The Mommy Effect: The Impact of Parenthood on Employment and Gender-Role Attitudes

In many models of human capital investment, occupational choice and dynamic labor supply and savings, individuals are typically assumed to take into account expectations of future labor force attachment. Perhaps the most salient constraint on labor force attachment is motherhood. We find evidence that women do not fully anticipate the effect of motherhood. In an event-time framework using panel data from the UK, we replicate the large, negative effects of motherhood on labor supply but also show that the birth of a first child makes women significantly more conservative on questions relating to gender roles (e.g., “family life suffers if mother works”). The effect exhibits little to no pre-trend and shows no evidence of fadeout, suggesting that the effects of motherhood on gender-related attitudes are unexpected and long-lasting. While women in the UK are generally accurate at predicting whether they will work the following year, once they have children they systematically over-estimate the probability they will continue to work. Using repeated cross-sectional data from the US, we show that female high school seniors have been increasingly under-estimating the probability they will be home-makers by age thirty.

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Chaired by: Prof Jean Yeung Wei-Jun, Director of CFPR
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All are Welcome! Refreshments will be served. Registration is required.
Register at https://tinyurl.com/yb3ggmm5 by 24 August 2017