Telework, Ageing, and the Socially Inclusive Workplace

Paul M.A. Baker, Ph.D. and Nathan W. Moon, Ph.D.
Georgia Institute of Technology

John C. Bricout, Ph.D.
University of Texas, Arlington

Jessica Pater
Georgia Tech Research Institute

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Introduction

- Telework as accommodation option for ageing workers in need of workplace flexibility

- Effectiveness limited without practices/policies for distributive work environments

- Risk of social exclusion for teleworkers

Background

- "Factory model" of work at odds with reality of modern information workplace

- Information and communications technologies (ICT) expanding boundaries of telecommuting

- Need for robust assessment tools and implementation of best practices

Telework: Opportunity?

- **Opportunities:**

    - Employers report retention savings, improved productivity, and heightened worker satisfaction

    - Enable ageing workers to have more flexibility and expand reach

    - Serve as accommodation for workers ageing into disability

…Or Barrier?

- **Barriers**:

  - Current Internet practices fail to fulfill this potential

  - "Digital divide" extending to workers who are ageing and who have disabilities

  - "Overhead" of learning and managing new technology and practices

Telework for Ageing Workers: Conceptual Model

- **Workplace accommodation** to increase participation

- **Strategic choice for employers** with personnel, human resource, market, and cost considerations

- **Social inclusion** through Web-facilitated social networks

- **Distributed work** with more opportunities for participation

Conceptual Issues

- Businesses are complex: threats and opportunities to inclusive, diverse workplaces

- Social relations with co-workers, supervisors and others in the distributed work environment essential to effective performance

- Improving ageing teleworker's social and human capital

Policy/Practice Tools

- Practice guidelines need to be derived from an evidence base of effective telework accommodations

- Adoption of decision-support tools to match workers to characteristics of the distributive work environment

- Policies that incentivize social learning and social networks, both at the organizational and individual level

Policy/Practice Tools (continued)

- Social Networks

- Professional Learning Spaces
  - Communities of practice (CoP)
  - Online communities of practice serve as virtual learning spaces
  - Online co-worker networks provide social capital (reciprocal trust) for the online CoP

- Assistive Technology

Policy/Practice Model:
Inclusive Telework for Ageing Workers
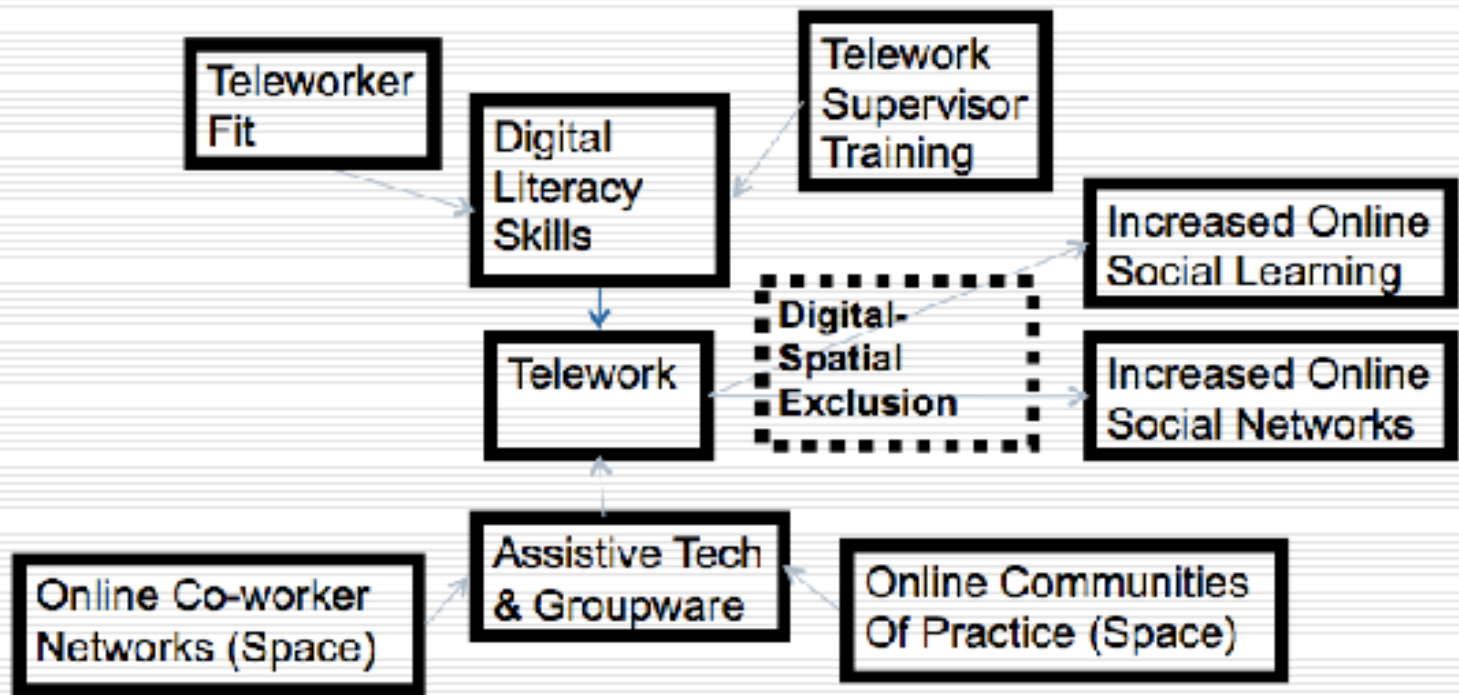
Approach

- Implicit life-long learning perspective: Relevant across populations online

- Importance of studying telework vs. offline outcomes

- Expanded notions of social work involvement: Technical assistance, CoP facilitators, digital literacy training, assessment and evaluation

Conclusions

- Increasingly complex social and economic context of business impacts modern inclusive, diverse workplaces

- Mutual benefits for employers and ageing workers in need of flexibility, accommodations

- Research to lead to applied best practices

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Contact Information

Nathan W. Moon, Ph.D.

Center for Advanced Communications Policy

Georgia Institute of Technology

500 Tenth Street NW

Atlanta, Georgia 30332-0620

United States of America

E-mail: nathan.moon@cacp.gatech.edu

Telephone: +1 404-894-8845