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Abstract

How did #MeToo alter the cost of collaboration between women and men?

I study research collaborations involving junior female academic economists and show they start fewer new research projects after #MeToo. The decline is driven largely by fewer collaborations with new male co-authors at the same institution. I show that the drop in collaborations is concentrated in universities where the perceived risk of sexual harassment accusations for men is high -- that is, when both sexual harassment policies are more ambiguous exposing men to a larger variety of claims and the number of public sexual harassment incidents is high. The results suggest that the social movement is associated with increased cost of collaboration that disadvantaged the career opportunities of women.

Motivation

- Collaboration is crucial for production of output^{1,2}
- Collaboration requires social interaction which has a cost
- Gender gap in career outcomes is attributed to differences in collaborations and networks^{3,4,5}

Events which change costs of collaboration particularly important for women

The #MeToo Movement (October 2017)

- Creation of awareness for sexual harassment in the workplace
- Encourage victims to come forward – offer public arena and support
- Aim to enforce punishment of perpetrators
- Anecdotal and survey evidence that men are concerned about sexual harassment accusations

Setting: Academia (Economics)

Research projects of junior academics in economics:

- Collaborations are vital for productivity and success but are formed voluntarily
- Relevant: pressure to produce research output to get tenure
- Measurable: publicly disclosed and updated in CV
- Nature of interaction in academia is prone to ambiguous social situations

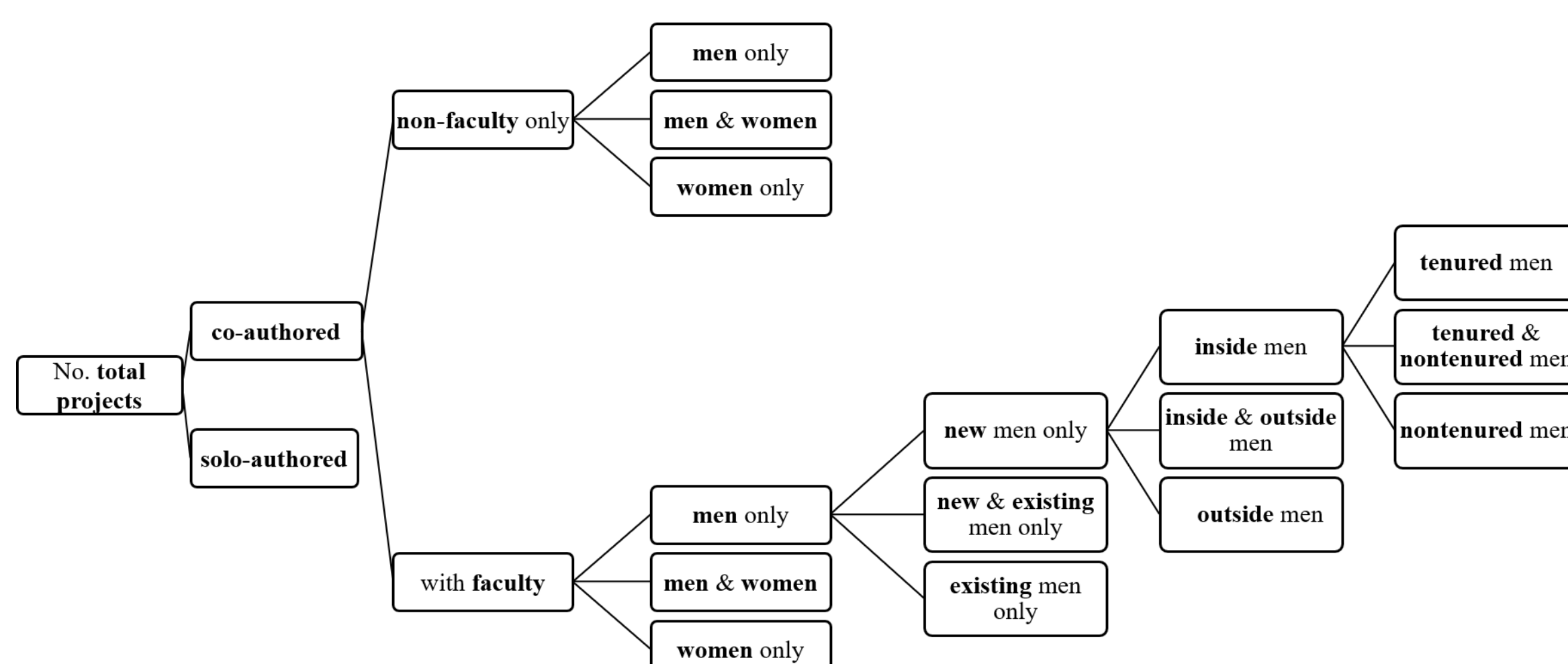
Academic careers are dependent on collaborations and social interaction

Data and Estimation

Analysis of composition of coauthors on **research project initiations** of **junior female academics** pre (2015-2017) and **post (2018-2020) #MeToo**

- Sample: all junior women at the top 100 U.S. economics departments who obtained their Ph.D. as of 2014 and were on a tenure-track in 2017
- Research project initiation: first public record of a paper in historical CVs, seminars, conferences
- N=83 junior female academics; 393 women-university-year observations

Fig 1: Decomposing each project into a non-overlapping combination of collaborators



Estimation (OLS):

- # collaborations of combination $x = \alpha_{ct} + \beta_1 Post_t + \beta_2 A_{iu} + \beta_3 C_{iu,t} + \epsilon_{iu,t}$
- Controls: individual FEs, # years since tenure-track start, network size, department composition

Did #MeToo Affect Collaborations?

Junior female academics start 0.7 fewer projects per year post #MeToo

- Fewer collaborations with men account for 60% of the decline
- Largest driver are fewer collaborations with new male coauthors at the same university (29%)
- No increase in the number of projects with other coauthor groups (e.g., women)
- Junior men don't experience an output decline and start more projects with men

Fig 2: Women start fewer new projects post #MeToo largely due to fewer new collaborations with men

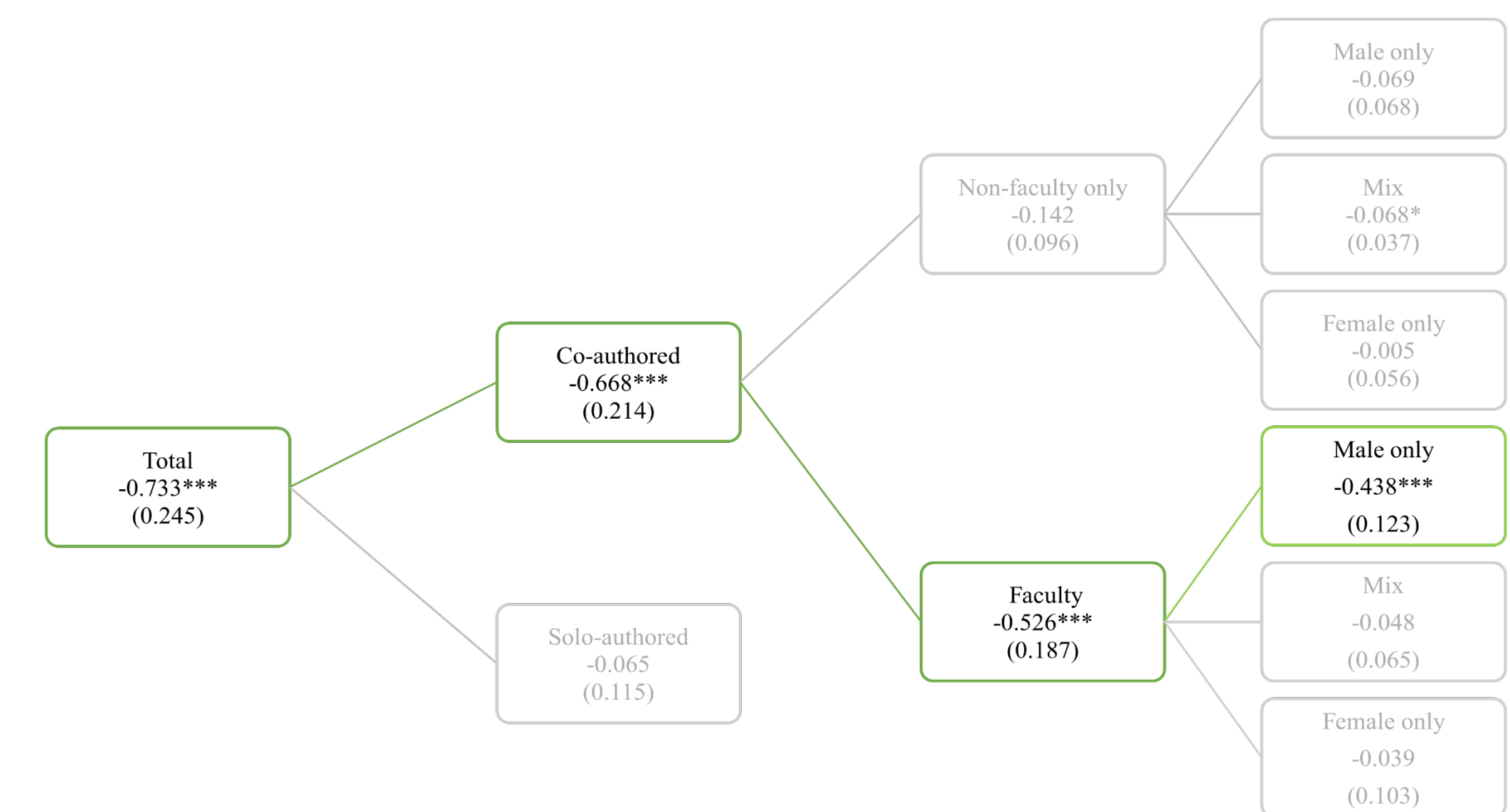
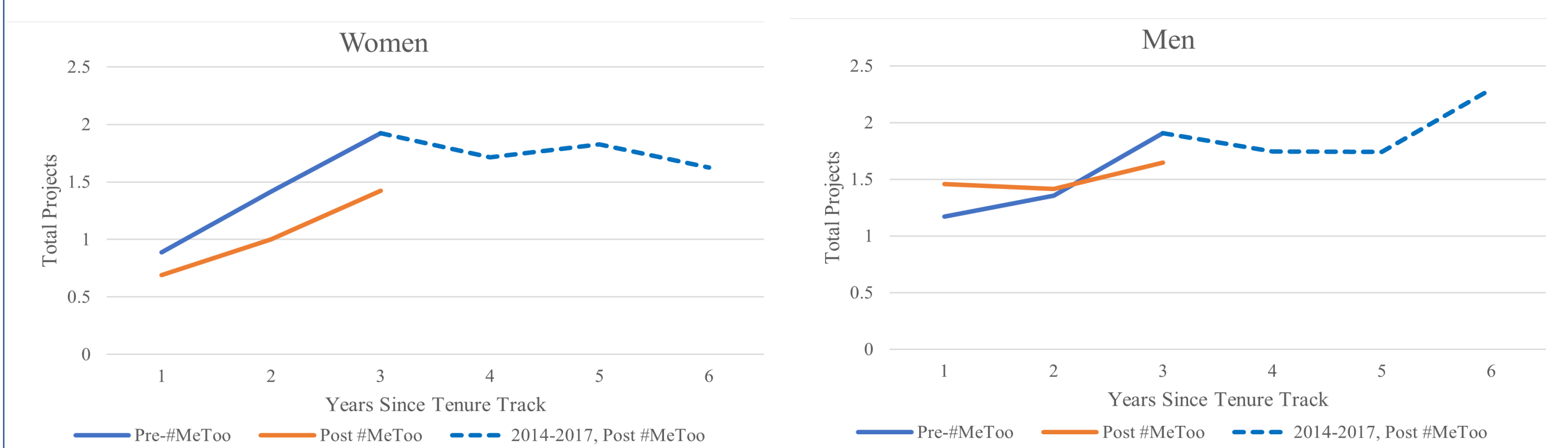


Fig 3: Women's productivity falls behind from the growth trend post #MeToo, men's doesn't



Are Women or Men Backing Off?

- #MeToo increased public pressure for institutions to side with accusers
- Decisions about employment continuation made through internal investigations
- A higher perceived risk of sexual harassment accusations when:
 - **University sexual harassment policies** are not specific about which behaviors are considered a violation
 - The probability of **reporting** appears high
- Women's choice to work with men should not be affected by policy clarity
- Relate # examples of prohibited behaviors in policy (**policy clarity**) & # public sexual harassment incidents (**reporting environment**) to # of collaborations between women and men at the same university

Fig 4: Clearer sexual harassment policies mitigate the decline in collaborations between men and women when perceived reporting risk is high

Variables	
Post	-0.053 (0.174)
Post x Log No. incidents (cum.)	-0.325* (0.167)
Post x Log No. behavior examples in policy	-0.052 (0.048)
Post x Log No. incidents (cum.) x Log No. behavior examples in policy examples	0.100** (0.046)
Time-variant controls and FEs	Yes
Observations	393
R-squared	0.275

Conclusions

- #MeToo negatively impacted on collaborations between men and women
- Women (but not men) lose productivity due to fewer collaborations with men
- Clear sexual harassment policies can mitigate the negative effect of #MeToo on collaborations

#MeToo was important to raise awareness. But the intent was not to impose costs on women's careers. #MeToo plus clear policies could create awareness for sexual harassment without hurting women's productivity.

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