



Don't blame the babies: Children and their surprisingly small influence on overwork

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Invitation

Monday, June 1, 2015
2 p.m., Room A 310

Many authors suggest that when employed people have children, they are unable to reduce their work hours as much as they would prefer. Existing research, however, offers mixed support for that claim. Jeremy Reynolds will discuss the roots of this popular hypothesis and potential reasons for the mixed support. Then he will offer an analysis of parenthood and work hour mismatches using U.S. panel data.

He finds that the transition from no children to one child heightens the desire for fewer hours among men and women. Most arrivals and departures of children, however, are not closely connected to hour mismatches. In part, this is because some workers (particularly women) manage to change their actual hours to match their preferences, but it is also because children have modest effects on preferred hours (especially among men). In sum, having children brings many challenges, but they bear relatively little responsibility for the work hour mismatches so many Americans report. Whether this is good news is somewhat unclear.

Jeremy Reynolds is associate professor of sociology at the University of Georgia. His research examines how preferences and family life influence actual working time. He is currently studying the extent to which people satisfy their work hour preferences in the long-run.

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