

Discussion of

“The Unintended Consequences of #MeToo: Evidence from Research Collaborations”

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Research Question

- 1 Did the #MeToo movement result in fewer collaborations between senior male (SM) and junior female (JF) economists?

Background

- The #MeToo movement attempted to solve the collective action problem of reporting sexual harassment
 - ▶ Creates social/public pressure to take allegations seriously
- Ambiguous welfare effects:
 - ▶ Presumably discourages harassment
 - ▶ May discourage beneficial interactions

This Paper

- Wisely takes a very narrow focus:
 - ▶ Do potentially beneficial interactions decrease for affected groups? (JF-SM coauthorships)
- If not, we shouldn't worry too much about unintended consequences
- If so, welfare effects are ambiguous
 - ▶ Exploitative coauthorships may be the ones being lost
 - ▶ Mutually beneficial coauthorships may be lost

Relevance

- Academic economic research is characterized by self-directed, mutually agree-upon coauthorships
 - ▶ Unlike EG hard science laboratories
- Potentially relevant for business, political, other professional settings
- Academic work has the advantage of being publicly-observable

Data

- Top 100 US departments
- Scraped CVs (and conference websites) for publication, individual economist details
- Comparable to other papers researching academic economics

Event Studies

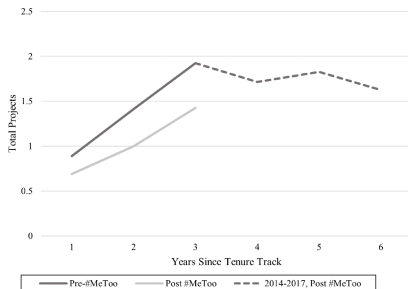


Figure 1: junior female academics.

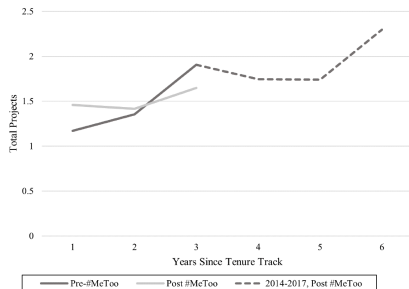


Figure A5: junior male academics.

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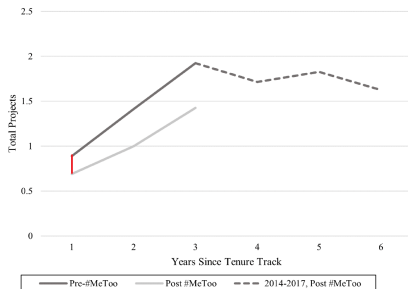


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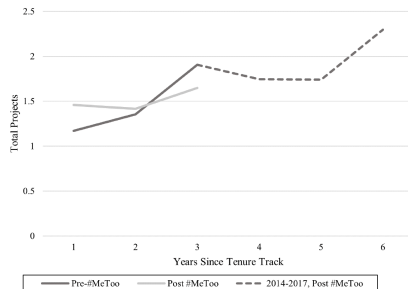


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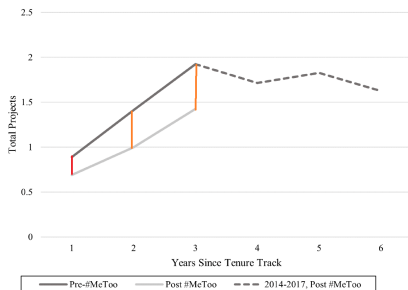


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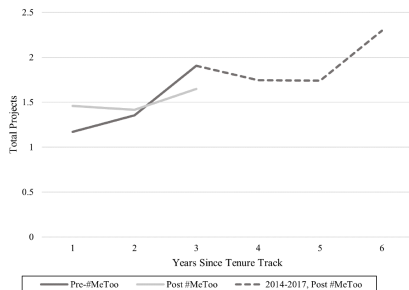


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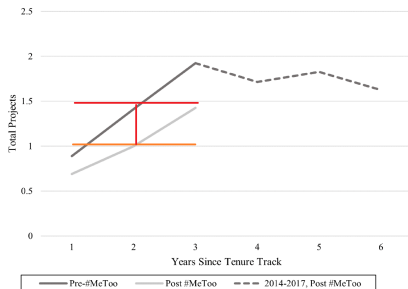


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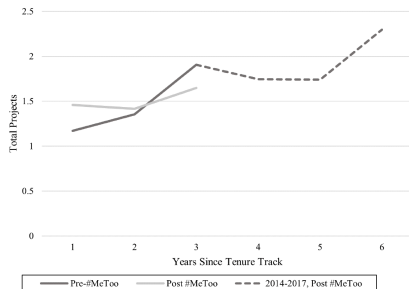


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Event Studies

- Despite potential average differences across cohorts, the difference is already striking
- Argument against cohort effects: the post #MeToo group (shorter cohort) has already been hired by the time #MeToo happens (ruling out changes in selection of female candidates following #MeToo)

Estimator

- Control for individual fixed effects (I will represent these as cohort effects on the graph)
- Semiparametric controls for experience (years since tenure track fixed effects)

Estimator

$$N_{it} = \alpha + \beta_1 Post_t + A_i + \beta_3 C_{it} + \epsilon_{it}$$

- $N_{it} \equiv$ number of new papers by i in year t
- $Post_t \equiv$ indicator for 2018 or later (#MeToo era)
- $A_i \equiv$ individual fixed effects
- $C_{it} \equiv$ observables, including experience

Estimator

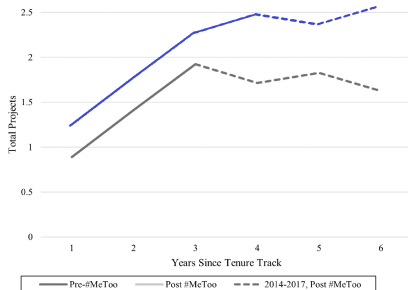


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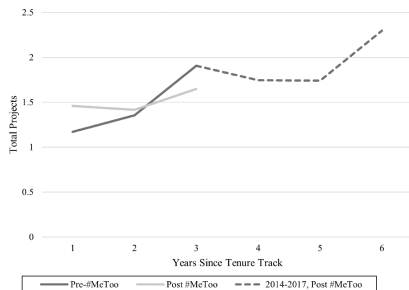


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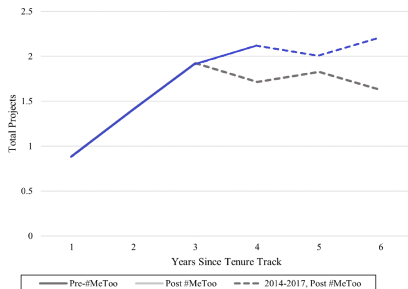


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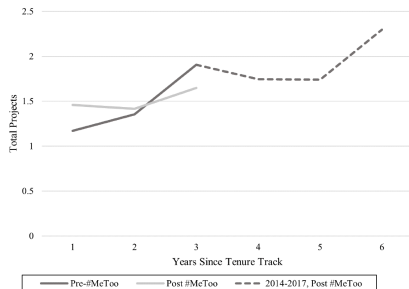


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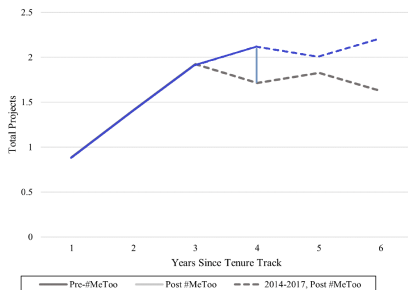


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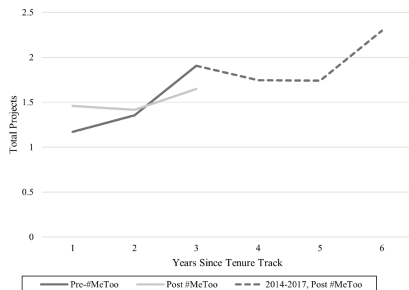


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Estimator

- This provides a very convincing estimate of #MeToo's effects
- There are other potentially interesting comparisons to make

Event Studies

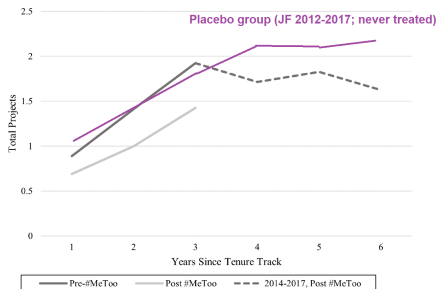


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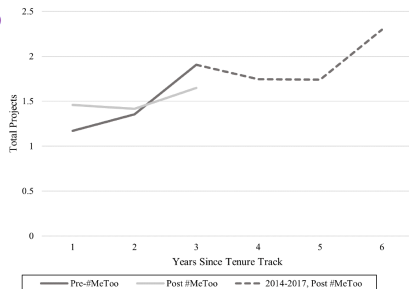


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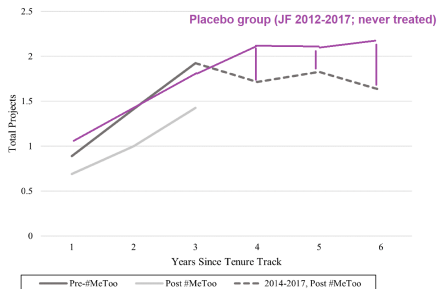


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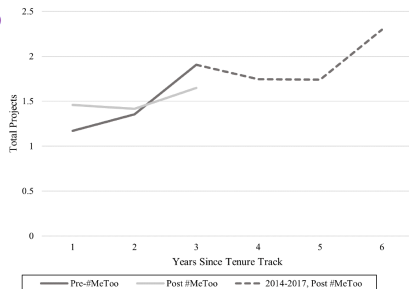


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What about men?

- Are JMs taking the coauthorships that JFs are losing/forfeiting?
- JMs are not quite a placebo group; they potentially stand to benefit

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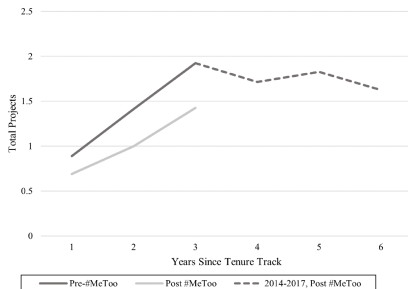


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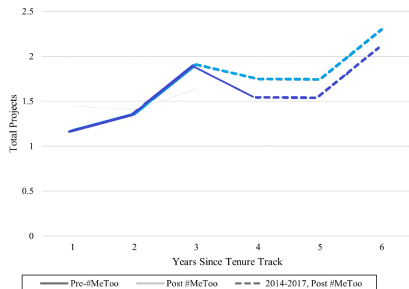


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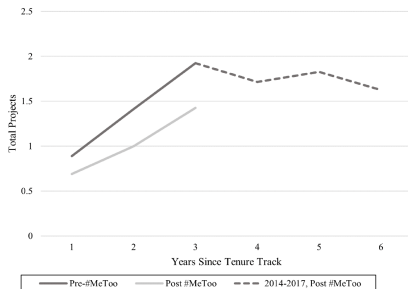


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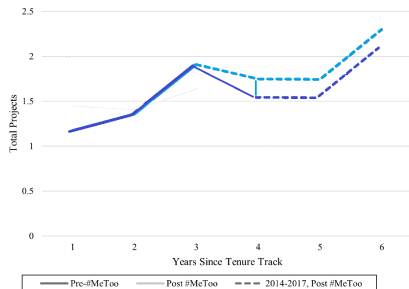


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Placebo group

- Raw effects are small, but men work more with men after #MeToo
- Could scale by relative size of JMs to JFs in department
- I see suggestive evidence that substitution is significant

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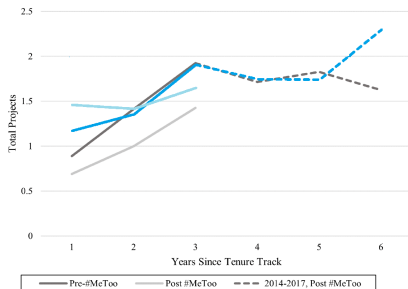


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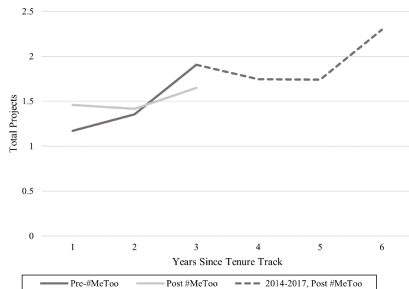


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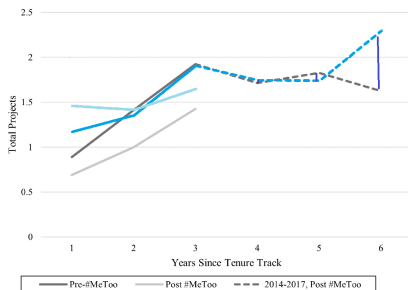


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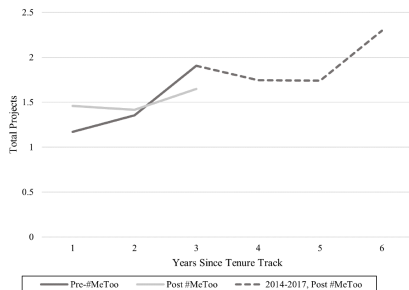


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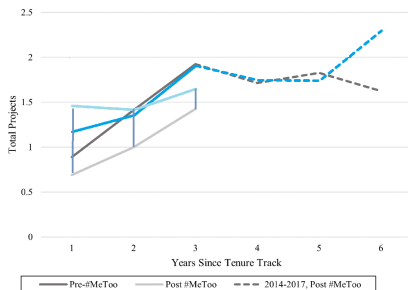


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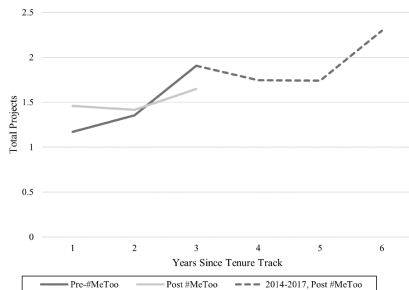


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JM vs JF matching

- This could be extended into a two-way discrete choice matching analysis (Choo & Siow 2006)
- This would recover total match value to SM-JF, SM-JM matches (as well as other combinations)
- To identify who is withdrawing from SM-JF interactions would require observing transfers (Salanie 2015, Larson 2020)
 - ▶ This would speak to welfare implications: if JFs are withdrawing, it is presumably due to preference/information shifts; if SMs are withdrawing, could be due to fear of accusations
 - ▶ Not realistic in the academic economics setting

Harassment policies in universities

- Less-ambiguous harassment policies in universities (interacted with incidents at the university) mitigate the negative effect of SM-JF collaborations
- This doesn't identify whether SMs or JFs are withdrawing, but has clear policy implications

New vs existing & inside vs outside coauthors

- Among inside-institution coauthor relationships, new ones are being lost; existing ones are not decreasing
- Among outside-institution coauthorships, new ones are not decreasing, but existing ones are disappearing
- This is surprising to me

Conclusion

- Very interesting paper on a timely subject