

Centre For Health Economics Seminar Series 2016

DO SIGNIFICANT LIFE EVENTS CHANGE WHO DOES THE LAUNDRY? SHOCKS, CHORE ALLOCATION, POWER AND SATISFACTION IN AUSTRALIAN HOUSEHOLDS

Presenter: Associate Professor Gigi Foster, UNSW
Date: Wednesday 27 July 2016
Time: 12.00pm -1.00pm
Venue: RB Scotton Room
Centre for Health Economics



Abstract:

In this paper, we ask whether and how men and women in mixed-gender unions change their allocation of time to housework in response to labour market shocks. Such shocks alter power dynamics within the household, as well as labour force commitments. Using Australian panel data on married and de facto mixed-gender couples, we look for evidence of such adjustments in the face of both own and partner shocks. We use labour market shocks that we argue are reasonably exogenous to housework time allocations to identify separately those changes in housework time allocation that are due to changes in paid work time, and those that are due to changes in gender power relations. We find that of all the types of shocks we examine, female promotion is the strongest predictor of housework time allocation adjustments, both for the whole household and for promoted women themselves. This effect is observed even controlling for her hours in the labour market, indicating a power-relations channel, but is far weaker in dual-earner households. We present supporting evidence about heterogeneity in effects by education levels, and about the outsourcing of housework tasks. Finally, in our most robust results, we show that a woman's satisfaction with the way in which housework is allocated within the partnership responds strongly to whether her partner is performing more or less housework than would be predicted from our model of housework time. This indicates a strong relevance of social norms in driving women's satisfaction with intra-household bargaining decisions around the allocation of housework.

Authors: Gigi Foster and Leslie Stratton

Presenter:

Gigi Foster is an Associate Professor with the School of Economics at the University of New South Wales, having received her BA from Yale, majoring in Ethics, Politics, and Economics, and her PhD in Economics from the University of Maryland. Her research interests and contributions lie in the areas of education, social influence, behavioural economics, and the multi-disciplinary analysis of human behaviour in groups. Much of her published work focuses on aspects of decisions related to human capital investment and social influence. Dr Foster's research has been supported by the Australian Research Council, the University of New South Wales, the University of South Australia, the University of Maryland, and the Spencer Foundation. She has published with Cambridge University Press (*An Economic Theory of Greed, Love, Groups, and Networks* (CUP 2013) with Paul Frijters) and in a variety of leading economic and multidisciplinary journals such as *Journal of Public Economics*, *Quantitative Economics*, *Human Relations*, and *Journal of Economic Psychology*.

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