And the aspirations to be promoted is a also very subjective evaluation, which can easily change with the influence of time and working environment. Some women may want to be promoted without talking about getting promoted. Some women may be more motivated to move up in circumstances such as a good economy. Second, if possible, panel data will be more convincing.