



IZA Press Statement – September 30, 2010

IZA Prize in Labor Economics goes to Francine D. Blau

German-based Institute for the Study of Labor honors Cornell economist

Francine D. Blau (Cornell University) has been selected as this year's recipient of the IZA Prize in Labor Economics. Worth 50,000 euros, the prestigious award recognizes Professor Blau's seminal contributions to the analysis of labor market inequality. She has written extensively on the role of women in the labor market and on gender differences in pay. Her work has profoundly shaped the view of scholars and policymakers on the causes and consequences of gender differences in economic outcomes, and on policies for advancing women's labor market position and well-being.

Pioneering the use of detailed micro-level data on the occupational level, Blau was able to assess the relative importance of potential causes for gender pay differentials, such as differences in qualifications between men and women, differences in the returns to skills, occupational segregation, and labor market discrimination. She has shown that the overall gender pay gap has decreased, but the remaining gap is no longer mainly explained by differences in qualifications and skills. Instead, labor market discrimination and the fact that women are still primarily responsible for childcare and housework duties lowers females' labor market attachment and limits their employment opportunities. A better integration of family and work is therefore one of the keys to achieving equity and efficiency in the labor market.

"Francine Blau's work is highly relevant for decision makers in politics and business because it shows that we need to significantly improve the labor market integration of women in order to meet the challenges of an aging labor force and growing skills shortages," said IZA Director Klaus F. Zimmermann.

Francine D. Blau is Frances Perkins Professor of Industrial and Labor Relations and Labor Economics at Cornell University. She is also a Research Associate of the National Bureau of Economic Research. She received her Ph.D. in Economics from Harvard University and served on the faculty at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, before coming to Cornell in 1994. She has helped promote the advancement of female academics, for example as Chair of the American Economic Association's Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession.

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The IZA Prize in Labor Economics is given annually by the Institute for Study of Labor, an international research institute and think tank based in Bonn, Germany. Awarded for outstanding contributions to the advancement of labor economics, the IZA Prize is considered the most important international science award in its field. Francine Blau is the first woman to receive the prize. The award ceremony will be held during the annual meeting of the Allied Social Science Associations in Denver, Colorado, on January 8, 2011. A collection of Professor Blau's key research findings is forthcoming in the IZA Prize Book Series published by Oxford University Press.