**Abstract for Doctoral Colloquium at EDI Conference June 2017**

For over 20 years, there have been more women entering the legal profession in the UK than men, but at partnership level in private practice women still represent less than 30% on average.[[1]](#footnote-1) Some issues contributing to this problem have been identified as (1) the macho culture of law firms;[[2]](#footnote-2) (2) discrimination (direct i.e. unequal pay;[[3]](#footnote-3) and indirect i.e. systemic disadvantage);[[4]](#footnote-4) (3) stereotyping and unconscious bias;[[5]](#footnote-5) and (4) an unequal domestic burden.[[6]](#footnote-6)

There is a lacuna between the formal equality set out in statute, and substantive equality that still appears to elude women solicitors in private practice. The Law Societies of (i) England and Wales; and (ii) Scotland; have both conducted research into this area and have a range of policies which they say assist law firms in dealing with these problems.

For this thesis, a theoretical framework has been developed based on the theory of Care Ethics[[7]](#footnote-7) and used in a comparative analysis of the policies in these two jurisdictions. The original contribution of this thesis comes from the conclusions it draws and the recommendations it makes.

By Nicola Zoumidou

Part-time PhD Candidate, Law School, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow.

1. The Law Society of England and Wales, “International Women’s Day: Women-Owned Law Firms Flourishing,” *Www.lawsociety.org.uk*, 2017, http://www.lawsociety.org.uk/news/press-releases/international-womens-day-women-owned-law-firms-flourishing/. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid. p.8; and Moira Macmillan, Angus Mcfadyen, and Nick McKerrel, “Women in the Legal Profession in Scotland,” *Society*, 2005. p.18 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The Law Society of England and Wales, “Private Practice Solicitors ’ Salaries PC Holder Survey 2015,” 2016. p.3; and The Law Society of Scotland, “Equality and Diversity Strategy 2014-2017,” 2014. p.35. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Savita Kumra and Susan Vinnicombe, “A Study of the Promotion to Partner Process in a Professional Services Firm: How Women Are Disadvantaged,” *British Journal of Management* 19, no. s1 (March 2008): S65–74, [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The Law Society of England and Wales, “Career Barriers Action Plan 2013” (London, 2013). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ivana Bacik and Eileen Drew, “Struggling with Juggling: Gender and Work/life Balance in the Legal Professions,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 29 (2006): 136–46,. p.140 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Using Care Ethics theories by Carol Gilligan, Nel Noddings, Sara Ruddick, Eva Feder Kittay, Virginia Held, and Joan Tronto. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)