

Amanda Berloni

Professor Susan Glover

Huma 5105

April 16, 2008

Struggling with Power: Women in Law Firms

There are no barriers to the advancement of women apart from those they choose themselves or those that are inherent in their biology.

Martin Mears (former President of Britain's Law Society)

Abstract:

Using a Foucaultian conception of power and applying it to the institution of the law firm, an analysis of how the law firm's structure and practices are antithetical to women is undertaken. Women, in particular, may find their work environment unsatisfying as a result of trying to succeed while maintaining other interests including the family. Foucault's notion of power applies to the analysis of women and their work experience within the law firm. Reference is made to articles written in the past twenty years which document the surge of women ending their tenure at large law firms as a result of unsatisfying working environments. A concluding discussion of what Michel Foucault's conception of power offers to women practicing in law firms is also given. By recognizing the dynamism of power, women can resist certain power relations and perpetuate the possibility of change. That is, the structure and practices of law firms can change making them more harmonious for women.