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# GLOBAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

# OVERLOAD AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT

.....  
**Erin Kelly**, Sloan Distinguished Professor of Work and Organizational Studies, MIT Sloan School of Management

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OVERLOAD

**HOW GOOD JOBS WENT BAD  
AND WHAT WE CAN DO ABOUT IT**

**Erin L. Kelly and Phyllis Moen**



**Forthcoming March 2020, Princeton University Press**

# An Interdisciplinary Network

## Supporting Partners

The Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health & Human Development (NICHD)  
Rosalind Berkowitz King, Project Scientist  
U01 HD051256

Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC)/  
National Institute for Occupational Safety & Health (NIOSH)

National Institute on Aging

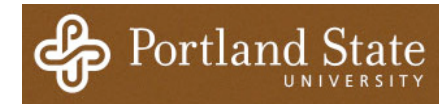
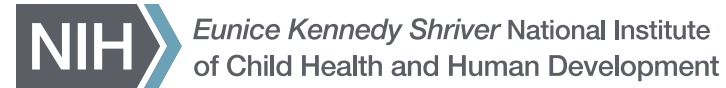
Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR)

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI)

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Thanks to the Minnesota Population Center (R24 HD041023), U of M College of Liberal Arts, MIT Sloan, CultureRx, and especially the study participants.

[www.workfamilyhealthnetwork.org](http://www.workfamilyhealthnetwork.org)



# Primary Setting for Our Study

- IT Division of a Fortune 500 firm we call TOMO
  - Not tech elite or Silicon Vally
- All jobs in development process
  - Highly educated, highly paid
  - U.S. employees eligible to participate
  
- 38% women IT employees
- 34% women IT managers



# Argument in Brief

- Work as it is currently configured isn't sustainable.
  - Professional and managerial jobs are more intense, less secure.
  - Break people, break organizations, or both.
- The root problem is not (only or primarily) work-family balance. And a work-family framing is risky, as well as inaccurate.
- But organizational changes are possible. **Dual Agenda Work Redesign** benefits employees & organizations.



# UNDERSTANDING THE **PROBLEM**



# Life at TOMO → Overload

- **Four Work Practices that Contribute:**
  - Long hours
  - “Always on” availability
  - Multi-tasking, split attention
  - But “face time” still expected, valued
- ★ **Overload: Too Much to Do with Too Few Resources**





# Life at TOMO → Overload

- **Why did they put up with overload, high demands?**
- **Increasingly insecure work environment:**
  - Downsizing routine → greater work loads
  - Off-shore labor strategy → new tasks
  - Risky to push back or raise concerns about timelines, workload





# “Given the way things are today, how do you feel?” – Overload vs. Work-Life Conflicts



# Costs of Current Situation

- **Firm's recognized concerns:**
  - Burnout
  - Retention
  - Recruitment (particularly of younger workers)
- **Less recognized costs:**
  - Rewarding wrong things?
  - Inefficiencies in daily work – distractions, meetings
  - Inefficiencies tied to global staffing strategy – those with great technical skills aren't doing that work because busy with training, prepping, monitoring offshore work
  - Productivity losses due to fatigue, health concerns
  - Missed deadlines, lower quality, vicious cycles



# POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

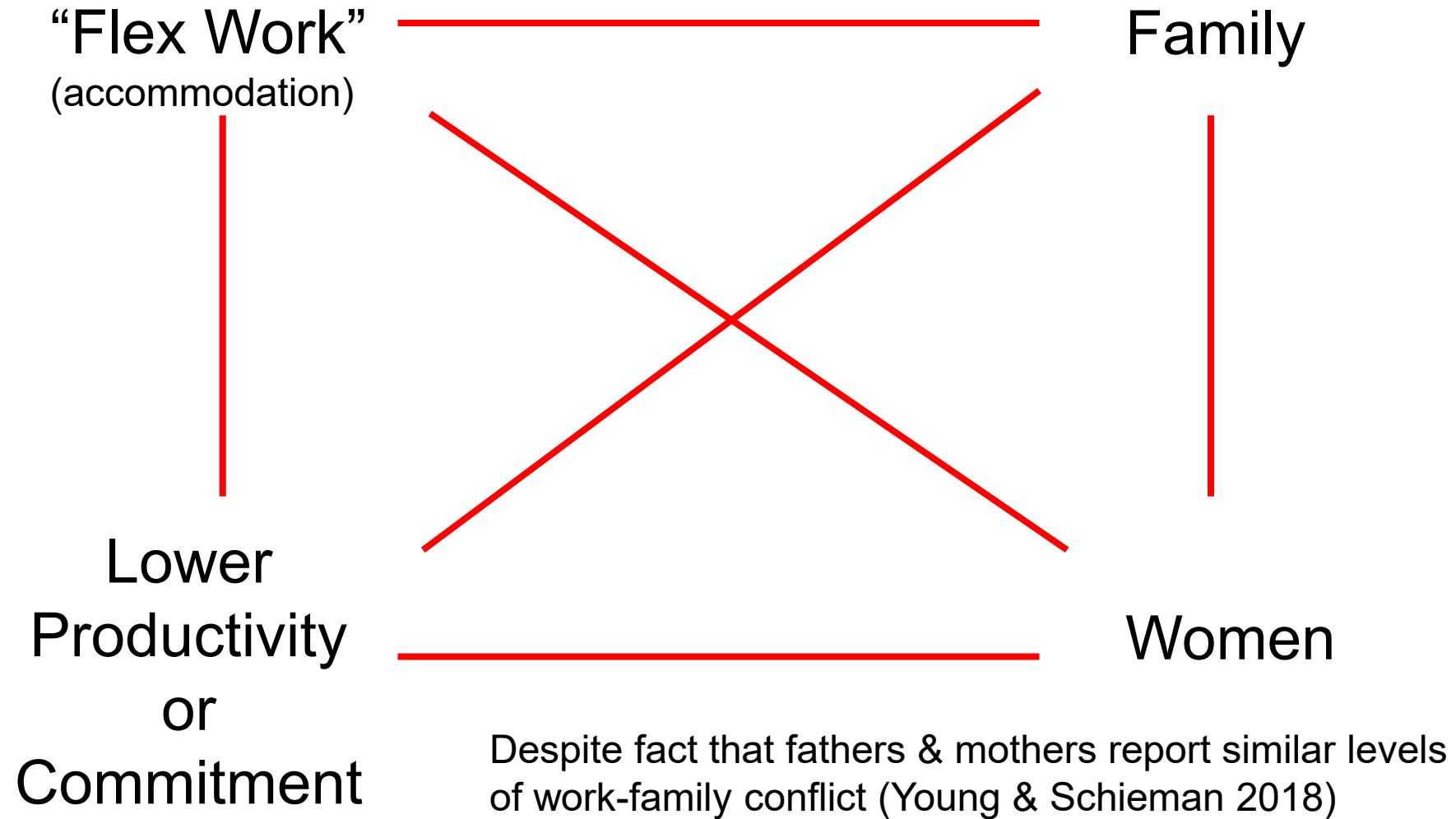


# A Problematic Approach to Flexibility: Flexible Work as an “Accommodation”

- Official policy allowing flexible schedule, regular telecommuting
- Individually negotiated + manager discretion
  - “Mother, May I?”
  - “Lucky” manager or resentful if manager doesn’t allow
- *Other research:* Flex stigma and fear of negative career consequences
  - Many employees (especially men) will not pursue
  - Can reinforce gender inequality



# Powerful Cultural Associations



# STAR at TOMO: A Work Redesign Approach

- **What?** Work groups reconsider when, where, and how work is done.  
*Collective process vs.  
individual accommodation  
(or unexamined intensification of work)*
- **Why?** Need to make work more effective, efficient, *and* sustainable for all employees.  
*Broadly framed interests vs.  
family needs or women's struggles*





# STAR at TOMO: A Work Redesign Approach

- **How?**

## **Manager training (4 hours):**

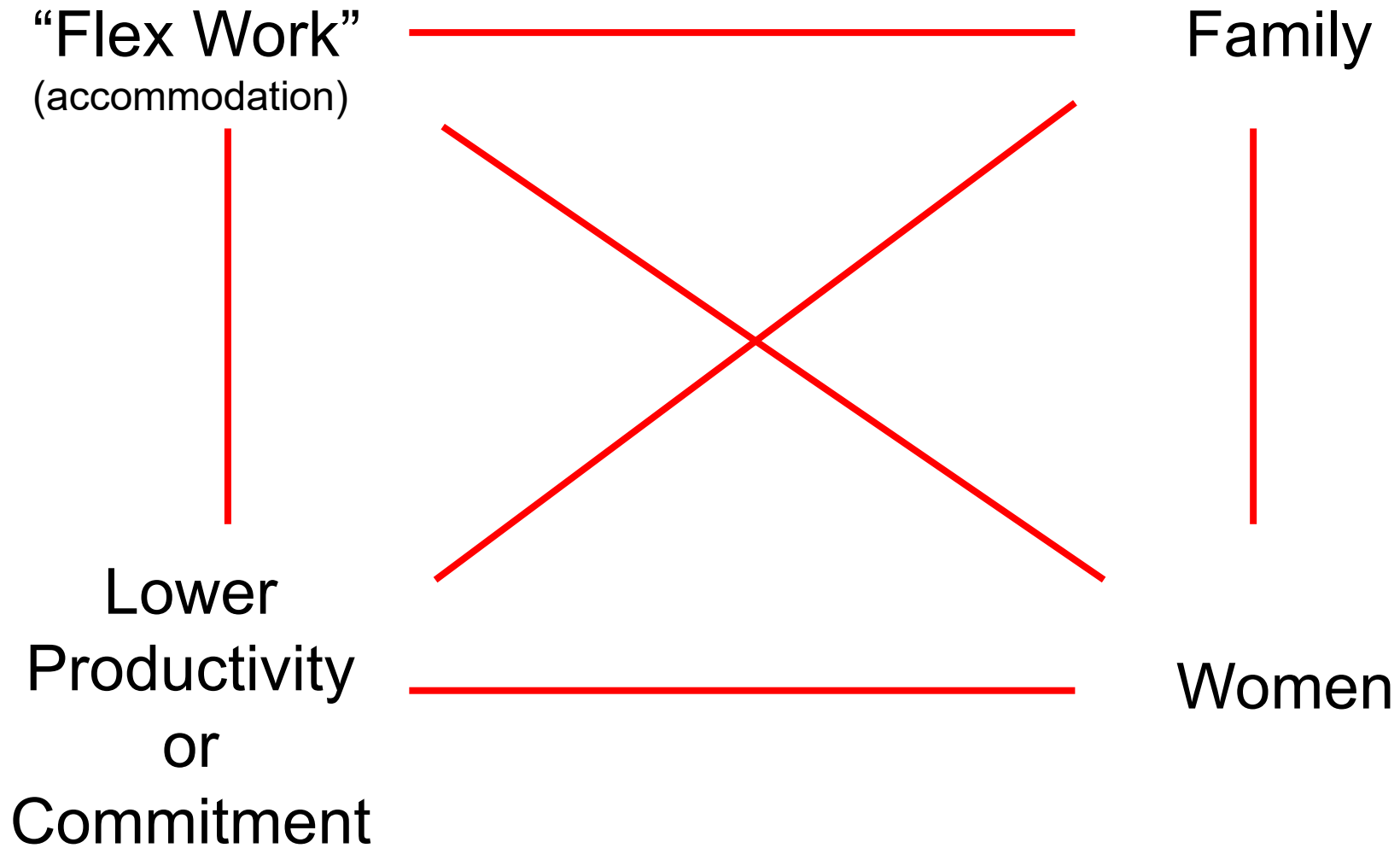
- Behaviors that demonstrate support for employees' professional and personal lives → Track over 2 weeks
- Executive support for change, peer coaching
- **Reinforce supporting employees as core to role**

## **Participatory workshops (8 hours):**

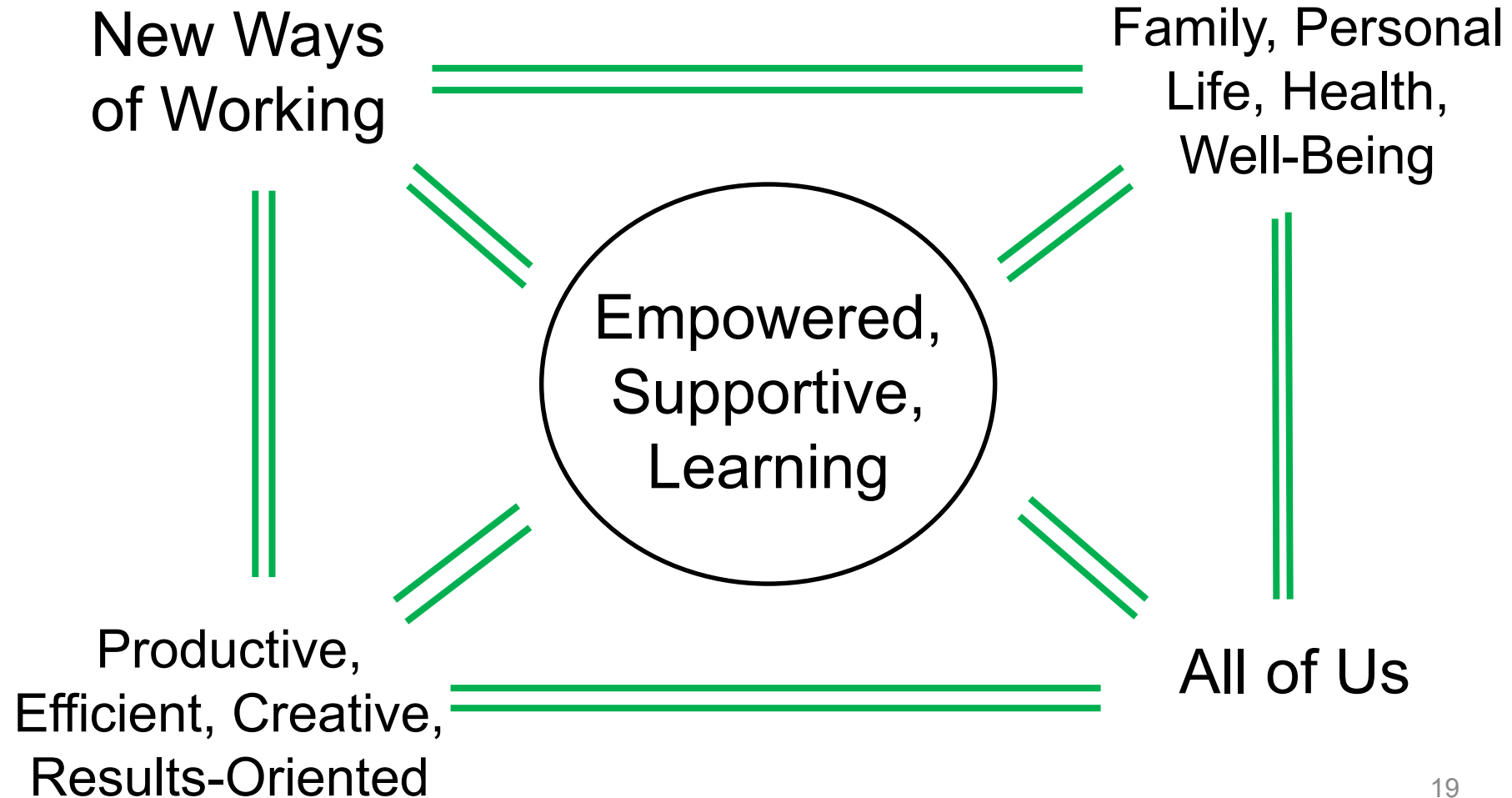
- Role plays & discussion about work time (hours, availability, schedules), work location, communicating and coordinating effectively as a team
- **Social change – new “rules of the game” within the organization and work group.**



# Powerful Cultural Associations



# Broaden Flex Practices & Create a New Normal



# STAR at TOMO: What Changes in the Work Redesign?

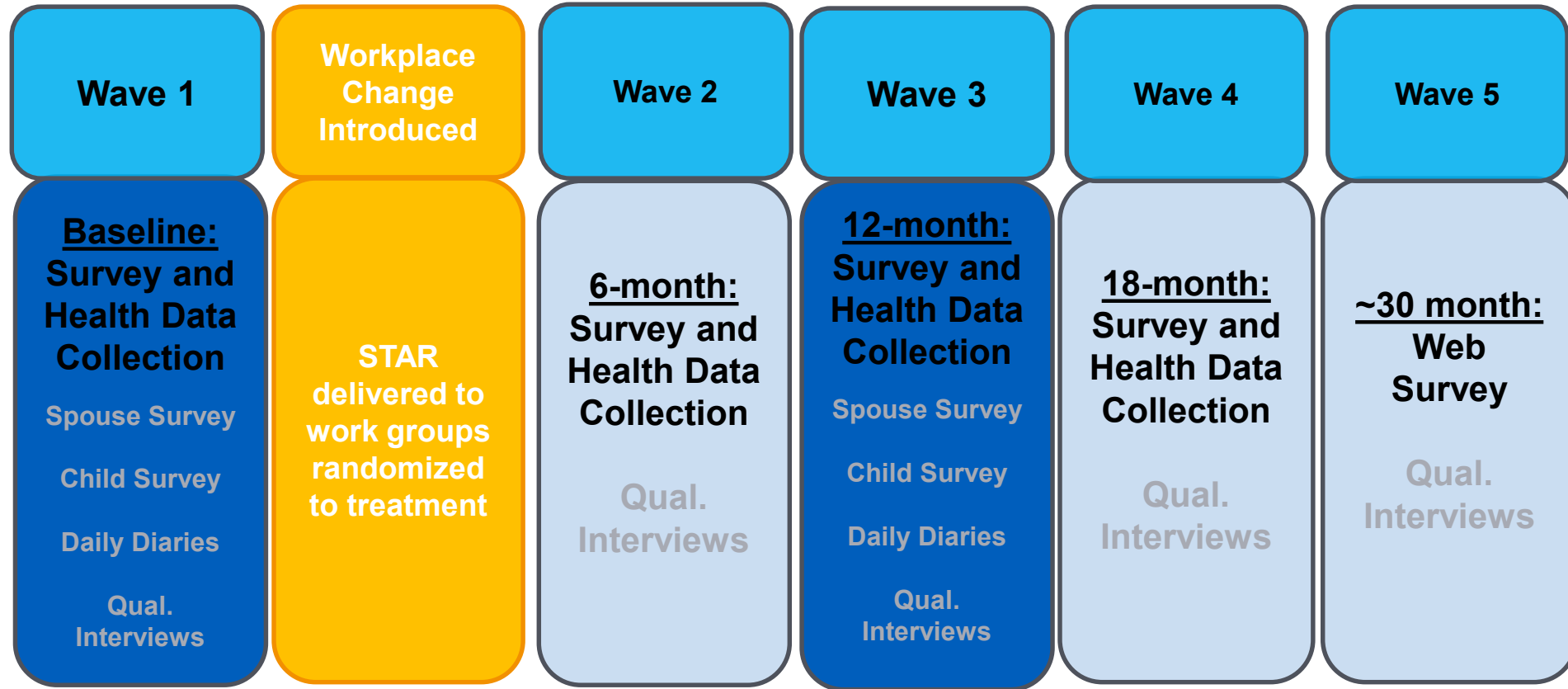
- Increased work at home
- Increased flexibility in schedule (both occasional adjustments and some shifts in regular hours)
- New coordination practices: Fewer meetings? Fewer attendees? New team dashboards?
- New communication practices: Off-line (no chat) blocks of time? Clarify escalation plans and urgency norms?
- Shift the culture so individuals decide when, where, and how to work, in consultation with their teams
  - **Shift in decision rights (control), supported by managers**



**DID IT WORK?**



# Study Design: Group Randomized Trial

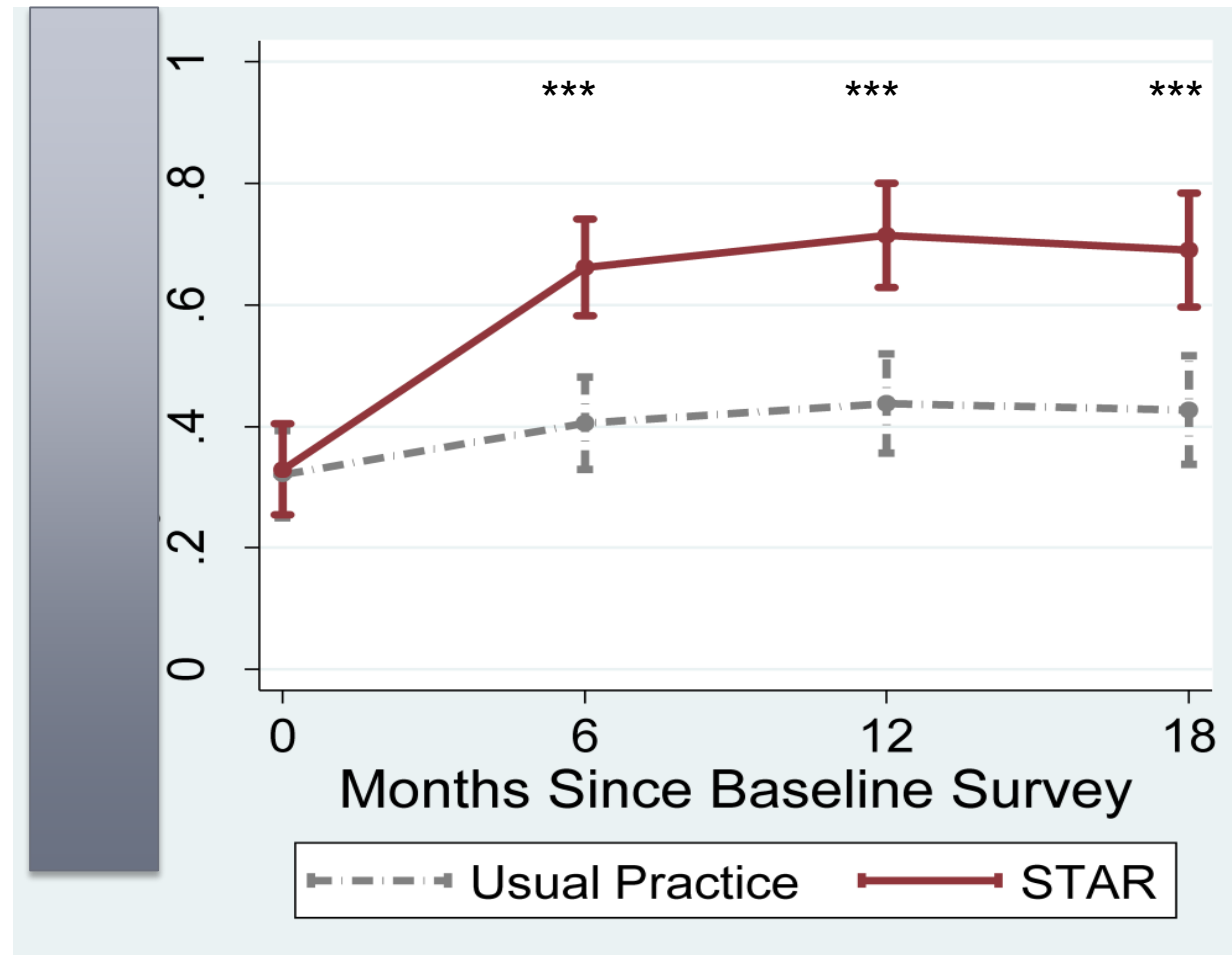


N at baseline: 1044 employees and managers, 78% response rate



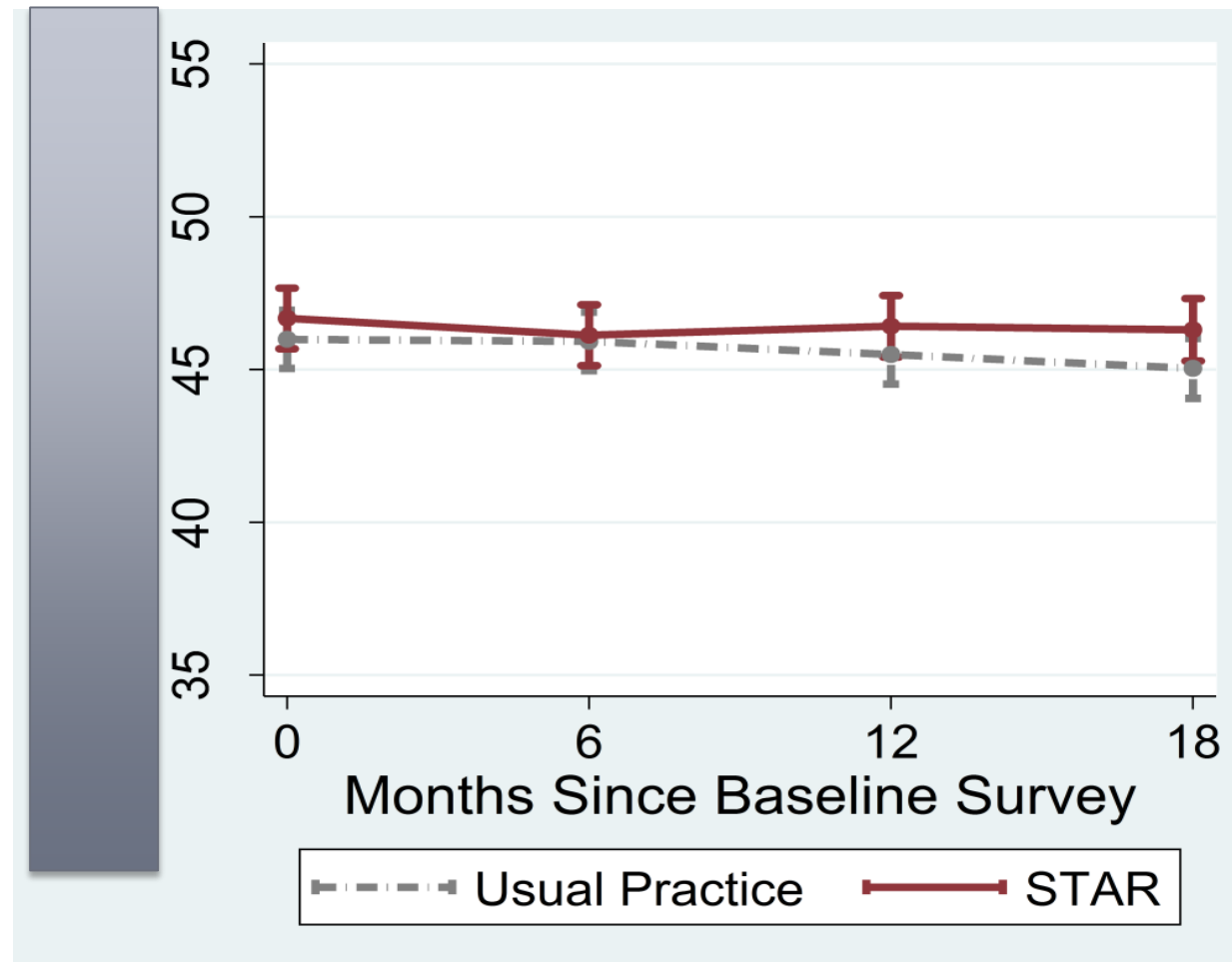
# Analytic Strategy

## STAR Increases [Sample Outcome 1]



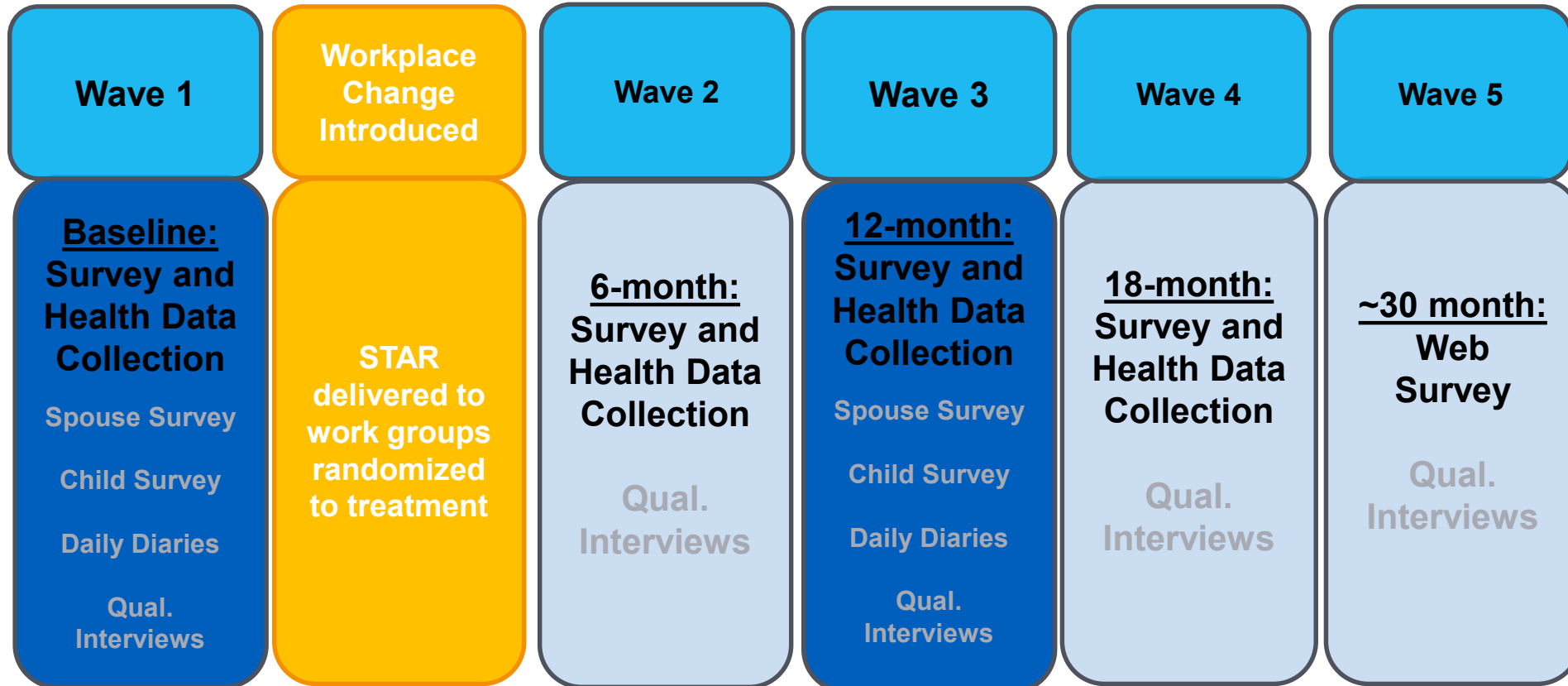
# Analytic Strategy

## STAR Has No Effect on [Sample Outcome 2]





# Study Design: Group Randomized Trial



**Merger Announcement**

**Merger Implementation**

N at baseline: 1044 employees and managers, 78% response rate 25



# Benefits for Employees and Managers

## ■ **More...**

- Control over when & where work
- Manager support for personal life
- Family time (time with teens, perceive “enough time” w/ family)
- Sleep (small increase in duration, better quality)
- Job satisfaction\*

## ■ **Less...**

- Work-life conflict
- Burnout\*
- Stress\*
- Psychological distress\*
- Cardiometabolic risk

\* indicates positive effects found for those who started STAR before the merger announcement.



# Benefits for Employees and Managers

- **More...**

- Control over when & where work
- Manager support for personal life
- Family time (time with teens, perceive “enough time” w/ family)
- Sleep (small increase in duration, better quality)
- Job satisfaction\*

- Teens: Healthier sleep patterns
- Teens: Better emotional health

- **Less...**

- Work-life conflict
- Burnout\*
- Stress\*
- Psychological distress\*
- Cardiometabolic risk

\* indicates positive effects found for those who started STAR before the merger announcement.

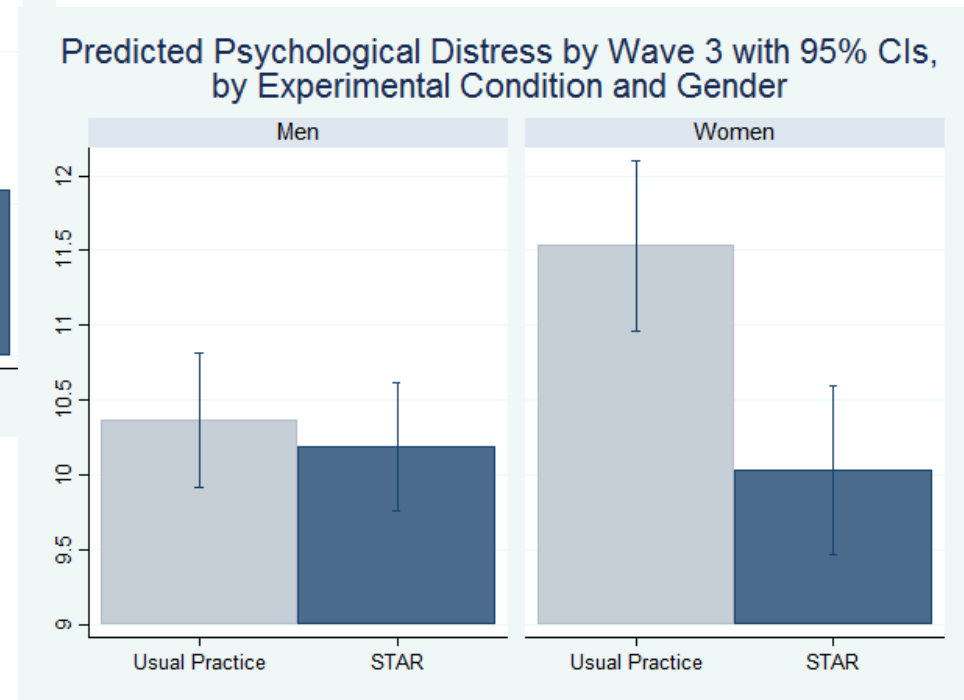
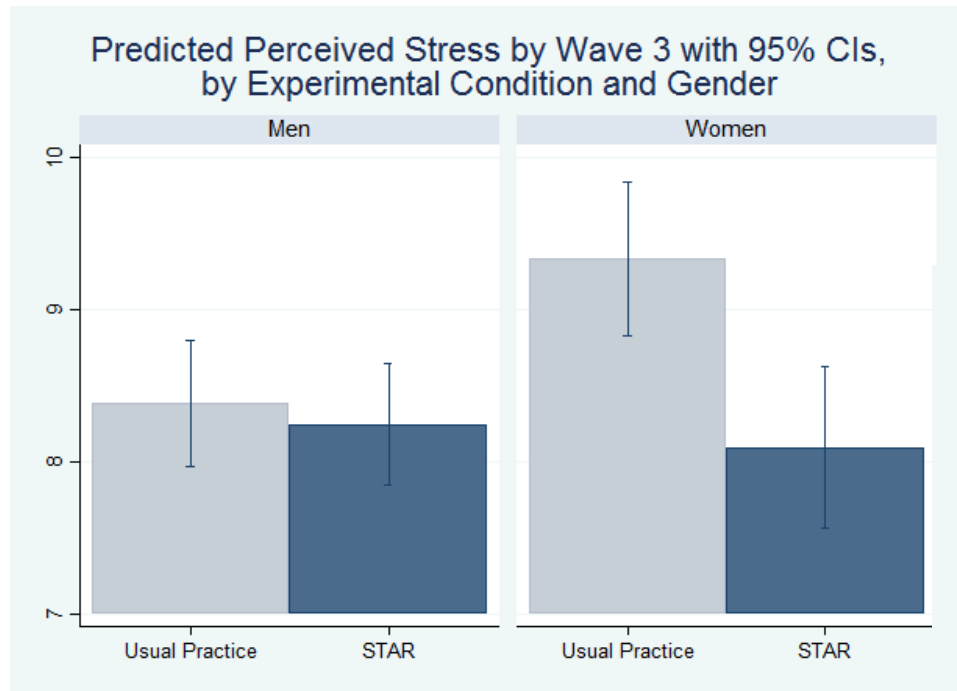


# Gender Differences?

- **Women in this sample working similar hours, work patterns**
- **But women report greater overload, stress, psychological distress**
  - True in many other studies, populations too
  - More willing to admit in a survey?
  - Greater workload (paid + unpaid)?
  - More worried about work affecting home life?
  - Less likely to have spouse who is not working
- **Most STAR effects are the same for women and men but...**



# STAR Impacts Women's Stress, Psychological Distress More



# Benefits for Organization

One story from Sherwin, a developer and dad:

I'm able to actually **stay more focused**...with the STAR program, it allows you to be able to **have more control** over it.

I'm constantly busy. **I stay busy. But I don't feel overwhelmed.** So that's huge."

From a year ago now [when STAR started], it's a **hundred percent less stress** on me than where I was even a year ago...\_I feel sad for people in other companies that still work in that [pre-STAR] environment.



# Benefits for Organization

- **Higher job satisfaction**
- **Less interest in leaving firm**
- **Fewer voluntary exits in 3 years after launch**
  - 7.6% of employees in STAR
  - 11.3% of employees in control group
  - Similar effects for women and men, across generations
- **ROI of ~ 1.6**



# Benefits for Organization

- Higher job satisfaction
- Less interest in leaving firm
- Fewer voluntary exits in 3 years after launch
  - 7.6% of employees in STAR
  - 11.3% of employees in control group
- ROI of ~ 1.6
- **Null effects on productivity:**
  - Hours worked, self-rated productivity
  - Internal metrics (note: mix of STAR and control employees involved in most products, applications)





# Summary

- **Overload is the underlying issue**
  - High demands and running lean +
  - Tech availability encourages 24/7 attention +
  - Insecurity (globalization, automation / AI)
- **Beyond a work-life framing to Dual Agenda Work Redesign**
  - Smart and sustainable ways of working
  - Countering pressure to be always-on and available requires a collective process
  - Consider changes in *when, where, & how* work is done and how performance is evaluated
- **Broad appeal and positive impact for employees and managers (all genders), their families, and the firm**



**WHAT CAN WE  
IMAGINE  
TOGETHER?**

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@\_elkelly

[www.workfamilyhealthnetwork.org](http://www.workfamilyhealthnetwork.org)



The background is a vibrant red color with a complex geometric pattern of overlapping squares and triangles. Some of these shapes contain a fine, dotted texture. Centered on this background is the MIT Management Sloan School logo in white. The logo consists of three lines of text: 'MIT' in a large, bold, sans-serif font; 'MANAGEMENT' in a slightly smaller, bold, sans-serif font; and 'SLOAN SCHOOL' in a smaller, all-caps, sans-serif font.

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# FIGHTING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN THE QUEST FOR AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

.....  
Moderator: **Renée Richardson Gosline**, Senior Lecturer & Research Scientist, MIT Sloan School of Management

**Anita D. Carleton, EMBA '18**, Software Solutions Division Director, Software Engineering Institute, Carnegie Mellon University

**Rebecca Kirk Fair, MBA '02**, Managing Principal, Analysis Group

**Vincenza Nigro, EMBA '12**, Global VP of Medical Affairs, Hansa Biopharma

**COGNITIVE BIAS**

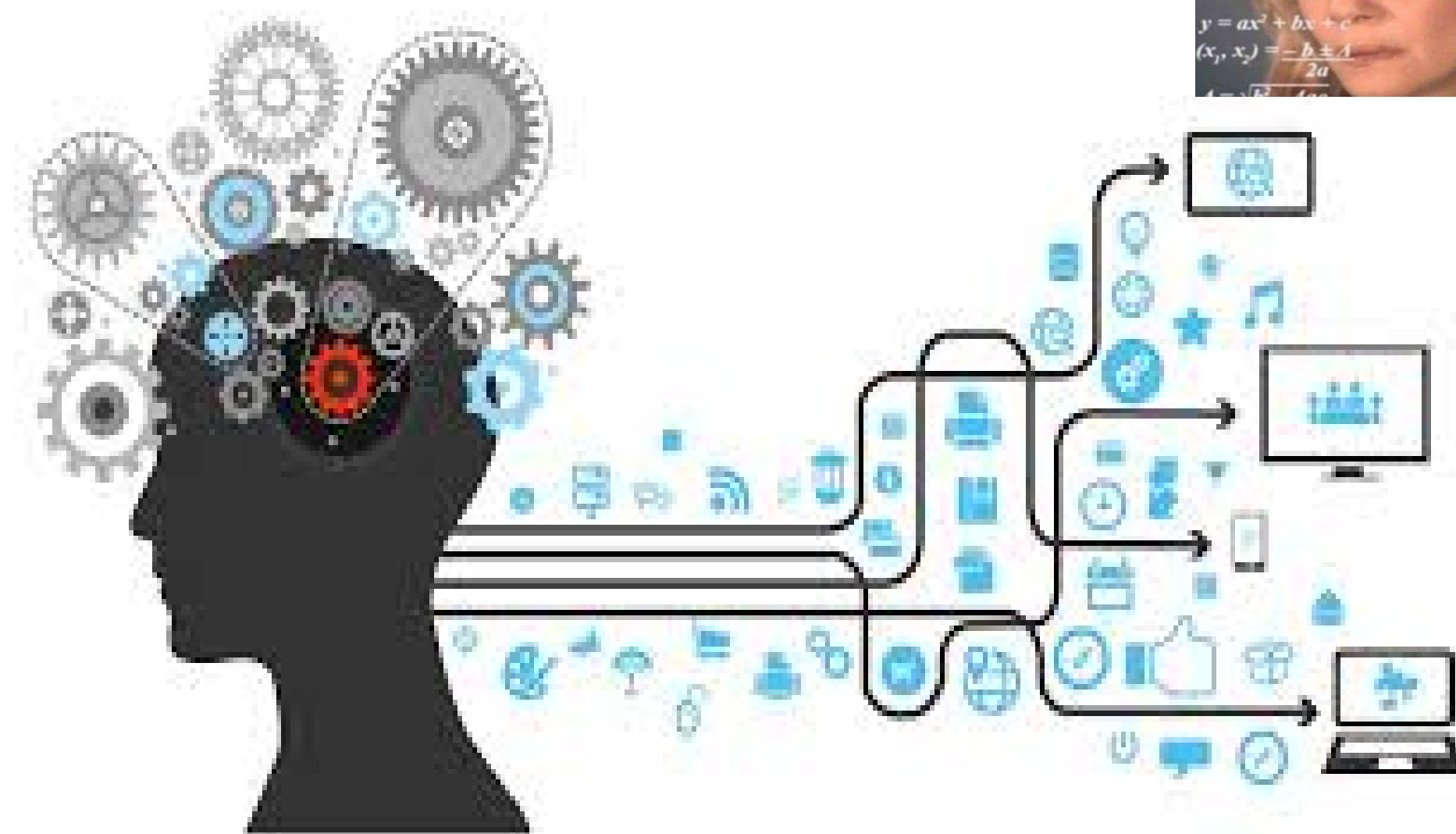
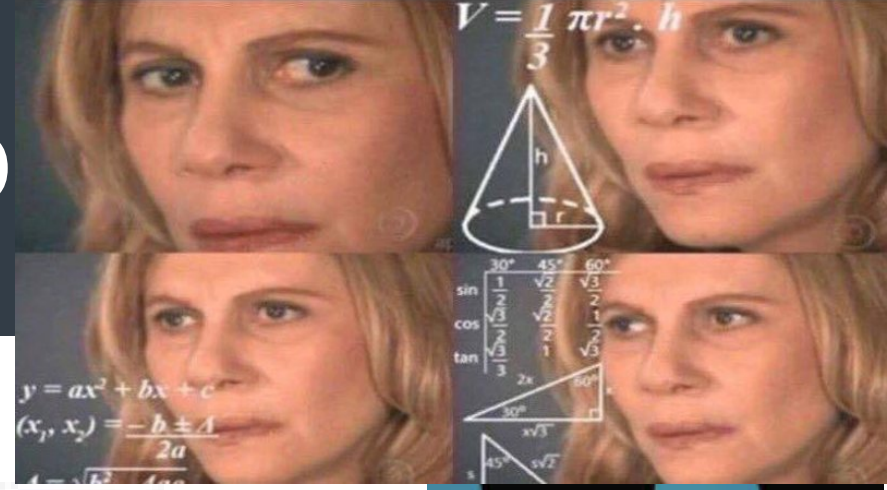
**&**

**AUTHENTICITY**

**&**

**EMPOWERMENT**

# 1. COGNITIVE BIAS & BEHAVIO



# COGNITIVE BIAS, GENDER & STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

- **Role Incongruence**
- **Confirmation Bias**
- **Bias Blind Spot**
- **Affinity Bias**

Portola Reporter  
1943



There just ain't no justice.

**Q: HOW DO WE COMBAT  
UNCONSCIOUS BIAS  
TO CHANGE THE WAY  
OTHERS VIEW US...**

**AND THE WAY WE VIEW  
OURSELVES?**



## 2. AUTHENTICITY



**Christiana Amarachi Mbakwe**  
@Christiana1987

If you work with a black woman it's likely she's censoring herself most of the day. Everything from her hair, attire, tone of voice, hand gestures, accent etc is being internally policed. Most of us don't get to be ourselves at work.

- Close to 50% of black and Latina scientists were mistaken for janitorial or administrative staff
- African-American women have reported facing discrimination at corporate workplaces if they come to work with their natural hair.

**Q: AUTHENTICITY:  
WHAT IS IT TO YOU?  
CAN WE BE LEADERS  
WITHOUT IT?**

# 3. EMPOWERMENT?

## THE U.S. SOCCER PAY GAP

#EQUALPLAYEQUALPAY

	MEN	WOMEN
EXHIBITION GAMES PER YEAR	20	20
PLAYER PAY FOR GAME WIN	\$17,625	\$1,350
PLAYER PAY FOR GAME LOSS	\$5,000	\$0,000
PLAYER PAY FOR MAKING WORLD CUP TEAM	\$68,750	\$15,000
TEAM PAY FOR WORLD CUP PERFORMANCE	\$9 MILLION <small>(FOR LOSING IN THE ROUND OF 16)</small>	\$2 MILLION <small>(FOR WINNING WHOLE THING)</small>
QUALITY OF TEAM	PRETTY O.K.	OFF THE F#@KING CHARTS



[CC.COM/EQUALPAY](http://CC.COM/EQUALPAY)

# NEVERTHELESS...

Research shows that diverse groups are beneficial:

- ✓ **Challenge assumptions & automatic thinking**
- ✓ **Increase productivity when paired with pay equity**
- ✓ **Can increase profitability**
  - ✓ *E.g., 2016 survey of 22,000 companies worldwide by the Peterson Institute: companies with at least 30% women in senior management had 15% higher profits.*
- ✓ **Women score higher on 17 of 19 top leadership skills**
- ✗ **Can trigger threat among dominant group**

**Q: EMPOWERMENT:  
HOW DO WE LEAD  
AUTHENTICALLY?**

**SOLUTIONS**  
**&**  
**THE WORK AHEAD**

# STRATEGIES

## Using Behavioral Science to combat unconscious bias for Inclusive Leadership:

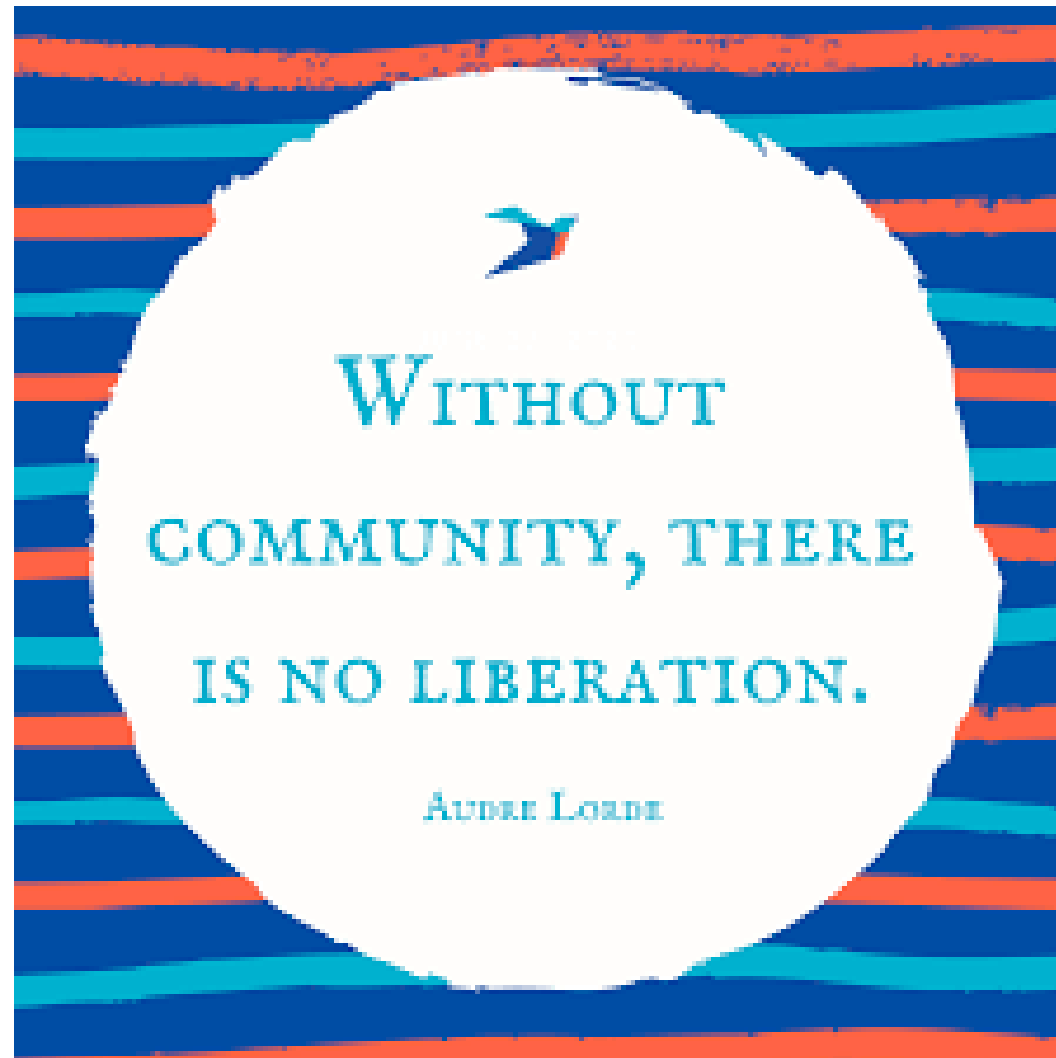
- High Standards must be paired with Inclusion for performance.
- Make the Unconscious Conscious to Combat Bias.
- Get Comfortable with being Uncomfortable.
- Champion processes that decouple Ideas and Status.
- Deliberately embrace Inclusivity as part of your Leadership style.
- Seek different kinds of support and connections
- Maintain intersectionality – inclusivity is interdependent. Hold the door open.

# GO FORTH!





# THANK YOU!



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# IN THE MOMENT LEADERSHIP - CULTIVATING INFLUENCE AND ADAPTABILITY

.....  
**Daena Giardella**, Senior Lecturer, MIT Leadership Center, MIT Sloan School of Management

# Improvisational Leadership

- Crucial *influence skills* for rapidly changing business environments
- Uncertain conditions (global/organizational) create an imperative:
- *Leaders must be skilled improvisers*
- No longer “soft skills”

# Improvisational Leadership cont...

- The more you can *adapt, respond, and extemporize* in the moment, the more persuasive and effective you'll be.
- Vital: *Emotional Intelligence. Empathy.*
- Read the moment. Bring out the best in others. Move the action forward.

# Improvisational Leadership cont...

Improvisation: The Art of the Unexpected  
The Science of the Unknown

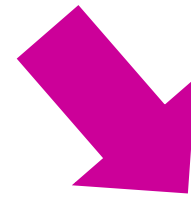
- Experimentation = Trial + Error
- Free to take Risks, Offer Ideas
- Learn How to “Stumble” → Rebound: Resilience

# Skillful Improvisation Requires Preparation

## Great Leaders Balance

### Structure

- Planning
- Analysis
- Strategic Goals
- Data



### Spontaneity

- Emotional intelligence
- Read the moment
- Respond to what *is* happening, not what “*should*” be happening
- Creativity

# Improviser's Mindset:

- In the Moment
- Open – Curious
- “High Stakes” Listener
- Collaborative – Builds Strong Relationships
  - Ready to Change – Adaptable
  - Willing to Take Risks
  - Aware of Big Picture



# OFFERS

Basic building blocks of improvisation

Offer: Anything you say or do that moves the scene forward

*“Yes, and...”*

Affirms

“Yes” = Generosity

*“Yes, but...”*

Negates

“No” = Fear

Best offers are specific and invite collaboration

# Rules of Improvisation

- Respond with an attitude of “Yes, and...”
- **Don't block** – Build, Don't Contradict
- Make specific offers
- **Make other actors look good**
- Always be changed by what happens

# Rules of Improvisation cont...

- **Listen - Build on others' offers**
- Don't hesitate → Commit
- **No judging oneself, others**
- Move the action forward
- Don't ask questions to avoid using your imagination

# Make the Other Person Look Good

Use a “Yes, and...” attitude

Avoid “Yes, but”

Use “I” Messages

(“I noticed” “I felt” “I heard”)

Avoid “You” Messages

(“You did this” “You did that”)

# **Improvisation:**

# **The Art Of Influence**

# ***6 KINDS OF INFLUENCE OFFERS that move scenes forward***

- **Influence the *Information***
- **Influence the *Relationships***
- **Influence the *Roles***
- **Influence the *Dynamics***
- **Influence the *Momentum***
- **Influence the *Perspective***

# 4-Player Model ©

David Kantor

- MOVER – INITIATE
- FOLLOWER – SUPPORT
- BYSTANDER – WITNESS
- OPPOSER – CHALLENGE



# STATUS

- Subtle up/down *stature changes* occur in every interaction
  - Moment-to-Moment “Influence” Moves
    - **High Status**
    - **Low Status**
- In productive, collaborative conversations, each person makes status change offers frequently.

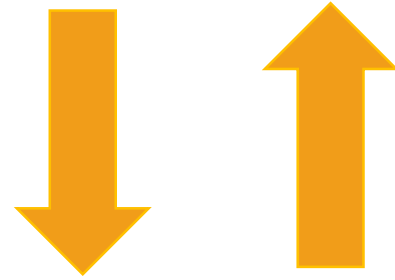
**Avoid**

Stuck Status = Role Lock





# Comfort Zone



# Challenge Zone

DHR

Default Habit Roles

GER

Growing Edge Roles

- **Try New Leadership Roles & Responses**

# INNER CRITIC

**Self-Condemning, Demeaning, Shaming Private Thoughts**

- **Situations, Personality Styles, Behaviors Trigger Internal Reactions – “Negative Self-Talk”**
- **How Do You Manage Your Inner Critic?**
- **Know Your Inner Critic – What Triggers It?**
- **When Does Your Inner Critic Chatter?  
(Before, During, After Events)**
  - **Cultivate Your Inner Editor**
  - **Cultivate Your Inner Champion**

**Don't Wait to Meet the Moment  
Perfectly...**

**The Unexpected Requires  
Engagement & Adaptability....  
*not* Perfection**

# **PRACTICE REBOUNding**

**Fear + Risk + Failure + Learning x Repetition =  
Confidence + Resilience**

# ***“Silenced By Fear:***

## ***The Nature and Consequences of Fear at Work”***

by Jennifer Kish-Gephart, James Detert, Linda Klebe Treviño & Amy Edmondson

### **“Developing **Voice Efficacy:****

- 1. Develop your anger-expression skills.**
- 2. Develop your voice-related verbal skills.**
- 3. Develop your emotional intelligence.”**

From: *Silenced by Fear*, by Kish-Gephart, Detert, Klebe Treviño & Edmondson

# Voice Related Verbal Skills:

“...Learn to frame issues and deliver messages appropriately.

Present criticisms or opposing views in *non-threatening language*.

**Increases Voice Efficacy**

**Deliver our *intended message*** instead of non-genuine communication designed to protect us from negative outcomes from those in authority

**Self-preservation verbal patterns may reinforce the belief that one is not capable of honest communication with people in authority...”**

From: **Silenced by Fear** “*The Nature and Consequences of Fear at Work*” by Jennifer Kish-Gephart, James Detert, Linda Klebe Treviño & Amy Edmondson

# **How do we face and navigate the fear of failure?**

**Encourage a culture of experimentation**

**Don't punish or just "tolerate" failure**

**Embrace failure in pursuit of new ideas**

**Be vigilant about subtle or overt messages of  
punishment for failure**

# The Confidence Gap

**Women & Members of Other Under Represented Groups  
Often Experience a Confidence Gap**

**Confidence is our belief in ourselves,  
our ability to succeed**

**Fear + Risk + Failure + Learning x Repetition =  
Confidence + Resilience**



**“Confidence matters just as much as competence.”**

**“Women applied for a promotion only when they met 100 percent of the qualifications.**

**Men applied when they met 50 percent.”**

**Carol Dweck, Stanford Professor of Psychology,  
Author, *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success***

**“If life were one long grade school,  
women would be the undisputed rulers of the world.”**

- **Girls learn to avoid taking risks and making mistakes.**
- **Boys absorb more scolding/punishment & may learn to take failure in stride. When we observed in grade school classrooms:**
- **Boys got eight times more criticism** than girls for their conduct
- **Boys’ mistakes are attributed to a lack of effort**
- **Girls come to see mistakes as a reflection of their deeper qualities. They get a lot of praise for being perfect.”**

**Carol Dwek's**  
***"Two Mindsets"***

**Fixed Mindset**

**Growth Mindset**

**Desire to Look Smart**

**Desire to Learn**

**Challenges**

**Avoid challenges**

**Embrace challenges**

**Obstacles**

**Give up easily**

**Persist in the face of setbacks**

**Effort**

**See effort as fruitless or worse**

**See effort as the path to mastery**

**Criticism**

**Ignore useful feedback**

**Learn from criticism**

**Success of Others**

**Feel threatened by the success of others**

**Find lessons & inspiration others' success**

# **Improvisational Leadership: In the Moment Leadership Skills**

**Daena Giardella**

**Senior Lecturer, MIT Sloan**

**Organizational and Leadership Consultant & Executive Coach**

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