

Equitable Future of Work - Commuting From Home to Home *Research Questions*



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Equitable Future of Working from home

- A culture of meeting individuals where they are and providing the resources they need, to create opportunities for them to succeed

Gender

Race

Disability

Caregiving responsibilities

Socioeconomic status

Health

Age

....

If remote work were to become a norm at least for positions or tasks where physical presence is not necessary, employers must ensure support that is mindful of the diverse experiences and circumstances of workers, including the more complex non-linear effects such as those related to worker age. *Tahlyan et al., 2022*

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Who is involved in the research on telework?

“it is essential that the disability community are consulted and represented in research and task forces addressing telework; their expertise is the most valuable resource for ensuring equity and inclusion from the outset”

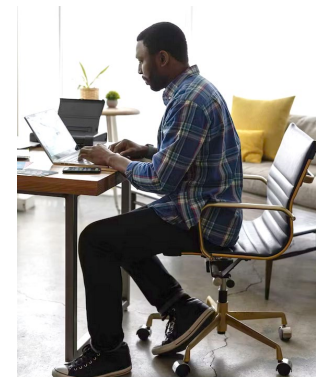
Lake and Maidment, 2023

Wholistic approach to research

- Whole person
- Whole work system
- Whole environment

Methods: participatory, longitudinal, mixed methods

Goal: Better, equitable telework/work from home, by design



Sociotechnical work systems include technical elements (machines and work organization components) and social elements (people and work environment); both of these major subsystems, the technical and the social, should be equally valued and attended to in order to provide a high quality and satisfying work environment for workers in these systems

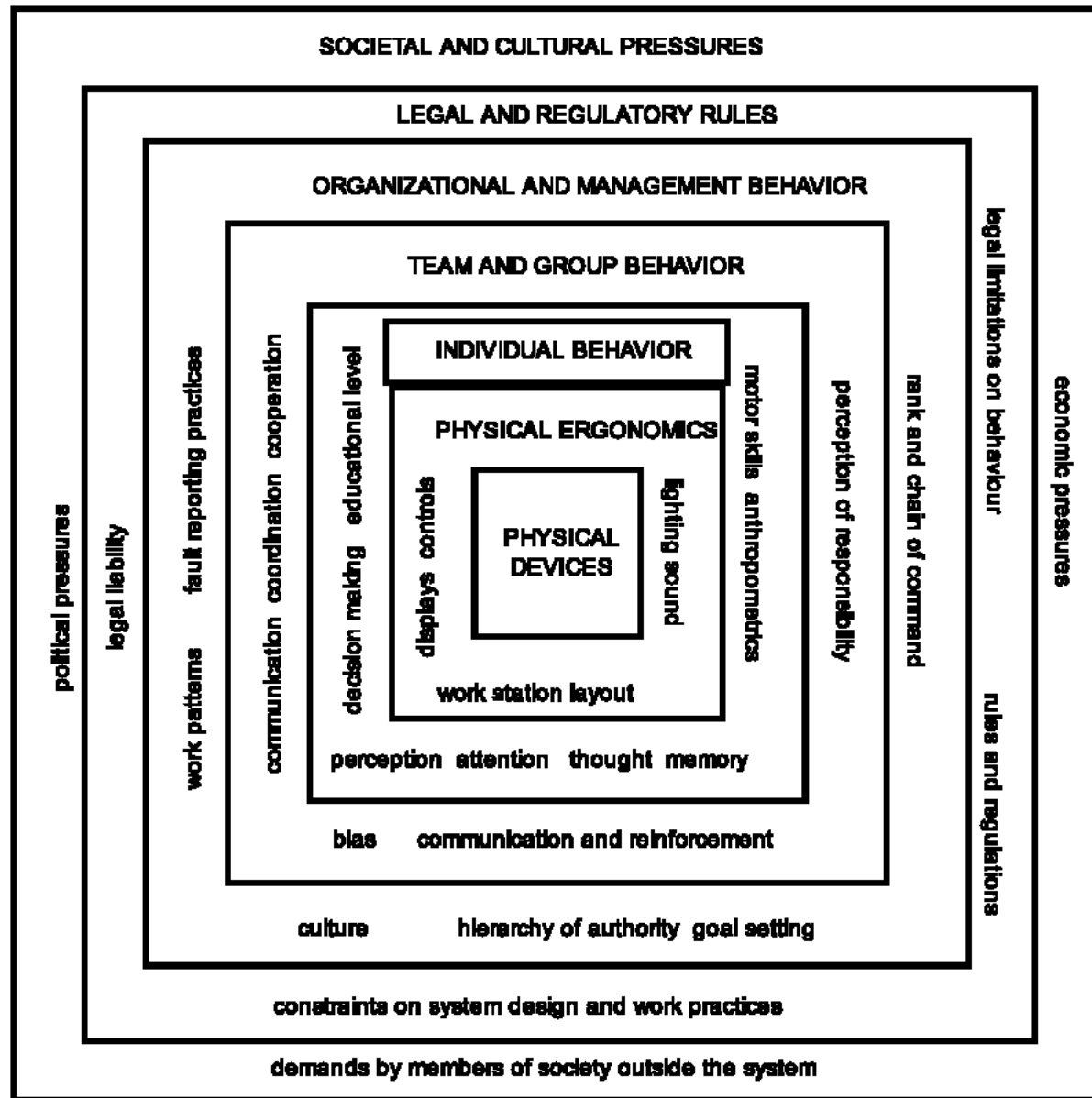
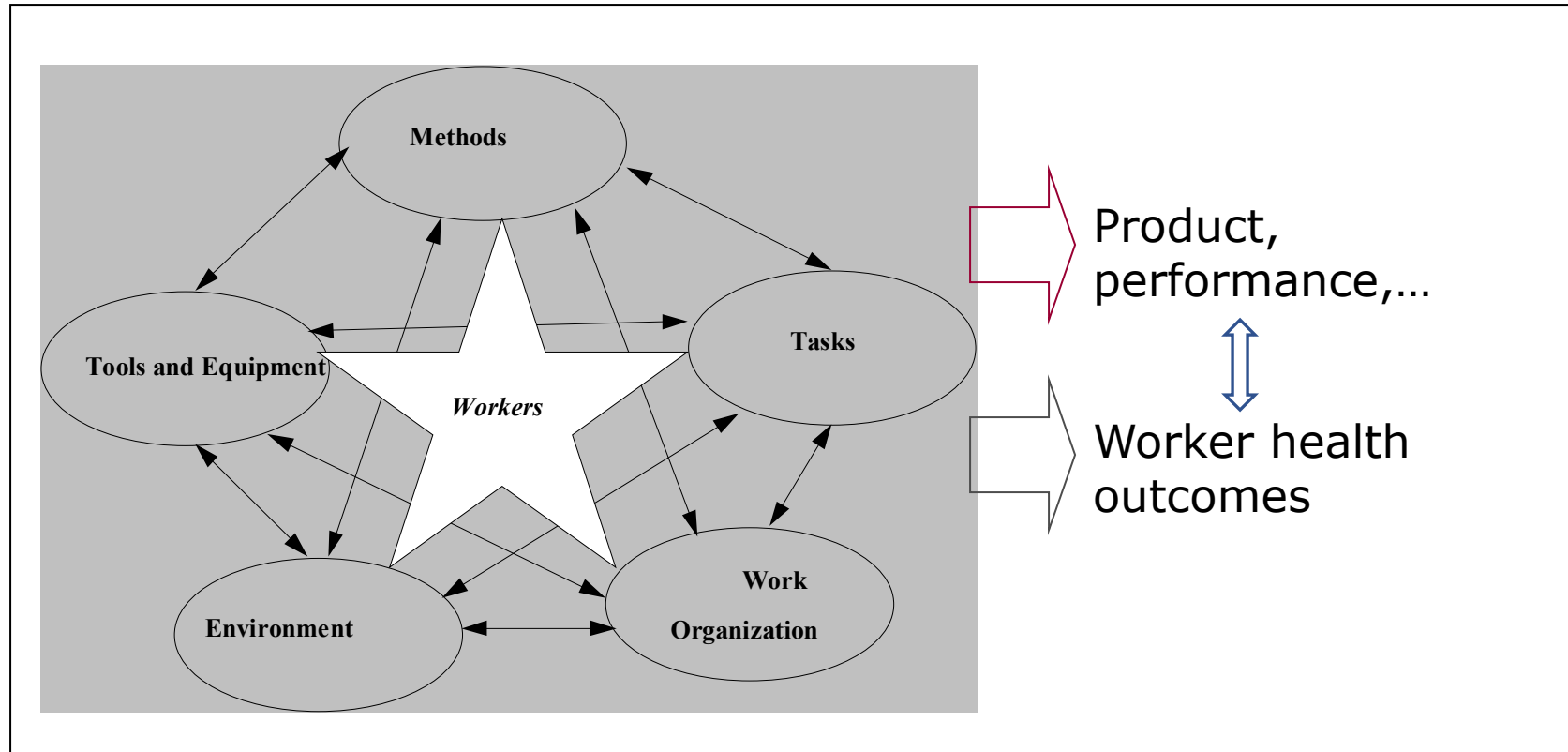


Figure 1. Ergonomics as the study and design of sociotechnical systems.

Moray, N. (2000). Culture, politics and ergonomics. *Ergonomics*, 43(7), 858-868.

Human Factors engineering... the application of Human Factors knowledge and principles ... and other information to the design of tools, machines, systems, tasks, jobs, and environments for productive, safe, comfortable human use

A Work System



Equitable Future of Working from home

Some research questions...

Telework affects the degree of control that the employer has over the working environment, and the employer's ability to plan and provide for a healthy and safe work environment.
ILO, 2021



Health and safety concerns:

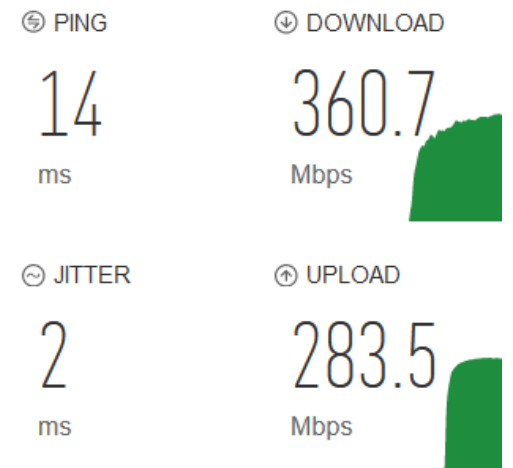
- How to evaluate a home work setting? How to 'control' a home work setting? Cost/benefit of 'surveillance' systems?
 - Intrusive; 'assumed access', not owned by the employer; dedicated work space or making-do work space
 - More research will be needed to determine the breadth and extent of health impacts of telework for different workers and over longer periods of time (e.g., blood pressure, musculoskeletal, effects of exposure to biohazards, chemicals and other home hazards) (ILO, 2021)
 - Mental health effects – research results are mixed, and more research is needed to determine circumstances that lead to better or poorer outcomes over time
 - Cybersecurity risks and effects

- Do/which results from pre-pandemic research on telework generalize to today's telework conditions and workers?
- Few studies have examined long-term effects of telework compared to a control condition, for a diverse population of workers.
- Do teleworkers “Belong”? Implications if they do not?
 - Belonging is described as having three dimensions: companionship, affiliation, and connectedness
 - “A fundamental feature of belonging is a person’s feeling of being valued, needed, important to other people, groups, objects, organizations, and environments, or spiritual dimensions.” Durakovic et al, 2023
- Economic analysis of telework: Who pays? Who saves?
- How best to support managers to support workers (those who telework and those who are in the office)?
 - A matter of company culture...
 - A matter of understanding workers differ in their psychological contract expectations
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In the neighborhood...

- Neighborhoods are a central component of the broader social and racial stratification process in the United States.
 - What are the societal effects of citizens staying home (teleworking), in their neighborhoods v. traveling to and coming together at a workplace that is likely to be more diverse than one's neighborhood?
- Limited and constrained access to the internet persists along the same racial lines along which social inequality exists.
 - How do companies compensate for the digital divide, to provide equitable access to meetings and online resources for all of their employees?
 - What are the root causes of internet speed inequality? What are the long term effects of internet speed inequality on individuals, families, and communities?



How equitable is telework or how equitable could it be?

- Self-reported concerns for career progression (cross-sectional research, Bachrach et al. 2022); implicit bias can be reduced through face-to-face exposure; face-to-face exposure increases positive inter-personal feelings; these positives are associated with important personal, organizational, and societal level outcomes (e.g. career progression, positive work evaluations, mentorship, health outcomes)
- *“if you’re a relatively junior employee, which I am, it’s hard to be seen by managers because you’re not physically there”* (P7). This echoes the notion of social stigmatisation, where diminished social capital and professional advancement results from the limited physical presence when homeworking. (Lake and Maidment, 2023)
- What policies and practices can a company offer that safeguard against career progression disadvantages to protect against possibility of race-based or other discrimination related to Work From Home?
- Compare survey perceptions of career progression limitations to actual career progression data to determine if face-time has differential effects based on social identity(ies), across organizational levels.



Thank you for your attention.

What questions do you have about working from home?

What's been your experience?

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Images

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