

Changing Work and Work-Family Conflict: Experimental Evidence from the Work, Family, and Health Network

Work-family conflict is common and consequential and scholars and advocates have long called for organizational changes to address these strains. We designed a group-randomized trial in which some units in the information technology (IT) division of a Fortune 500 firm were randomly assigned to participate in an initiative, called STAR, that targeted work practices, interactions, and expectations by (a) training supervisors on the value of demonstrating support for employees' personal lives and (b) prompting employees to reconsider when, where, and how they work. We find statistically significant, though modest, improvements in employees' work-family conflict and family time adequacy and larger changes in employees' control over their schedules and supervisor support for family and personal life. We find no evidence that this intervention increased work hours or perceived job demands, as might have happened with increased permeability of work across time and space in a salaried professional workforce. Subgroup analyses suggest the intervention brings greater benefits to employees more vulnerable to work-family conflict. This study utilizes a rigorous design to assess the impact of social structures on individual lives and to suggest how we might reorganize work to advance both business goals and employee wellbeing.

Erin L. Kelly

**Sociology & Minnesota Population Center
University of Minnesota**

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Time: 12:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Location: HSH 201

Refreshments will be provided.