THE GOVERNMENT OPEN CONCEPT OFFICE: A STUDY OF PHYSICAL DESIGN ON PUBLIC SECTOR
OFFICE COMMUNICATION

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Abstract

Open concept designs have become common in private office environments, but they are a recent adoption in the public sector. Despite an overwhelming number of studies refuting the design's effectiveness, the Government of Canada is adopting this approach for public servants with the implementation of its "Workplace 2.0" initiative. Through the use of semi-structured interviews and surveys with public servants who now occupy a Workplace 2.0 office, the aim of this study is to determine whether a change in the built environment of a public service office space has affected how employees communicate at work. This thesis found that open concept offices do not inherently lead to increased productivity or correspond to desired changes in office structure and communication practices. Instead, these designs may help sustain the pre-existing bureaucratic environment, while ostensibly trying to eradicate it with the production of new office spaces.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Open concept offices have proliferated over the past half century, across different sectors and in different countries. Closed door offices and cubicles with high partitions have been traded in for smaller, often shared desks with low surrounding partitions in an attempt to increase collaboration and productivity in the workplace. These redesigns are an approach to manipulating space to promote these behaviours. However, an overwhelming number of studies have refuted the effectiveness of open concept offices, stating they often decrease productivity and cause stress to employees. Although the literature surrounding these open concept offices is largely negative, they are still being implemented. The Government of Canada is a relatively new example of an organization adopting this open arrangement for its offices, doing so under the title "Workplace 2.0". In addition to the literature refuting the expected benefits of the open concept approach, most of the organizations that have adopted this kind of design are private companies. This leads to the question: why is the Federal Government, the epitome of the public sector in Canada, implementing this design?

This study found that although Workplace 2.0 presents its design template as positive for workplace morale and productivity, it offers no evidence to support this expectation. Previous research, supported by the findings of this study, suggests that rather than promoting collaboration and increasing productivity the open plan design tends to actually impede the realization of these goals. In fact, the design examined here increases management control and impedes communication, collaboration and productivity. Concerns about privacy

and random checks by supervisors are perceived as disincentives for communication among employees, reinforcing hierarchy rather than encouraging collaboration.

Workplace 2.0, as described by official documents, is a government-wide initiative introduced by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) "to create a modern workplace" by including collaborative spaces, more flexible furnishings, and lower panels that separate offices ("Understanding" 7). The new offices are expected to increase collaboration and teamwork and to create more productive employees (13).

Aim of the Study

This thesis will show the negative impact Workplace 2.0 has had on employees with regard to collaboration, privacy, and productivity in the workplace. This will be done by gathering information from semi-structured interviews and surveys conducted with a group of public servants, roughly a year after they have moved into a new office compliant with the Workplace 2.0 design. The data largely relies on answers comparing participants' old workspace to the new one to determine how the open concept office has affected how they interact with others at work. This thesis contributes directly to literature in organizational communication, examining the relationships between the open concept design methods and communication practices within a governmental organization.

Before the implementation of Workplace 2.0 began across government departments, a number of documents detailing the changes to the built environment of the offices were

released to both the public and public sector employees. These documents discuss the motivations behind the initiative and the expected benefits. Among the many stated motivations behind the initiative, demographics, employee attraction and retention, improved work-life balance, and evolving technology are at the forefront ("Understanding" 6, "Workplace", 4). A more in-depth look at these documents, and discussions with employees, will show that the main motivation behind the initiative was most likely saving money, and that making this a top priority has had negative consequences for workers, including more stress, less perceived productivity, and less personal communication in the office. The documents help inform the interview and survey questions, to determine whether some of the goals of Workplace 2.0 had been met. Interview results indicate many of the expected benefits listed in the documents including increased productivity, collaboration, and new technologies had not been achieved in practice, indicating the initiative has not produced its intended effects.

This work integrates and intertwines Critical Theory, Interior Design, and Organization Communication to critically analyze the important aspects of the depiction of Workplace 2.0 in a functional organization. This thesis shows that, though physical barriers were removed to increase collaboration, personal and private communication no longer occurs. Additionally, the removal of these barriers did not help to eradicate hierarchy in the workplace but rather worked to continue to inforce it. Finally, the thesis shows how the privacy and productivity of employees had been negatively affected by the new office design.

Contributions

By examining workplace responses to the open plan office in the public service, this study expands the scope of the existing office design and management literature by identifying unique features of public sector work in the office design context. Most important here is what we might call the "faceless bureaucrat" model in which a culture of avoiding individual responsibility for work is enhanced by the command and control effects of Workplace 2.0 (A point expanded on in the Privacy chapter.) More specifically, the findings of this study question the implicit cost-cutting goals of Workplace 2.0. The losses in productivity and collaboration may, in fact, outweigh the cost-savings attributed to reducing office space requirements. Finally, the results of the study are intended to impact and contribute to space planning decisions in Canadian public sector offices, and worldwide.

Overview of the Study

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 begins with the study's introduction. Chapter 2 uses foundational pieces of Organizational Communication, Critical Theory, and Interior Design to understand how physical design can affect moods and behaviours in the workplace. A thorough review of government policy documents will provide a foundation for the critical analysis of the impact of Workplace 2.0 as implemented. In Chapter 3, the research methodology, consisting of interviews and surveys, is outlined. Chapter four presents the results of the interviews and surveys in four subsections: Agency and Involvement, Privacy,

Productivity, and Collaboration. The final chapter provides an analysis and conclusions based on

the data.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Open concept office designs have become increasingly common since their introduction in work environments over a half-century ago. Open offices can range in their design, such as the arrangement of desks in rows or in pod formations. Commonly found in these offices are: teams working in close physical proximity, architecture aimed at making spaces easy to access, and an overall open and bright environment. Small differences, like the type of partitions surrounding offices and the amount of office space allotted to employees, will differ from office to office (Brennan et al. 280). While trade publications tend to promote them as ideal tools for collaboration, scholarly articles on these designs are largely skeptical of their benefits. This academic literature on office space has developed in two different ways: questions of optimization (as seen in Interior Design), and investigations of problematic power relations within spaces. Critical theory has explored power relations as strongly determined by environments as well as considering the variety of individual responses to built spaces and the potential for unintended outcomes from design. Both of these dynamics are needed in order to account for the variety of experiences with power and control in everyday office life. Although these research directions are connected and often overlap in the context of workspaces, this thesis will primarily take an organizational communication and critical theory approach, as the development and execution of the space in question had already been completed prior to the beginning of the study. The core documents released by the government on Workplace 2.0 will be analyzed to provide a foundation for the further analysis of the literature in organizational communication literature on open concept offices.

How spaces are constructed and shaped for work is considered by a wide range of disciplines. Critical theory, interior design, and organizational communication anticipate different questions about built spaces. These questions respectively reflect a focus on physical environments as a way to analyze society; the conceptual development, project management, and execution of a design; and how space affects how communication takes place in organizations. These approaches contribute to showing the complexity of social interactions in an office environment that define the workplace. This is useful for the example of Workplace 2.0 where different individuals must now interact within its predetermined design.

Critical Theory

Critical theory dissects how spaces are produced as a way to analyze society and social forces. Prominent scholars in this field have established the study of constructed spaces as a useful tool to reveal how certain social groups are controlled and how behaviours are encouraged (Hall 1966; Lefebvre 1974; Foucault 1975; Jameson 1991). In *The Production of Space* (1974) Lefebvre provides a classic example of how critical theory engages with space. He demonstrates how spaces are created through a combination of physical, mental, and social techniques (16). From this perspective, space can be a means of production and also a means of control or domination (26). This critique of the multi-modal approaches used in the production of space is useful to take into account the actions of both the individual and the collective when analyzing a space. Lefebvre avoids a more determinist or behaviourist reading of constructed spaces by showing how subjects may create positive experiences within or modify the spaces

they occupy (35). This leaves open the question of how much control individuals have over a space and how much control a space has over them.

Space as a means of control is a significant focus in the works of Michel Foucault. This is particularly true in the often cited chapter "Panopticism" in *Discipline and Punish*, in which Foucault discusses Jeremy Bentham's concept of the Panopticon. The Panopticon is described firstly as a prison, then discussed in school settings, workplaces, and hospitals. In each case the Panopticon controls lines of sight and communication in a carefully designed environment to produce tightly controlled social relationships. The concept of the Panopticon reverses the principle of the dungeon; while the dungeon works to enclose prisoners, hide them, and deprive them of light, visibility acts as a trap in the panoptic schema (Foucault 200). This concept is useful to outline how the production of a space includes patterns employed to manage an individual (whether inmate, worker, patient, or schoolchild) so that they engage in self-surveillance without requiring direct punishment (205). Panoptic relations act as a tool used to supress, but it also acts as a tool to increase the productivity of its subjects in workplaces, schools, and potentially governments. Visibility is a central feature in open concept offices, which bring these practices of surveillance and self-surveillance together. While open offices have differences to classic panoptic examples, as managers are also visible to those they manage, and all those in the office are under larger more elaborate surveillance mechanisms (i.e. HR and payroll record-keeping, management systems, productivity trackers), the watcher/watched dynamic described in the panoptic schema is a strong influence on everyday office life.

Much like Foucault, Edward T. Hall argues spaces can alter an individual's behaviour. In *The Hidden Dimension*, Hall argues "no matter what happens in the world of human beings, it happens in a spatial setting, and the design of that setting has a deep and persisting influence on the people in that setting" (Hall xi). Hall's work shows how the experience of distance and immediate receptors construct different perceptual worlds. The distance receptors, the eyes, the nose, and the ears, are concerned with the examination of distant objects while the immediate receptors, the sensations received through touch, are used to examine objects close up (Hall 41). Hall continues by indicating an individual's relationship to their environment "is a function of his sensory apparatus plus how this apparatus is conditioned to respond" (62). A person's sense of space differs across and within cultures as everyone perceives space differently due to their individualized sensory perceptions. Hall notes that an individuals' "sense of space is closely related to his sense of self, which is in an intimate transaction with his environment" (63). This acknowledgement that individuals experience space differently is particularly important when discussing workers in office spaces as they are generally not built to accommodate different people.

Hall's work critiques architects that design buildings without taking into consideration the needs of the people who will be using the space. This is often the outcome when management is concerned with "the bottom line," and the financial decisions that result because of it are rarely based "on any understanding of human needs or the ultimate costs of ignoring them" (Hall xi). These concerns can be seen unevenly in the history of office design; some office configurations take them into consideration, others do not. This notion will be explored in relation to Workplace 2.0 in the following chapters.

Together Lefebvre, Foucault, and Hall provide tools for analyzing how individuals react to power relations and methods of control within designed spaces, and a broad perspective for considering what elements make up a space. These facilitate investigating manager and employee relations and the construction of newly designed work environments such as open concept offices.

How Interior Designers Conceptualize Office Spaces

Interior designers create and implement the physical design of spaces. In a sense, interior design is also focused on the production of space, however, unlike the critical theory described above it is focused exclusively on the individual as a body and their experiences with the physical objects in a space. In *Human Dimension and Design Basics*, Panero and Zelnik apply this logic to workspaces. They note two basic types of human body dimensions, structural and functional, that may have an "impact on the design of interior spaces" (27). The structural dimensions include the measurements of different body parts like the head and torso in standard positions, while the functional dimensions include measurements obtained in working positions (27). While they note this data will range from individual to individual , they are only taking into account physical differences rather than social or hierarchical differences that shape workplace experiences (31). The authors argue that ensuring an office environment is responsive to the human dimension is important because the user will spend a significant amount of their waking hours within the workspace (Panero and Zelnik 172). In this view, the "quality of interface" between users and workstations becomes prioritized; while this interface

is an important aspect of office work, focusing on it may neglect not only the surrounding social

relations, but also how that interface is influenced by social relations at work (175).

Interior design does provide suggestions for how to create physical layouts that

recognize a social dimension in the workplace, to a limited extent. Creating privacy is

recognized as an important need in offices, though its solutions are depicted as a matter of

engineering layout and traffic flows. The privacy problems that are expected are tied to dealing

with a high volume of people and limited space. Little is said about how designs relate to an

office's culture, management or surveillance methods. In *Designing for Privacy and Related*

Needs, Julie Stewart-Pollack and Rosemary Menconi discuss this approach to privacy in the

workplace and how to achieve it. Acoustical privacy can be a problem in both enclosed and

open office spaces. According to the authors, this can be designed in an open office by

interrupting the paths of sound. This can be done by using sound masking, sound blocking, or

sound absorption (Stewart-Pollack and Menconi 101). Furthermore, it is suggested that panels

any lower than 60 inches will not be effective as a sound barrier (105). The authors also discuss

visual privacy and its relation to lighting, stating that well-lit areas are commonly regarded as

public spaces and therefore higher levels of noise are acceptable. A solution for this problem

would be to allow individuals to control their own office lighting, which does recognize the

importance of some autonomy in the office (107). However, this could be problematic when

panels are low and the office depends on natural lighting. In terms of overall privacy, the

authors suggest that when designing offices interior designers should: create clear boundaries

between workspaces, keep workers from main traffic patterns, position workstations so

workers do not have to face main aisles, and provide different desks with standing or seated

options (111). Interior design practices rely heavily on predicting the needs of those who will be occupying the space. While these kinds of design considerations may have been taken into account in the design of Workplace 2.0, it is beyond the scope of the data assessed in this study. Further, this project largely considers the social relations, intended and otherwise, of the spaces occupants rather than its designers' intentions. Analyzing the space of an open concept office requires taking into account how social relations and power dynamics at work become realized when combined with new physical environments. While interior design is not a central focus of this study, the design literature provides useful tools for interpreting the data gathered here. In addition, the findings of this project might contribute to considerations of what can and should be done when designing workplaces.

Literature on Open Concept Offices

Literature in organizational communication, as well as ergonomics and behavioral studies, often discusses open concept office spaces by looking at them from the perspectives of company structure, analysis of the office layout, and participant reactions. These fields discuss the subject using different approaches and perspectives on physical relations, personal interactions, and dynamics within organizations. However, common themes arise out of the literature on open concept offices. These are: privacy, productivity, and collaboration. These common themes in the literature were also strongly identified by the participants in this study. The structure of this thesis was built upon the overlapping areas of concern between the literature and the data retrieved from this study. This thesis will build on these studies by

exploring how productivity, collaboration, and privacy affect how participants communicate in their new Workplace 2.0 office.

Privacy in studies of open concept office spaces is broken down into explorations of surveillance, hierarchy, and stress and job satisfaction, mainly based upon sound and visual privacy, or the lack of them, in the workplace. Early writing on open concept offices began to connect these subthemes to show the wide-ranging effects of privacy in the workplace. A prime example is Sundstrom et al.'s (1982a) "Physical Enclosure, Type of Job, and Privacy in the Office." In this piece the authors discuss privacy in the form of physical enclosure surrounding workstations, concluding that satisfaction with the space was strongly correlated with the number of enclosed sides around a participant's desk, specifically when they were not visible to their supervisor. Duvall-Early and Benedict look at privacy similarly by examining architectural privacy in office spaces, "the extent to which an employee's individual workspace is accessible to the intrusion of others" (671). It was found that participants in the study with private offices were more satisfied with their immediate surroundings, arguing they felt freer to come up with their own ideas in this closed environment. Further, O'Neill and Carayon (1993) look at these physical barriers in office spaces and correlate their existence with stress levels in the workplace. In their study, perceived enclosure was the only variable that could be directly linked to environmental stress. These studies, looking specifically at privacy through the lens of physical barriers around individual workstations, suggest that the more physical barriers in a workspace, the more satisfied and less stressed a worker will be, leading to more employees working from home and employees communicating less with their coworkers. However, this

relationship between barriers, satisfaction, and stress is often reversed in documents

supporting such office modernizations as Workplace 2.0.

Similar to the discussion of visual privacy within Interior Design, Organizational

Communication studies also addresses sound privacy. Organization Communication, however,

focuses on how sound privacy is tied to relationships in the office. It also deals with sound and

other aspects that may have arisen long after an office was designed. These studies on sound

privacy in the office can be traced back at least until the 1980s and are prominent still today,

proving how relevant the issue continues to be. Sundstrom et al. (1982b) traced a relocation of

employees to a new office, finding that participants were now less able to hold confidential

conversations in this new open concept environment for fear of being overheard. Likewise, in a

study that detailed the move to an open concept office by a community college, Becker et al.

(1983) found that faculty were less willing to discuss sensitive issues with students because they

could no longer do so in private. Although these writings discuss visual privacy and sound

privacy in open concept offices, they do not usually speak explicitly about surveillance. Instead,

it is alluded to when mentioning how barriers separate employees from their supervisors, and

their fears of being overheard by others. In some cases, it appears participants altered their

behaviour because of a lack of privacy or a feeling of uneasiness (Cozzeto and Pedliski 1997).

These studies often look specifically at employee reactions to privacy or else group together the

views of management and employees. Few offer insights into how these perspectives may differ

within the same office.

The open concept office is meant to be one of equality rather than hierarchy by having the same or similar working conditions for employees and managers. Although some have argued this environment facilitates communication between employees and supervisors (Palmer and Lewis 1977; Kraemer et al. 1977), subsequent studies have determined the opposite. Hedge (1982) and Sundstrom et al. (1982b) note workers with different positions respond differently to their work environments, likely due to their status but also their workspace. For example, participants in Hedge's study perceived privacy differently based on their position, because those in managerial positions had more privacy than their subordinates. In this case, there is still a sense of hierarchy in the workplace, although the open concept design is created in part to curb this tendency.

Literature on productivity in open concept offices is overwhelmingly negative, arguing that the designs lead to decreased productivity (Hedge 1982; Becker et al. 1983; Jackson et al. 1997; Brennan et al. 2002; Baldry and Barnes 2012; McElroy and Morrow 2010). These studies almost exclusively talk about productivity from the subjective perspective of office workers, rather than comparing actual logs of their work prior to and after a move to an open concept office. This is likely due to availability and confidentiality issues. As retrieving the logs of participants in this study would require looking through confidential information, this study has a similar limitation to the participant's self-reflection; however, it also includes the managers' perspectives of productivity. Hedge's (1982) study suggests that the increase in distractions in new open offices led to adverse reactions, including reduced productivity. Similarly, Becker et al. (1983) found that faculty members often worked away from their desks because they could not conduct tasks that required concentration due to the increase noise levels in their open

office. Jackson et al. (1997) took a different approach to studying productivity in open plan offices. They compared participants working in different conditions, including a quiet condition and a continuous speech condition. The study determined that those working in the quiet conditions achieved more accuracy on the given tasks. It is noted in their study that phone conversations, face-to-face conversations, and telephones ringing were among the most disturbing noises in an open plan office with speech being the most disturbing. Furthermore, in Brennan et al.'s (2002), "Traditional versus Open Office Design: A Longitudinal Field Study", participants not only had a lower perceived job performance after moving into an open concept office, the participants never adapted to the change, and continued to find the distractions hindering their productivity long after the move. In these studies, decreased productivity is always strongly correlated with increased distractions. Similar findings were reported by Brand and Smith (2005). These cases are highly relevant to Workplace 2.0, where like the participants in the Brennan et al. study, they still have not found a way to completely adapt to the changes.

Collaboration is not as frequently addressed in the literature, though it is a communication practice in the workplace tied closely to privacy and productivity and underlies several studies. When discussing privacy and communication in the workplace, Sundstrom et al. (1982) noted communication was increased by the newfound accessibility in a layout, but resulted in a greater difficulty in specific types of communication, like private speech. Becker et al. (1983), Brennan et al. (2002), and Baldry and Barnes (2012) also note similar dynamics, stating employees were unwilling to discuss certain topics in their work area for fear of being overheard, although many advocates of open concept offices would argue "they facilitate communication, particularly among team members located in proximity to one another"

(Brennan et al. 2002). Similarly, Baldry and Barnes (2012) found that participants appreciated the close proximity to one other and thought it useful for informal and quick conversations about joint projects. However, in many circumstances, they preferred quiet environments to think, which open offices do not generally provide. Collaboration is an expected result of better communication practices, but it is rarely directly assessed in such studies.

These three themes are often interconnected in the literature and in practice. For many people, not having privacy in their place of work affects their comfort levels, because they constantly feel as though they are being watched, and this in turn affects their productivity levels. Additionally, privacy, or a lack of privacy, can impact the topics employees are willing to discuss at work, affecting collaboration and communication in the workplace. Collaboration areas, consisting of chairs, couches, or work areas away from employee's workstations, are sometimes incorporated into open concept offices. Such collaborative spaces, created to increase communication in the workplace, have largely been ignored in the literature to date. This study will extend the existing literature on open offices in communications to explore participants' experiences with these spaces. The ways in which scholars examine privacy, productivity, and collaboration in the workplace will provide a starting point for looking at these themes in the context of Workplace 2.0. Where it will diverge is by looking more closely at the discrepancies between managers' views on privacy versus their subordinates. It will do so by examining participants' responses through the lens of critical theory. Through this, power dynamics and abuses of power can be examined.

Theoretical Framework for the Study

Within organizational communication, critical theory is concerned with the study of power and authority relations in organizations, in the hope of creating workplaces that are free from domination and spaces where all those involved can contribute equally (Kehoe 33). Stanley Deetz's approach to critical theory within organizational communication will be applied to this study in order to better understand the reasons for implementing Workplace 2.0, how the implementation was handled by executives, and how it affects workers in practice.

In his work, Deetz argues organizations have the potential to be "positive social institutions" but they rarely realize this potential because "various forms of power and domination have led to skewed decision making and fostered social harms and significant waste and inefficiency" (Deetz 94). In order to create forums where conflicts can be discussed openly and resolved fairly, asymmetry, domination, and distorted communication must be demonstrated and critiqued (94). Deetz identifies two types of research in organization studies, communicative action and ideology critique. Ideology critique will be used to deconstruct Workplace 2.0.

Deetz argues four themes are consistent with literature about organizations working from an ideology critique perspective: "concern with reification", "the suppression of conflicting interests and universalization of managerial interest", "the eclipse of reason and domination by instrumental reasoning processes", and "the evidence of consent" (95). All of the themes are concerned with how those in managerial positions within organizations exert control and domination over others, using different practices to achieve the same goal. These

practices include normalizing processes within organizations to protect them from examination or questioning, creating a false consensus by universalizing management interests, taking control of the "human" side of organizations, and fabricating consent (96-98). These themes will be discussed in relation to Workplace 2.0 throughout the thesis.

Using critical theory as described by Stanley Deetz as a theoretical framework will be beneficial to the research as it will help to uncover hidden meanings, rather than concentrating on overt communication actions or practices. Workplace 2.0 has been marketed to public service employees and the public as a collaborative non-hierarchical work environment (see previous section on Workplace 2.0). Using critical theory, and supplemented by Jeremy Bentham and Foucault's discussion of the Panopticon and Petronio's Communication Privacy Management Theory, the thesis will determine whether Workplace 2.0 has achieved this specific work environment or if it assumes and reproduces traditional power structures, while appearing on a superficial level to challenge them. Traditional power structures tend to be persistent and are unlikely to be significantly disrupted by only addressing one aspect of office life.

Gaps in Existing Literature and Knowledge

Common in the literature on open concept office design is an exclusive focus on private sector work environments. The public and the private sectors differ on the organizational level, the managerial level, and on the employee's level (Esteve and Ysa). Since the public sector is unionized, there are more formal processes in place to ensure functionality and prevent abuses

of power. On the managerial level, private sector managers tend to prefer analytical practices when making decisions while public sector managers prefer consultative practices. Finally, employees working in the private sector place a high value on economic rewards when conducting tasks while their public sector counterparts place a high value on tasks that are "of use to society" (Esteve and Ysa). Given these core differences between the public sector and the private sector, the literature on private sector open concept offices should not be assumed to directly relate to an open concept public sector office. For that reason examining Workplace 2.0 is a valuable extension of existing literature.

Government Documents on Workplace 2.0

Before discussing the methodology used to examine a specific Workplace 2.0 office, a brief critique of the claims around the initiative will provide context and assess motivations for the new design. Prior to the large scale implementation of Workplace 2.0 across departments, documents created by the government about the initiative were released to employees and the public. Throughout this thesis, references to "the government" refer to senior management in the public service rather than its current political leadership unless otherwise specified. The documents released by the government serve several purposes; specifically, to provide a description of the initiative, to state the motivations behind the initiative, to explain how Workplace 2.0 will change the built environment of government office spaces, and to highlight the perceived and expected benefits of the initiative. Rather than being far removed from workers' experiences, interview subjects were quite concerned with the motivations, and it is important to compare motivations and outcomes for a new design. The documents "Workplace

2.0: Public Servants Working Smarter, Greener, Healthier," and "Understanding Workplace

2.0"[1] were released in the spring of 2011 and 2012, and are in the form of presentation notes.

What the government believes is important for a successful organization and how it views its

employees can be deduced by examining the choice of words and pictures used to discuss this

new initiative that will affect federal public service employees country-wide. This section will

examine what appears to be the true motivation behind Workplace 2.0, how it views hierarchy

and management in the workplace, and how the government believes it will benefit from the

design change. These points will be discussed again throughout the thesis, in relation to

employee interview responses, to determine whether the expected outcomes have been

attained in practice. Based on the literature released by the government about Workplace 2.0,

it appears the government employs a command and control type of management (this will be

discussed further in the "Privacy" chapter). Additionally, the alterations made in the physical

layout of government offices suggest there is a distrust of employees and a desire for a

hierarchical workplace. This management practice seems to conflict with the practices implicit

with an open concept office design.

Arguments and Motivations for Workplace 2.0

Motivators, or "drivers of change", behind the initiative are highlighted in both

documents. In "Workplace 2.0" the motivations are stated as: demographics, attraction and

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[1] Both documents were retrieved from the Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) website and are publicly available and easily accessible by a simple Google search.

retention of employees, work-life balance, greening government[2], and technology (4). Three

additional motivations are stated in "Understanding Workplace 2.0": smaller offices, aging real

property portfolio, and fiscal restraint (6). Due to the inclusion of money and space as a

motivator in "Understanding Workplace 2.0" and the exclusion of the points in "Workplace 2.0",

it can be argued the document "Workplace 2.0" was meant for the employees who will be

moving into a new office equipped with this initiative, while "Understanding Workplace 2.0"

may be geared toward executives or stakeholders. This discrepancy is telling as it illustrates one

of the struggles interview participants had with the implementation of this new office design.

Employee attraction and retention is brought up as both a motivation for implementing

Workplace 2.0 and a benefit of it. Shortly after the release of the first document in 2011,

however, the government announced a series of budget cuts that would see thousands of public

servants lose their jobs. These budget cuts began in 2012 and are expected to be carried

through until 2016 with some agencies losing up to 35% of their staff (Tencer). The notion that

the new workplace will attract and retain new employees is therefore a contradictory and

inaccurate statement considering the context of what was and still is happening economically.

Not only was Canada still going through an economic downturn in 2012, the government was

actively letting go of its employees. Due to the timing of the release of the documents it can be

inferred the government knew about the upcoming budget cuts and what was expected to

happen to many public service employees. The argument presented in "Workplace 2.0" that

Workplace 2.0 will help employees better serve Canadians, can be problematic as it can be

argued that fewer workers will lead to fewer services, which could negatively impact

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[2] Although the "greening of the government" was discussed in the documents, and discussed in the interviews for this study, it was not included in the results as it was deemed outside the scope of the study.

Canadians. Although the documents highlight more important motivators, it can be argued the main motivation is saving money due to the Harper government's mentality of fiscal restraint.

This silent motivator can be seen in "Understand Workplace 2.0" when examining the "Pilot projects" section. In this section, two buildings are discussed with four points each. Three of the four points discussing both buildings deal with money, including the points for 400 Cooper Street in Ottawa which state Workplace 2.0: "reduced space by 20%, [had] one-time fit-up costs reduced by 14%, [has the] potential to save 20% annually, [and] 80% of employees very satisfied with air quality and light" (11). Two of the four points clearly discuss monetary benefits while one ("reduced space by 20%) discussed it in a more indirect way as less space would lead to less rent and less money spent. Only one of the four points discusses benefits for the employees. This discrepancy can also be seen when comparing the two documents. One document notes monetary motivations while the other does not, perhaps to make the implementation appear to employees as something that is in their best interest. Money, or saving money, therefore seems to be an important factor in Workplace 2.0's implementation.

Benefits

The documents provide a long list of expected benefits to come out of the project. Nineteen benefits of Workplace 2.0 are listed in what appears to be a word cloud, although it is unclear as to whether these benefits were derived from data. The validity of many of these claims is questionable, as they were not proven in the pilot project. Figure 3 depicts this page.

Figure 1: Workplace 2.0 Benefits
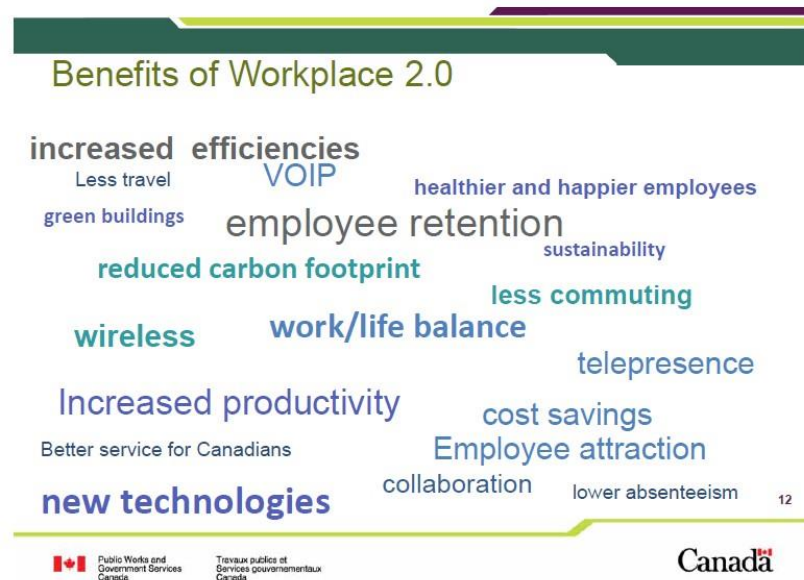
Although the slide appears to feature a word cloud it can be fairly certain that this was a (poorly executed) aesthetic rather than a generated visualization based on any data. The words are more spaced out and the font size does not vary significantly from phrase to phrase as happens in typical data-driven word clouds. This creates the appearance of a Web 2.0 practice without actually doing it. As the benefits appear in different fonts and sizes, without any indication that this is an actual word cloud, it suggests whoever put together the document made the "benefits" they believed to be the most important the biggest with no clear methodology and either understanding of or commitment to "2.0" practices. Additionally, the only benefits that are capitalized are "Increased productivity" and "Employee attraction" ("Understanding" 12). From looking at the page, "Increased productivity, "employee retention", "Increased efficiencies", "Employee attraction", and "new technologies" are most prominent due to their size and/or boldness. A number of benefits overlap in theme. "Less travel" and "less

commuting" can easily become one point rather than two as they mean essentially the same thing. Also "reduced carbon footprint" is just a more specific version of the "green buildings" benefit. The same is seen with the terms "VOIP" (Voice Over Internet Protocol) and "telepresence". Through this mock word cloud it is clear the government is trying to sell the Workplace 2.0 initiative but is not doing so with a substantive process. Features of the new design such as lower panels on offices, more meeting rooms, and more collaborative spaces were designed to increased teamwork among employees. This suggests employees can get better work done when they work together rather than separately, and does not take into account the different needs and preferences of different workers.

Is Money a Good Enough Motivator?

Both documents focus greatly on the motivations behind implementing Workplace 2.0 and the perceived benefits of the initiative. While some things are mentioned explicitly and repeatedly, such as the ability of the workspace to increase collaboration, some elements are highlighted in a less obvious way, including money being a driving factor for this new environment. Furthermore, although the government claims the initiative is positive, there are many critiques of open concept office in the organizational communication literature. With these critiques in mind, and those that will become evident through the answers of the participants in this study, money should not be the driving force behind a complete design change in the office. Although saving money should be considered in office design, the everyday workings of an office environment should be taken into account as well.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Purpose

This study discusses how and why Workplace 2.0 changed the ways employees communicate in the workplace. Conversations with employees found that the government implemented the initiative to tighten control over employees by monitoring them more closely. The mixed methods approach described below uses semi-structured interviews and surveys to provide both a qualitative and a small descriptive quantitative basis for understanding the way public service employees view the new initiative and their employer, and in turn how the employer views its employees.

Appropriateness of Research Design

This study employs a mixed methods approach as it collects and analyzes both qualitative and quantitative data (Creswell and Clark 6). The interviews gathered participants' views on common workplace issues. The survey data, coupled with the interview data, will provide the basis for understanding how employees cope with working in an open concept office and how they have adjusted since the move.

Research conducted on office design regularly rely on questionnaires as their primary method (Hedge 1982; Sundstrom et al. 1982a; Sundstrom et al. 1982b; Becker et al. 1983; Duvall-Early and Benedict 1992; O'Neill and Carayon 1993; Brennan et al. 2002; Brand and Smith 2005; Danielsson and Bodin 2008; McElroy and Morrow 2010). Less commonly, employees were videotaped for analysis or tests were administered to determine what

participants focused their attention on at work (Paul 1995; Jackson et al. 1997). In Brennan et al.'s 2002 study on open office designs, interviews and focus groups were used as a pilot project, but the responses from the questionnaire were the main source of information. Semi-structured interviews were used in Baldry and Barnes's analysis of the open concept office in three different universities. This thesis also employs the use of the questionnaire, but focuses mainly on the data received from semi-structured interviews to retrieve a more in-depth view of participants' reactions to their new workplace. Instead of relying on fully formulated inquiries common in questionnaires, participants were able to shape the discussion around aspects of their work life that were important to them. This then shaped the study.

The qualitative data in this study contains information gathered from semi-structured interviews while the quantitative data consists of data with received from surveys with close-ended questions concerning demographic and behavioural information. The surveys were administered to the same participants who partook in the interviews. These datasets will be mixed in order to provide "a better understanding of the problem than if either dataset had been used alone" (Creswell and Clark 7). The survey data will therefore inform the interview data and vice versa. The information gathered from this sample will be understood in relation to the documents released about Workplace 2.0 by the government to determine if the change in office design had the intended effects on employees and work.

The limited population currently working in this new office space required that the sample be non-random and the snowball sampling technique was necessitated by limited access to the building. One of the participants was known to the interviewer, through past work

experience, prior to the start of the research[3]. The participant in question arranged interviews with colleagues and they set up additional interviews.

Sampling

The sample consisted of ten public service employees who recently moved into the new workspace within a year and a half of the interview dates. The employees who were interviewed belonged to three different groups that reported to the same director. The ten participants were, at the time of the interviews, between 25 and 65 of age.[4] Two of the ten participants are female and eight are male and the highest level of education achieved by the participant's ranges from a college diploma to Masters degrees. Two assistant directors were interviewed, along with a facilities manager, four analysts, a senior officer, a consultant, and an administrative assistant. Although several participants' first language was not English, all were comfortable answering the interview and survey questions in English.

It was decided no directors would be interviewed for this study because there are so few of them and their experience in the Workplace 2.0 configuration is unique as their workstations are similar to the ones they occupied in their previous buildings. The majority of the individuals who participated in this study had their own offices in their previous building, while in this new configuration, none of the participants have a closed door office. Rather, they all sit at similarly sized desks.

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[3] A pilot study was conducted with one of the participants six months before the other interviews were conducted. The pilot interview, consisting of six questions, gathered information on the participants' views and perceptions of Workplace 2.0. The pilot study allowed the interviewer to modify existing questions and determine which areas should be looked into further. The data gathered in this preliminary interview are not included in the final version of this thesis.

[4] Not for certain as one participant did not disclose their age.

To protect the identities of the participants in the study, they will not be referred to by name. They will simply be referred to as a member of management or not. Personal pronouns such as "he" or "she" will not be used to further protect the identities of participants. Instead, participants will be referred to as "they". Additionally, the name of the department for which they work will not be disclosed at any point in this research. This is done to ensure the comments made by individual participants cannot be traced back to them.

Instrumentation

The interview questionnaire consisted of eighteen set questions. However, as the interviews were semi-structured, new themes and questions arose out of the discussions. Additional questions were then asked of the following participants if the theme related to the research. The eighteen questions asked participants to compare their old office space with the new one, discuss which configuration they preferred and why, and inquired about issues such as noise and privacy in the new office environment. These questions were informed by the literature, with a special consideration of the Workplace 2.0 documents. A pilot interview also helped shaped the questions, as it uncovered certain issues and themes common in the specific workplace. The survey included fill-in-the-blank questions to gather demographic information. This was done to determine identifiers including the age, position title, highest level of education received, and the first language learned, of the participants. The surveys included behavioural questions using a Likert scale with options running from 1 to 5, where "1" meant "Strongly Disagree", "2" meant "Disagree", "3" meant "Neither Disagree nor Agree", "4" meant "Agree"," 5" meant "Strongly Agree". These questions were compiled of lists of questions used

in similar studies and were meant to gauge how participants worked best, what kind of

environment they thrived in, and how they felt about being around and working with others. A

list of both the interview and survey questions can be found in the appendix. *Procedure*

The interviews were conducted over a span of two days on December 3rd and 4th, 2014.[5]

Five interviews were completed each day at the participants' place of work in two different

meeting rooms according to availability. The interviewer had to be signed in by an employee on

both days and had limited access to the building with a visitor pass.[6] All of the interviews were

recorded with an audio recording device in order to be transcribed at a later date. Notes were

also taken throughout each interview. After each interview was completed, the participants

were given the two page survey to complete.

Analysis

Interview responses were grouped into different themes, including agency and

involvement, privacy, productivity, and collaboration based on their content. The survey data

was then inserted into a spreadsheet to search for commonalities. This data provided the basis

for demographic groupings related to indicators such as age, gender, education, and position.

These were then compared to the interview answers to determine how the responses gathered

through interviews corresponded to these demographics. This initial demographic analysis

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[5] The "Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans Course on Research Ethics (TCPS 2: CORE)" was completed by the interviewer before drafting a proposal to be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee at York University. On Tuesday, November 25, 2014, the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee at York University approved the project. A copy of the certificate is included in the Appendix.

[6] Before beginning each interview, an informed consent form was given to the participant to review and sign. The informed consent form provided details on the scope of the study, provided the contact information of the interviewer and her supervisor, stated the identities' of the participants and the department for which they work would be disguised in the final version of the thesis, and indicated the study is one of minimal risk to the participants.

found that the dominant indicator was workplace position, which then acted as a framework for interpreting the interview responses.

Ethical Considerations

As the participants were being interviewed about their place of work, careful consideration had to be made to ensure the study was one of minimal risk. After discussing the study with an assistant director at the department, it was decided it would be best the identities of the participants would remain hidden as well as the department name to ensure confidentiality.

Summary

The mixed methods approach was chosen for this study because it "provides strengths that offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative research" (Creswell and Clark 9). As discovered in the study, many of the interview question responses were layered and nuanced; the same data could not come from a strictly quantitative study. The survey data complemented the interview data by providing additional demographic and behavioural information. An analysis of the Workplace 2.0 documents was completed before the start of the interviews which provided context and helped to structure the questions.

Given the limited scope and scale of the study, and the resources and time available, ten interviews represent an appropriate limit. During analysis, there was enough overlap to suggest the data was reaching a saturation point, suggesting perhaps that, even in a bigger study with more resources, additional interviews would not have been necessary. Additionally, it has been

argued ten interviews is a common point for saturation with qualitative data, and the same was found in this study (Deacon et al. 45). Access was also an issue as the building had heavy security. Nevertheless, the ten interviews and surveys combined provided a well-rounded discussion of the topic of space in this particular environment.

Conclusion

The data from the semi-structured interviews will show how these participants communicate in the workplace and how this has changed and evolved since moving into the new office configuration. It will do so by looking at different aspects of life at work including the effects of decreased privacy on employees in the workplace, workflow and efficiency, collaboration, and the relationships between management and employees. The survey data, mainly used to identify the roles of participants, will help explore how communication in the office can be dependent on an employee's job position. By using the data gathered from the interviews and surveys organized by theme, a well-rounded picture of what office communication looks like in a Workplace 2.0 setting will be depicted. The semi-structured interviews are well suited to providing an insiders perspective in the case study and a deep dialogue about the topics, providing data on open concept offices.

Chapter Four: Results

Agency and Involvement

Figure 2: Office Layout
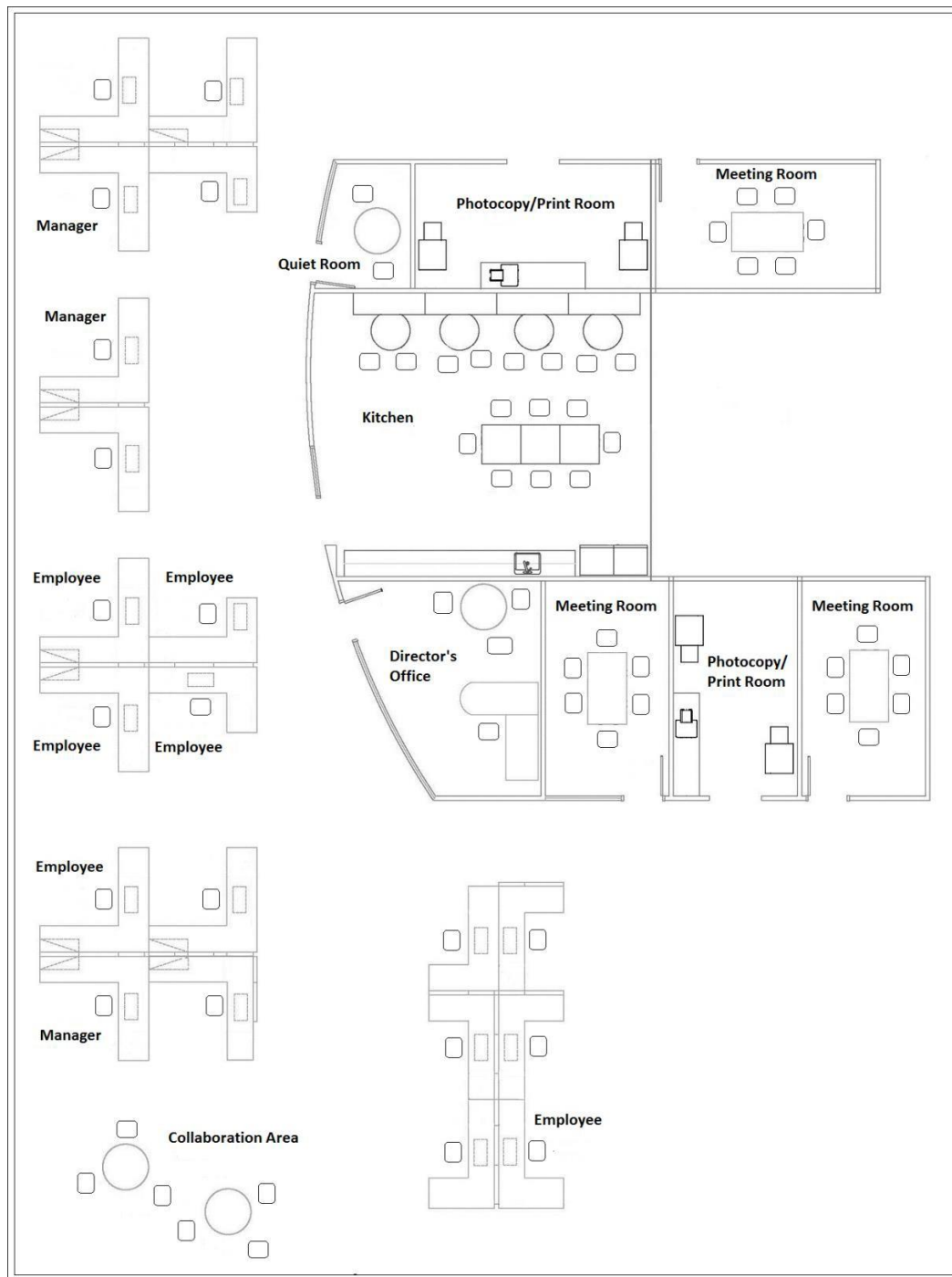
The Government's Description of Workplace 2.0

Workplace 2.0 is an initiative spearheaded by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) to "support the Clerk of the Privy Council's commitment to workplace renewal" ("Workplace" 4). The use of the unit "2.0" is an interesting choice as it suggests a more advanced or upgraded version of what currently exists. The initiative is an attempt to create a modern work environment that will "attract, retain and enable public servants to work smarter, greener and healthier to better serve Canadians" ("Understanding" 7). This is expected to be done by not only altering the physical space of the office and providing new technologies to employees, but also by updating policies and procedures used by public servants ("Workplace" 5). A major feature of Workplace2.0 is the incorporation of collaborative spaces in the form of couches or small tables and chairs away from employees' desks, which are meant to be used as informal areas for meetings or discussions. Their open design is expected to encourage "casual interaction" and to create "a more open collaborate environment" ("Workplace" 10, 28). Up to 25% of government offices were to be converted to the Workplace 2.1 portfolio over the next five years, beginning in 2012 ("Understanding" 22).

Under this initiative, space is to be provided to employees "based on worker profiles and time spent at the workplace" ("Workplace" 7). Therefore, a "leadership worker," or a Director or Director General, the only level of employee who would have a closed office, would have an officer between $10m^2$- $18m^2$.The "fixed worker," typically an analyst or administrative assistant, who is expected to be in the office over 60% of the time, would receive an office of $4.5m^2$ while the "flexible worker," or an auditor or account executive, who is expected to be in the office less than 40% of the time would have an office of $3.0m^2$. A "free address worker" or a

consultant would have access to a 1.5m^2 office space when they are in the office although it would not be designated to them specifically and they would have to share it with others ("Understanding" 9). Although all office spaces are similar in appearance, with the exception of director's closed door offices, it is clear from these descriptions they are not all the same. What is not mentioned in the documents, but became obvious after visiting one of the new offices, is the position of employees' computer screens. Contract workers generally have their computer screens facing outwards toward a hallway or toward other employees. Senior employees and management, however, have screens that are not so easily viewed by others. In addition to having smaller desks, contracts workers have significantly less privacy, and a sense of hierarchy and division in the office is still prevalent no matter how many collaborative spaces are incorporated into the layout.

An Outsider's First Impressions of the Office Layout

Upon walking into the participants' work area, the small size and low height of employee's workstations is noticeable. Standing at one end of the office it is easy to see the other end and all desks and workers in between. Similarly, even sitting at a workstation, it is not hard to see others, sitting or standing in other parts of the office. The office is bright and clean. The fabric contouring the workstations is of a beige-grey colour while desks are white and cabinets are white and dark brown. Some meeting rooms have accent colours on the wall but otherwise the colour scheme is bland and inoffensive to the eye. A cluster of couches is placed near the meeting rooms at the centre of the floor and another cluster of chairs and small tables

is placed near the windows. These "collaborative spaces", as the government has deemed

them, work to break up the rows of desks lined up throughout the floor.

At the time of the interviews, participants had been working in the new office space for

approximately 14 months. One participant, an administrative assistant, was hired after the

move to the new office and was not familiar with the previous office environment. The others,

however, had been working in the old office for several months or years.

Figure 2 depicts the participants' new office. A senior officer, two assistant directors, a

facilities manager, a financial analyst, a senior analyst, and an analyst have desks along the

windows. As noted by some of the participants, this set up is not typical of the new work

environment. Due to the extra space in the specific area, more employees were able to work at

desks beside the windows. In this sample only the administrative assistant, the consultant, and

the analyst (who was at the time working on a four month contract) had desks in front of others

and were not against the windows. Additionally, the contract worker and the consultant were

the only participants who had their computers facing outward rather than toward the windows,

due to the temporary nature of their employment.

Under the new set up, only directors have closed door offices, whereas before it was

not uncommon that mid-level managers or senior staff had their own offices. In Workplace 2.0,

Directors have their own offices that are placed in the middle of the floor oftentimes in high

foot traffic areas. Additionally, all of the rooms, including director's offices, have a wall of glass

separating them from the main work area so it is easy to view into and out of the rooms. Also

included in the centre of the floor near the participants' workstations are three meeting rooms, two print and photocopy rooms, the kitchen, and a quiet room.

In the new office environment, workstations are placed along the perimeter of the floor while closed door rooms and offices are placed in the middle of each floor. This differs from traditional offices, including the participants' old offices, which have several closed door offices around the perimeter, with cubicles in the middle of the floor. As the workstations are along the windows in the new offices, and since the partitions separating the workstations are so low, there is no shortage of natural light in the office, something the participants' noted their old office lacked.

What is Work?

For the employees who participated in this study, the term "work" can mean a variety of things. The work that these participants engage in is creating documents or products for other sectors within the organization. According to a participant, roughly five to ten hours a week is spent in meetings with different groups within the organization. A great deal of the group's time, approximately fifty percent, is then spent gathering information, statistics, and input from these groups to frame or build the product they want. Collaboration between these departments is required to a certain degree but as the group is producing products for these sectors, rather than with them, much of their work is done individually. Additionally, the vast majority of the work this group conducts is done on their computers rather than on paper.

New vs. Old Design

A few basic questions were asked at the beginning of each interview, including: what kind of office the participants prefer, what they would change about their current office, and how much input or involvement they had with regards to the new configuration. When asked whether they prefer this new open concept arrangement or their previous office configuration, six participants stated they prefer this new arrangement, three preferred the old office space, and one was undecided. Although most picked one over the other, participants were quick to point out advantages and disadvantages of both configurations. Many appreciated the increased sunlight in the new office while others much preferred their closed door office in the old arrangement as it made it easier for them to concentrate while doing work. The answers may have been influenced, however, by the state of their old building. An employee described their old building in the following way:

> …the other building was so old and decrepit. Water wouldn't
> work. Air conditioning wouldn't work. Heating wouldn't work or
> worked too well. Elevators were broken almost every week. The
> washrooms had one stall. That was it for an entire floor. They
> didn't keep it very well cleaned. The air quality was terrible. It was
> dark…you can tell that at the beginning that there were different
> office configurations but they just added a door and you would
> walk through. It was a maze, not a cubicle maze, but it was just a

> maze. You didn't know where you were going. You needed a map.
>
> It was pretty bad.

Other participants spoke similarly of the old office, stating it was dark and dungeon-like. A member of management even stated there was asbestos and sewer smells that filled the building. Although a few groups still worked at the building at the time of the interviews, this participant stated everyone was going to move out at some point. The changes therefore went far beyond simply moving into a Workplace 2.0 office. Considering the state of the previously occupied building, it is not surprising many participants preferred the new one. Because there was no standard Workplace 1.0, different employees approached the new environment having worked in different office spaces and reacted differently. The participants were, however, fully aware of the exceptional state of their old building and most had experience in other typical government offices. Though they did make comparisons to their last building in their interviews, they used a variety of other government offices as references. As a result, it is clear the decrepit state of the older building is not the sole reason they prefer the new one.

A number of suggestions were brought up when asked what participants would change about their new office configuration. Bigger workstations, different desk shapes, more closed door offices, and a further distance from the kitchen were mentioned as features participants would like to change. An overwhelming seven of the ten participants stated they would like higher partitions around their desks. None of these seven participants, however, are members of management, and the three managers that took part in this study did not indicate they

would like higher partitions. The reasons for this will become apparent in the following chapter on privacy in the workplace.

Employees' Views on the Goals for Implementing Workplace 2.0 versus the Governments' Views

As discussed in the previous section, several reasons were given by the government for the implementation of the Workplace 2.0 design, including demographics, attraction and retention of employees, work-life balance, greening government, and technology ("Workplace" 4). While not mentioned often in the documentation, it seems clear that saving money has been an important motivation for the implementation of the Workplace 2.0 design and many of the participants in this study picked up on this. When asked what the main goals were for implementing the Workplace 2.0 design, six stated it was to save money and space. Alternatively, three participants stated it was to increase collaboration among employees. Of the six participants who stated Workplace 2.0 was implemented to save money, none were managers, and two of three participants who stated collaboration was the main goal for the initiative were members of management. This divide between management and non-management is interesting in that members of management appear to be far less sceptical about the initiative compared to their subordinates. Possibilities for this could be that more information and accountability was given to managers before the move, or that the managers are still attempting to "sell" the new configuration, or, perhaps the managers believe the new office with help foster better relationships among their employees. In other words, because

managers were given more power when it came to settling into the new office, they may feel as though they have more ownership over it. Alternatively, they could also see their employees struggling to adapt to the new environment and are attempting to make the transition easier for others by looking at the situation more positively. The employees, on the other hand, may feel as though since they were barely consulted on the office changes, their best interests were not considered and something else, like money, may have been the main factor driving the initiative.

Employee Involvement and Accommodation

Before moving into the new building equipped with Workplace 2.0 furnishings, employees were made aware of the new environment through emails sent out detailing the changes, a website explaining the new workplace, and a mock workspace set up in their old office physically showing a new workstation. The emails sent from other government departments were viewed differently by different participants, some even likening it to propaganda. This implies a lack of consultation among managers and employees, as they attempt to "sell" Workplace 2.0 without welcoming the input of those who will be occupying the space. As will be discussed below, in many cases, those in positions of power were "telling" employees about the change rather than "asking" them about it. Many of the participants stated, however, that the government's communication effort leading up to the move to the new work environment were well done. According to a manager, "fun" weekly emails with quizzes were sent out.

After viewing the emails, website, and a mock cubicle, concerns about the partition size separating the desks began to "stress out" workers, according to one of the members of management interviewed. They stated that it was the first time the employees would have to deal with low partitions as many workers come from workplaces with either closed door offices or cubicles with significantly larger partitions surrounding them. Another member of management added there was "fear mongering" among employees. They stated before moving into the new office there were rumours and conjecture about what the new space was expected to be like. Workers were invited to provide feedback, and as a group, employees came together to write a list of concerns about the new workplace. An email detailing these concerns was sent to management who responded, although certain things could not be changed. The email, provided by a participant after their interview, contained the following list of concerns[7]:

- Employees were not consulted on the seating arrangement in the new office
- Employees wanted to visit the new office before moving
- Employees were concerned about the placement of their computers, specifically that they might face the corridor and others walking by would see what they are doing. They noted that this would create a stressful environment
- Employees stated certain workers required ergonomic materials like chairs and were curious when they would be consulted
- Employees were concerned they would not be able to eat at their desks.
- Employees did not understand why there was a one screen policy (many previously had more than one computer monitor)

Some of the answers given in the interviews suggest that managers in the unit did make an effort to address some of these concerns, while others may have been impractical to execute. Regardless, of whether the suggestions were plausible or not, the list is an indication of a minimal consultation process. Before moving to the new office, employees were invited to the

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[7] This list was truncated and the language was altered so as to protect the identities of those who wrote it

new space to look around, though some decided not to take advantage of this option. From the participants' email, it appears as though some employees believed they would not have any say in where their new workstation would be located. Many confirmed in the interviews that this was not the case. Instead, managers were approached with a floorplan of the space allotted for their immediate team. Based on these floorplans the managers chose their own desk first and then consulted one-on-one with their employees about where they would sit in order of seniority. Employees were therefore consulted on space allocations, but in some cases their choices may have been limited. A member of management stated: "You can't change the configuration…but at least we could change where you're situated." It is unclear, however, if management only thought to provide such consultations after employees took the initiative to formalize and circulate their concerns.

Announcements that employees were not to eat at their desks in the new configuration were made before the move. After a push back from employees, this regulation was dropped. However, employees were not as lucky with their other concerns about the workplace. The placement of their computer monitor was non-negotiable. In the employees emailed concerns, they stated that having their computer screens visible to others would create a more stressful environment. This prediction proved to be true and will be discussed in the following chapter on privacy. Additionally, workers were only provided with one computer monitor though many wanted more screen space. Rather than simply declining these requests with a clear rationale, management put in place a lengthy and difficult request process for additional monitors to the point that few went through the process. Finally, it remains unclear whether the ergonomic assessment requested by employees was ever conducted. A participant implied that it had not.

Based on these demands, it appears employees did have some say when it came to shaping their new work environment, although it was quite limited.

While those in charge of the move to the new office accommodated some employees and their concerns, it is unclear whether they were planning on providing these accommodations to them, or if it was done just to appease them. Moreover, with the exception of allowing employees and managers to consult on the location of their new desks, the accommodations the employees were granted were relatively small. The orientation of employees' computer screens, which employees anticipated would cause stress, was the most important item on the list with regards to the constant overall mood of the employees. This was not changed by management. This indicates that being able to keep tabs on employees was more important to management than making them feel comfortable in their place of work. While this may be a justified managerial approach, it contradicts findings from the previously discussed literature on open concept offices (Hedge 1982; Sundstrom et al. 1982b; Duvall-Early and Benedict 1992; O'Neill and Carayon 1993; Cozzeto and Pedliski 1997).

A member of management stated other managers were interested in getting employees involved in the move. According to this participant, it was agreed that employees would have some say in how their office environment would be decorated, although they acknowledged that that there were limited choices. With this in mind, a survey was given out with a few different choices for the colour scheme of the office. The colours of the partitions were bundled with the wall colour and the carpet colour so employees would have to pick the package they liked best and vote for it in a survey format. This manager saw this workplace survey as a way

to ease into the new environment, and to allow workers to shape their new work area "to the extent that it was feasible." Another member of management put it a different way. When asked about voting on colour schemes, the manager stated: "Well we gave them a couple of palettes just to give them a sense of participation…in a conservative way." Some participants noticed this rather conservative effort to involve employees in the decision making process. An employee stated: "they had three or four concepts and they put that to a vote. But that's very minimal." Another employee added: "See to me that's not consultation. That's "you're going to get wet, just pick how you're going to get wet." It's not a real choice."

Although workers were given information, they were never consulted on the changes and did not have the chance to voice their opinions on anything other than on something superficial – the colour scheme of the office. Their workstations, work equipment, and surroundings were decided upon before moving into the new office. Although the government implemented a new workspace that they argue will increase collaboration and teamwork among employees, little collaboration was sought in planning this new work environment, although this is not unusual when designing workspaces. Decisions were made by executives and relayed to workers in a top-down approach of management. Even a manager notes the only change that employees were consulted on was to give them a sense of inclusion in the process, suggesting they were not providing employees with a genuine role in the process. Employees noticed this as well, understanding the limitations to their opinions set by others. Regardless of how much employee consultation there ideally should be in office design, the government appears to be placing value on the appearance of being inclusive, despite continuing their top-down management style. This collaboration process was not a part of the

formal descriptions of Workplace 2.0 but was applied by management in this case. Whether

other instances of Workplace 2.0 will take similar steps is unknown, but the management's

comments in this case suggest a perception that consultation is a desirable ethos of this new

space.

Privacy

Among the topics discussed during the interviews, privacy, or a lack of privacy in the office, elicited the strongest responses from participants. The topic of privacy was also brought up by the participants when discussing other subjects such as productivity or collaboration in the workplace, showing that it permeates many facets of their life at work. The participants, managers and employees, in this study continually and explicitly tied the concept of privacy to the notion of productivity. Their answers also implicitly suggested a structuring relationship between privacy and self-policing. Together, productivity, self-policing, and hierarchy, show the effect changing privacy can have on the workplace and workplace satisfaction.

Privacy was discussed by Workplace 2.0 staff in conjunction with a variety of topics, including productivity, self-policing, and collaboration in the workplace. When asked about privacy in the workplace, participants spoke of lower partition heights, the glass walls that separate meeting rooms from hallways, the location of employees' desks, and the orientation of computer screens within a worker's workspace. Participants had different views on these architectural designs which appeared to heavily depend on their job position and where their desk was located in relation to others.

Privacy in relation to Workplace 2.0 will be discussed in terms of physical space and workstation orientation.[8] A main feature of Workplace 2.0 is the low partitions. Prior to the implementation of Workplace 2.0, government cubicles stood at about six feet high. Now they are roughly three and half feet of solid material with half a foot of shaded Plexiglas at the top.

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[8] It is unclear whether online surveillance has changed since moving into this new office configuration, and as it extends beyond the scope of this research, it will not be discussed in the study. Instead, this study will examine the architectural changes and how it has impacted privacy in the workplace.

Prior to the changes of Workplace 2.0, someone standing outside the cubicle would most likely

be confronted will a tall gray cubicle wall, when now they can see the entire floor.

Privacy, Location, and the Previous Office

Even though Workplace 2.0 suggests a flattened hierarchy as managers now sit in

workstations similar to their employees, privacy in this office is experienced differently

depending on the individual. For example, with the new partition height, a taller person sitting

at their desk can peer over their office space into another. Standing, they can see directly into

multiple individuals' offices. Closed door offices are now only reserved for "Leadership

Workers" such as Directors, Director Generals, or higher ("Understanding" 9). On a surface level

this would appear to eradicate the command and control version of management in favour of a

less hierarchical, more team oriented work environment. On a deeper level, however, hierarchy

is still prominent in the workplace. This command and control type of management assumes

that leaders know best and they must "help" employees by commanding and controlling their

behaviour and involvement in the organization. They must therefore force cooperation

(Anderson and Ackerman Anderson 3). This notion will be discussed further in the "Theory X

and Y" section and hierarchy in the workplace will become apparent when discussing

management's role in choosing where theirs and others' desks will be located in the new

configuration.

Under this new configuration employees have little architectural privacy. Architectural

privacy is defined negatively by Duvall-Early and Benedict as workspaces that are easily

"accessible to the intrusion of others", or lack physical barriers around them (Duvall-Early and Benedict 671). Many participants in this study noted the level of privacy a person experiences depends heavily on the lines of sight created by where their desk is situated in relation to others and how their computer screen is oriented. The same result was also found in the article "Physical Enclosure, Type of Job, and Privacy in the Office" by Sundstrom et al. (1982a); the authors state that physical enclosure, in the form of partitions or walls, is strongly correlated with privacy in a work environment. People in different occupations, however, "may perceive privacy differently" (558). A participant stated the following about Workplace 2.0:

> But also I have to say, depending how your cubicle is oriented or
>
> located, like for those right next to the hallway it might be more
>
> of an issue than if you're in the back area next to the window
>
> where I am. So that's not the same thing for everyone, depending
>
> where they are.

Based on responses from participants in this study, the decrease in privacy in this new work environment is noticeable to workers, and viewed unfavourably by many. When asked during the interviews what they would change about their new office, seven out of the ten participants stated they would like higher partitions around their workspace. This small request indicates employees would prefer to have greater privacy and understand that privacy is embodied in architectural features such as barriers.

Before moving into the new office space, team leaders were given a floorplan of the allotted space for their group. The supervisors, in concurrence with their employees, decided

where each team member would sit in the new office. The floorplan is organized in the following way: all meeting rooms and the director's office is located in the middle of the floor, with all other employees sitting by the windows. The desks, for the most part, are arranged in rows of two to four. As supervisors are able to have first choice of which desk they will occupy, several of the participants noted that management generally tended to pick the desks that are closest to the windows. This was the case in this specific group. The manager and the two assistant directors who took part in this study have desks that are along the windows and their employees work in the desks in front of them. Consequently, they can see into employee's offices and at their computer screens. In turn, because the supervisors' backs are to the windows, no one is able to easily look at their computer screens.

When the ten participants in this study are in their workstations, visibility between their desks is highly uneven. Though the supervisors occupy the desks located in front of the window there remains extra space in that part of the office, allowing several other non-management participants, who in this case are analysts, to also occupy similar spaces beside the windows. It should be noted, however, this is not a typical arrangement for the Workplace 2.0 configuration. More representatively, employees with a lower position, specifically a participant with a "casual" four month contract and an administrative assistant, are located near the hallway. This is a high traffic area. The participant with the casual contract had their computer monitor facing partially outwards toward the hallway, where not only their supervisor had a clear view of their screen, anyone else walking by would be able to see their work on the screen. This participant was constantly aware of this visibility and it affected how they worked. It is clear from the interviews that the location and orientation of a respondent's desk shaped

their views on privacy in the workplace, and that privacy is inherently tied to visibility and

hierarchy in Workplace 2.0 offices.

Management

The data gathered from the surveys found common traits among the members of

management and common traits among employees who participated in the study; some

correlations were stronger than others but this division, as could be reasonably expected, did

turn out to be a significant predictor of work views and experiences. The three members of

management in this study viewed themselves as talkative and outgoing, answering "Strongly

Agree" to such statements when surveyed. This differed from their employees who tended to

rank themselves in the lower or middle end of the scale. Additionally, the managers disagreed

when asked if they saw themselves as reserved while their subordinates did not. Finally, the

participants holding management positions generally prefer to work in groups rather than

individually, while the opposite was found for the employees, who mostly prefer to work alone.

Not only do the supervisors identify similarly, they identify quite differently in these areas when

compared to the employees they supervise, prompting the question: do people who identify as

generally more sociable and who enjoy teamwork seek management positions, or are they

sought after because of these traits? (This point will be expanded in the Discussion chapter.) As

will be demonstrated below, the members of management tend not to appreciate that there is

less privacy in the workplace or else do not notice it. The employees, however, perceive the

lack of privacy in the workplace and view it as problematic. These basic apparent differences in

personality between employees and supervisors may reflect that people who consider

themselves outgoing, sociable, and not reserved would not be as opposed to less privacy as those who identify as reserved. It may also suggest that privacy does not necessary hinder the work of management but hinders the work conducted by employees. Therefore, not only are members of management not reserved, the work that they do does not require them to be.

The three participants in a management position saw no problem with increased visibility in the office due to decreased architectural privacy. A member of management stated the lower partitions allow them to "keep an eye" on their staff. When asked if they have noticed an increase in productivity from their employees in the new office they answered: "Do I find they're getting more done? If I'm popping over the partition I would say, just from the looks of it, no." This participant recognized the employees know their supervisors' desk is positioned behind them, and that they could easily see into their work area, but they do not always filter their activities to correspond with the new configuration. This participant stated one person in particular looked at a magazine website during work hours, although it is not clear if they had similar issues with more than one employee. They suggested people are "still in the old mentality of being isolated. I mean I know they know I'm there but old habits die hard maybe."

When asked about privacy, a different participant in management viewed it in a different way. Instead of speaking of monitoring employees like the previous member of management, they discussed confidential information in the workplace. They indicated that "nothing is really top secret" and the people who require closed offices to deal with confidential information have them. This suggests a view of privacy as a requirement related to confidentiality, rather than its absence as an oppressive practice or presence in a positive

environment, proving it affects workers differently based on worker profile, to the point where some think of it as being something constant in the workplace while others barely think of it at all. Differing views of privacy in the workplace in this case have outcomes and shape what is seen as acceptable or needed behaviour. These differing views can affect relationships in the workplace, which will be described in more detail in the "Communication Privacy Management" section below.

The third employee in management spoke of the meeting rooms when discussing privacy. They noted the glass windows make it easy for people outside of the rooms to look in and see who is occupying the rooms and what they are doing. They mentioned shading on the windows was added after the group had moved into the new space because it was too distracting to people using the meeting rooms. Although this was mentioned in relation to privacy, this participant did not see this as a problem and rather found it quite comical when people waved to their coworkers from outside of the meeting rooms. That these two participants do not worry about privacy, unlike their subordinates who will be discussed below, may be indicative of their privilege in the office space due to their position and their office location. The responses of all three members of management who took part in the study indicate they do not mind the decrease in privacy in the new workplace configuration and even find it useful in some circumstances.

Employees

The other non-management participants discussed privacy in different ways and they were not as nonchalant about losing some of the privacy they had in their previous office

configuration. Like their supervisors, a number of employees in this study had a private office prior to moving into this configuration. Although several participants now have desks along the windows like their supervisors, they view privacy in an entirely different way. One participant mentioned there is very little privacy with regard to computer monitors. As previously noted, some employees are constantly aware of having their computers face either the hallways or other people. When asked if this was done on purpose, the participant said they were unsure as they have never heard anyone get in trouble for spending time using the computer to do something unrelated to work. They stated it was more likely to have people avoid certain behaviours, a dynamic reminiscent of the Panopticon. This is also reminiscent of the Hawthorne Effect, which saw workers act differently when they knew they were being watched compared to when they did not know they were being watched (Greenwood et al. 223). Acting differently is not, however, always an improvement, and this effect may run counter to the intentions behind open concept designs like Workplace 2.0.

Instead of increasing productivity in the workplace, knowing they may be being watched has had the opposite effect and made participants feel uncomfortable in the workplace (the topic of perceived productivity will be discussed further in the following chapter). The participant's noted "discomfort" in having their computer screen visible to other people is an example of how such practically minded management-based designs may elicit unintended and counter-productive reactions. While this participant did not explicitly state that a lack of privacy is necessarily an issue, it is clear that employees are always quite conscious of it at work. It was argued by a separate employee, whose computer screen partially faces out towards a hallway, their supervisor should not need to see their computer to know that they are doing work. These

employees do not view taking away the privacy they once had as something productive. In fact, they consistently report that being watched does not seem to help their work. Their reported experience of this visibility is consistent with the findings of several studies (Hedge 1982; Brennan et al. 2002; Paul 1995; Jackson et al. 1997; Becker et al. 1983), where private workspaces were connected to increased productivity. Instead of architectural privacy being weighed against managerial tactics to increase productivity, it appears to be helpful to management's goals as well.

Along with less architectural privacy, this environment also provides less sound privacy. Two participants noted it was harder to have private conversations in this new environment and felt it was likely they would be overheard. They were not as conscious of this in the previous office configuration. Similar findings are apparent in other studies on open concept offices. In a study by Sundstrom et al. (1982b), a relocation to an open-plan office led to a decreased ability to have confidential conversations. The authors note the open-plan office "may have made communications easier in some ways" but made it more difficult in other ways by not allowing speech privacy when needed (390). Brennan et al. (2002) also suggest "open office designs decrease communication because they prohibit confidential conversations" (294).

The design of Workplace 2.0 attempts to bypass the problem of not being able to hold confidential conversations in open plan offices by providing employees with private rooms. Within Workplace 2.0, private rooms with two chairs, a table, and a phone are available for employees to use. These were mentioned by several participants, although their frequency of use was an element upon which there was no consistent agreement. While many stated these

rooms were made for private conversations, some people have stated they are used frequently while others stated they are usually empty (this will be pursued further in the chapter on collaboration). Part of their under-use may be functional, as they do not connect to the rest of employees' workflow. As noted by a participant, these rooms do not have computers in them so if an employee needs to make phone calls while looking at something on their computer, these rooms are not useful to them. When asked about the types of conversations workers have in this new office compared to the last, this participant stated: "…sometimes it may be less personal in what you're saying because you're conscious that people will be able to hear what you're saying". Another participant had a similar view on the matter.

> Imagine you're standing in the middle of 50 workstations and
>
> you're the only one standing up, people don't know if you're just
>
> chatting or here talking about work or what the hell you're doing
>
> there, if you're just killing time. So it's a bit awkward. And
>
> sometimes, let's say this person when you want to discuss
>
> something or just ask a question, let's say the boss is sitting just
>
> there beside so maybe you don't want ask the question, it's going
>
> to make you look bad, you know what I mean? So you just don't
>
> ask.

Therefore not only are employees uncomfortable having private conversations in their work area, many do not use the places designated for these conversations. As a result, the conversations do not happen, even if the conversations are work related. If employees are not asking questions about their work tasks because of a fear of being overheard by specific people,

problems from gaps in knowledge or uncertainty may arise later. This fear of being overheard

therefore affects productivity in a negative way. In many cases, a lack of informal

communication in the office not only affects productivity but relationships as well. Gossip in the

office can be understood as a means to gain information, influence, or entertainment. It can be

used by workers to evaluate and re-evaluate "themselves by comparing themselves with

others, using gossip to accumulate information and then, in turn, to exchange it with others to

test it for reliability," or for "mutual satisfaction and amusement" (Noon and Delbridge 26).

Informal communication in the office can therefore help to build relationships with others by

determining who can be trusted in the office. It can also serve as a channel for entertainment at

work. In this configuration however, it appears less informal communication is occurring,

making it harder to build personal relationships with co-workers. This could, in fact, be the

reason less collaboration is occurring in the workplace, despite more collaborative areas being

incorporated in the design (this will be discussed further in the "Collaboration" section).

  In addition to affecting productivity at work, decreased privacy has caused stress to

employees. A participant argues the lack of privacy heavily affects the moods and behaviours of

some employees. They stated:

> I know some people who have their screen open to a common
>
> area. So if people walk by, anyone and everyone can see the
>
> screen. Twofold, yeah you're on government time and you
>
> shouldn't be browsing the Net but let's be honest, no one works
>
> 7.5 hours at 100% and if you were forced to do that I think you
>
> would be miserable. We have a couple of students whose screens

are facing the kitchen, so highest traffic area and they're

miserable and they've told me "oh my God I just want to check

my email but I feel so guilty" and they look genuinely unhappy. So

it kind of pushes you in the direction of "thou shalt work 110% all

day."

This statement brings up several issues relating to the Workplace 2.0 design. First, it

shows how traditional office hierarchy is reinforced by Workplace 2.0, as it forces students, the

lowest ranking employees (both in terms of their official position and in terms of the duration

of their contracts), into the highest traffic area of the office where others can easily monitor

what they are doing. Second, the above quote is suggesting that it must be made to appear to

management as though employees are working at their full potential during all hours of the

day. Yet, as will be explored in the following chapter, most participants believe their

productivity has decreased in this new office. Therefore if participants' productivity is lower but

they must appear as though they are always doing work, it raises the question: what are

employees actually doing if they are not doing work? (This issue will be returned to the

Discussion chapter). Finally, the decrease in privacy, according to this participant, has had a

negative impact on the moods of employees in the workplace, causing them a kind of stress

that does not appear to have been present in the previous office design.

The impact of privacy in the workplace on employee behaviour has been widely

discussed by scholars and many have noted a lack of privacy in the office can lead to adverse

reactions including increased stress levels and dissatisfaction with workers' immediate

environment (Hedge 1982; Brand and Smith 2005; Cozzeto and Pedliski 1997; Sundstrom et al. 1982; O'Neill and Carayon 1993). Cozzeto and Pedliski argue that surveillance and monitoring in an office environment can "create a climate of stress," leading to an increase in fears and anxieties and a distrust among employees (524).

In a case study by Brand and Smith (2005), a move to an open concept office "resulted in largely more negative perceptions by occupants regarding the quality of their immediate work environments" (819). Similarly, in a study conducted by O'Neill and Carayon, it is noted that "perceived enclosure is the only variable having a direct link to environmental stress for participants" (482). Although stress levels were not studied in relation to Workplace 2.0, that the participants were consistently aware of being watched and felt disturbed by this suggests there could be a link.

A participant said:

> I don't see the reason why the partitions have to be that low. If they were a bit higher maybe sound wouldn't carry that much and you'd be able to have a little more privacy. I think it's important that employees, everyone has a little bit of privacy. My opinion is as long as people are producing and delivering what they have to deliver in time and with quality they can do whatever they want as long as you deliver what you're supposed to. With time and with quality, I don't care what you do in between. But that's just me. I think a little more privacy would be nice.

Theory X and Y

Theory X and Y developed by Douglas McGregor in the 1960s provided a lens

through which to understand the discrepancies between management and employee views on

privacy in a workplace. Theory X, or the authoritarian management style, asserts that the

average person does not like work and will try to avoid it, thus people must work under the

threat of punishment to achieve organizational goals (Sager 289). Theory Y, or the participative

management style, asserts that workers will apply self-direction or self-control in the pursuit of

organizational goals (289-290). If these frameworks were to be applied to the specific situation

of Workplace 2.0, it appears the members of management are trying to perpetuate facets of

Theory X because they do not trust their employees, while the employees would prefer a work

environment similar to Theory Y as they do not believe they deserve to be watched all of the

time. Communication Privacy Management Theory can also be used to further understand this

discrepancy.

Communication Privacy Management Theory

Communication privacy management theory asserts that people believe they own and

have a right to control their private information (Petronio and Durham 337). Boundary

turbulence can occur when groups of people have different expectations of privacy

management or what constitute private information. Possible "negative relational

ramifications" can occur "when privacy boundaries become turbulent" (342). This dynamic

applies to Workplace 2.0. Several employees believed they had a right to privacy in the

workplace while the members of management did not necessarily share the same views about

both having any privacy in the workplace, and what should be considered private information. If these expectations continue to differ, turbulence in the relationship could occur causing distrust between both parties involved, leading to a more stressful, less productive work environment for all employees. Some of the participants working in the Workplace 2.0 environment have noticed the beginnings of this, but it remains to be seen if there is any potential for escalation.

Conclusion

The decrease of privacy in the workplace, implemented with Workplace 2.0, suggests employees must not only be watched at all times but be aware that they are being watched. As one participant in the study stated, the government may be trying to create an environment in which employees feel they have to be working their hardest at all times, from when they arrive in the office in the morning to when they leave at night. The lowering of the partition heights throughout the office can be seen to have created a panoptic snowball effect beginning with supervisors surveilling their employees, to employees knowing they are being surveilled and adjusting their behaviours accordingly. This has been found to affect their behaviour in that they are unable to have personal conversations at work, and they must appear to be working at all times (while potentially not actually doing work, or only conducting "busy work"). While this may seem like it would increase productivity, it can be found to have the opposite effect. As another participant mentioned, employees sometimes do not feel comfortable having helpful work-related conversations in the workplace because of a fear of being overheard. Although

both sound privacy and visual privacy are of importance to employees, sound privacy seems to

affect workers' behaviours in a more detrimental way. It is able to not only hurt productivity in

the workplace, but also to cause stress to employees. Under the lens of the Panopticon, Theory

X and Y, and Communication Privacy Management Theory, it appears managers and employees

have fundamentally different views on what the role of privacy should be in the workplace. This

gap undermines the relationship needed for a productive workplace, suggesting the goals of

management and tactics of management are not "in sync".

Productivity

For participants in this study, the topic of productivity brought out similar responses. Many believed their productivity levels significantly decreased after moving into the new office equipped with the Workplace 2.0 design. Similar findings have been discussed in other studies on open concept offices. Articles discussing open-plan office arrangements have an overwhelmingly negative view of these workspaces' ability to improve productivity (Hedge 1982; Brennan et al. 2002; Paul 1995; Jackson et al. 1997; Becker et al. 1983). Although the promise of increased productivity seems to be a leading reason for switching to the open-plan office, improvements in work habits or efficiency in these environments have yet to be demonstrated (Baldry and Barnes 242). It is important to note that the studies that touch upon productivity in open-concept workspaces, including this one, discuss employees' perceptions or sense of their own efficiency rather than looking at concrete work logs. With regards to Workplace 2.0, a decrease in productivity is discussed in relation to increased noise and visual distractions and a lack of privacy in the workplace. The impact of Workplace 2.0 on productivity, however, is not wholly negative as it has helped some employees better manage their time.

In "Effects of Office Layout and Sit-stand Adjustable Furniture: A Field Study" Rajendra Paul notes visual and noise distractions "reduced employees' ability to concentrate on their job tasks when needed" (425). Similarly, Jackson et al. found that participants in their study performed better at work tasks in terms of accuracy in silence compared to participants who had speech as a background noise (Jackson et al. 512). The authors note phone conversations,

face-to-face conversations, and telephones ringing to be among "the most disturbing noises

reported by open plan office workers" with speech being perceived as the most disagreeable

kind of noise to have as background noise when trying to complete a complex task (509). This is

not unique to corporate offices. Becker et al. note an open plan office design in community

colleges tends to decrease the total of work faculty members completed and increased the

amount of time it took to complete (718-9).

When discussing Workplace 2.0 with the participants, the topic of productivity was not

on the initial list of questions before the interviews were conducted, however, since so many of

the participants brought it up, it became an important component of the interviews. Seven of

the eight participants who spoke of productivity stated they are less productive in this new

environment compared to their previous office. Only one participant, a member of

management, stated this environment was "the same or better" for getting work done. Several

participants, like those who have participated in previous studies on open concept offices,

noted not only an increase in sound distractions in the new office but an increase in visual

distractions as well. These participants argued this hindered their ability to concentrate in the

office. Additionally, concentration in the new office affected both participants who stated on

their surveys that they got distracted easily and those who stated the opposite.

Distractions in the Workplace

Due to the nature of the workspace, many of the participants felt as though someone

standing and speaking several feet away was talking right beside them. One participant noted

the difficulty in tuning out conversations because they were happening close by and the sound travelled easily as a result of the open space and low partition heights. Another participant mentioned a group that works near theirs, stating they are "really noisy." A separate participant now wears noise-cancelling headphones throughout the day while working. This participant also keeps the door of his cabinet open at all times to attempt to block out visual distractions as he finds people simply walking by to be disruptive and breaks his concentration. This participant therefore creates a barrier between self and coworkers, both aurally and visually. In their old office, this participant had high walls surrounding their workplace which blocked out the sound distractions. This can therefore be seen as an attempt to partially rebuild the barriers that were lost once they moved to the new office. Another participant even admitted to contributing to the noise when describing the spread of headphones at work:

> The major thing though is the noise and the distractions. You know, in the open office because even though they have supposedly white noise, I have a loud laugh I talk loud so I know I disturb people but how do you stop it? That's around you all the time so you see a lot of people with headphones on, playing music. To me that's not a productive environment.

These attempts to block out audio and visual distractions illustrate how consistent a problem they can be in the new office. Furthermore, it appears as though there is no concrete solution to deal with these distractions. Most of the participants mentioned the white noise that was supposed to be playing at all times, although they were not all in agreement about its impact.

Several participants did note, however, that one day when the white noise was not playing, its absence was noticeable. It does not appear that it provides a good enough solution though, as many people are finding their own ways to deal with noise.

The low partitions are also a problem for people in terms of productivity. Because the partitions are so low, many people have admitted to talking over them to coworkers. The people in between these interactions or around them find them to be distracting. When asked if this affects their productivity, a participant connected privacy and productivity, stating:

> Yeah, it does a bit because you're feeling interrupted. The work
> that I do is not really earth shattering but I like to be able to do it
> in peace and quiet without being interrupted. I also don't really
> want people to see it until it's completed because what it starts
> out as and ends as is completely different.

Another participant discussed how the lower partitions affected their productivity levels in a different way. When asked if his productivity level has gone down in this environment, a participant discusses the impact of having a closed office versus an open one:

> I think overall probably. Because I think in a closed office if I was
> sitting here and I closed the door, and you wanted to see me
> chances are you wouldn't. You'd walk by, see the door is closed
> and say you'll see *participants name* later. If I'm sitting over
> there working away, doing the exact same thing chances are you'll
> come and say "*participants name* can I ask you a question?" So

I think the productivity does go down. Not the quality, but

probably the widgets a day does go down.

Given this environment if I wanted to talk to you and you weren't

talking to anybody and you had no way of closing the door, I'd

interrupt you. So that kind of communication to me is negative

because I'd have no way of knowing if you're really busy and

concentrating. To me it's a negative environment, it's not

conducive to widgets a day. I keep using that as a measurement. I

don't know how to make a better measurement. Overall,

productivity, I think, drops in this kind of environment.

Another participant says something similar of the constant interruptions, stating that it is

harder to tell people to leave their work area in the open concept office than it was when they

had their own office.

Many of the participants interviewed admitted to having to work from home simply

because of these distractions. What is particularly interesting is that none of these participants

brought work home when they were working in the previous office configuration. One

conversation in particular brought up this issue:

Participant: Definitely I'm less productive. Even, I talk to my

manager and he does accommodate me. If I have some files and I

really need some time and concentration, sometimes I just work

from home.

Interviewer: Ok so you're allowed to do that?

Participant: Oh yeah. Because here I can't. I just can't.

Interviewer: And did you used to work from home in the other

office?

Participant: Just here. It wasn't necessary when we worked

downtown. I just closed my office and I could work.

Interviewer: How often do you work from home now?

Participant: It depends really on the type of file I have. But I would

say maybe one or two days a month.

While at work, participants admit certain tasks take longer to complete in this new

environment. A participant even feels slightly guilty that they try to compensate for not getting

all of their work done. They stated:

It has taken me longer to do certain things and it has been a

source of distress for me to the point where I find I'm working

from home or working off my Blackberry a bit more often than I

did in the past. I feel like I'm not really productive at work so to

atone for that I spend a little more time on my Blackberry because

I don't feel like I'm doing a full day's work.

The same participant, however, stated the environment sometimes helps them to manage their

time better. They specified:

> I'm actually ironically able to balance it [work and life] a little bit
>
> better. Because I have an open space, I know I have to time
>
> certain things. So it's like "ok I have to make a few personal phone
>
> calls", I send myself some reminders in the morning and I'm like
>
> "ok I have to go in the fishbowl [meeting room] and get them
>
> done one after the other because I'm not going to have the
>
> chance". Whereas when you're in the closed off you're like "oh
>
> yeah I can do this whenever" and you wait until the end of the
>
> day and say "oh crap I didn't call the bank, I didn't do this, didn't
>
> do that". So, ironically, I'm probably just the weirdest one you'll
>
> get on that one I'm sure.

The open environment therefore acts as a distraction as well as a motivator. This motivator,

however, is prompted by the lack of privacy in the workplace as this participant must move to a

private room in order to get certain things done.

When asked what Workplace 2.0 employees liked about their new office configuration,

many noted the brightness. As all of the meeting rooms are at the centre of the building, and

partitions are not built more than four feet high, daylight enters the building in a way that was

not possible in the previous office. In "Windows in the Workplace: Sunlight, View, and

Occupation Stress" Leather et al. argue that closeness to a window in the workplace is "not only

a matter of preference…but also one of health and well-being" (Leather et al. 740). The authors argue sunlight and view is positively correlated to job satisfaction (749). In this study, most of the participants appreciated sitting near the windows because of the sunlight, however, one participant argued it was a source of distractions. This participant said they are often looking out the window when they should be working, and observed that if something is happening outside on the ground, people are likely to point it out to their coworkers and several people are distracted at the same time. The participant stated about sitting near the windows: "It's less productive but I guess I'm happier."

Conclusion

Increased distractions in the workplace are, according to the participants in the study, a leading factor contributing to decreased productivity. These findings are similar to other studies on open concept office plans in that increased aural and visual distractions are positively correlated with lower productivity levels. The result of these distractions appear to be even stronger in this case as it has forced employees to work at home when they must concentrate. This, combined with the notion that employees must work their hardest all throughout the day as discussed in the previous chapter on privacy, suggests employees are making little headway when it comes to completing their individual daily tasks. Additionally, since employees' perceptions of their own productivity had decreased, it appears as though employees are attempting to look like they are doing work, while perhaps only doing "busy work."

Collaboration

As previously noted, scholars of organizational communication, ergonomic studies, and behavioural studies rarely speak of collaboration in reference to open concept office design. Instead they discuss communication in the office space. Since this chapter will discuss the collaborative spaces included in the Workplace 2.0 design, the term "collaboration" will be used to discuss communication and group work in the office. Based on participants' answers, collaboration has improved in some ways; the new design makes quick conversations easier in the workplace. However, as mentioned in the privacy chapter, personal or confidential conversations rarely take place in the new office because employees are worried about being overheard.

The new configuration features different rooms located in the centre of the building on each floor. Interview participants have easy access to the Director's office, several meeting rooms, a "quiet room", printing and photocopying rooms, and the floor's kitchen. The meeting rooms consist of a table, a phone, several chairs, and normally a screen, while the quiet room is a small room consisting of two chairs, a small table, and a phone. All of these rooms, including the Director's office, have a wall of transparent glass making it easy to see into and out the rooms. Shading on the glass has been added to the meeting rooms but it remains easy to view those using the rooms. A collaborative area consisting of couches and chairs was placed near the meeting rooms. Another collaborative area consisting of chairs and small tables was placed near the windows, close to many participants' work areas.

Participants' views on collaboration in this new office configuration are reminiscent of other studies looking at open concept office designs (Allen and Gertsberger 1973; Zahn 1991; Brennan et al. 2002; Sundstrom et al. 1980). While this design has helped facilitate collaboration in some ways, it has made it harder in others. Documents detailing the configuration change state the lower partitions and the inclusion of collaborative spaces should make it easier for employees to work together on different projects ("Understanding" 18). As participants have noted, however, the office configuration did not change the nature of their jobs. They still have the same tasks they did before. In many cases, they did not need to collaborate, and the change in the office environment did not alter this. Everyday behaviours like talking over partitions have increased communication at the expense of productivity. Other things, like not allowing employees to have extra chairs in their offices so that chairs could be put in the collaborative areas have decreased this kind of interaction when ostensibly trying to increase it.

Some studies have argued that open office designs can work to facilitate communication (Allen and Gertsberger 1973; Zahn 1991) while others argue the design decreases rather than increases communication in the workplace (Brennan et al. 2002; Sundstrom et al. 1980). Moving to an open concept non-territorial office saw an increase in communication in the number of daily communications and in the amount of workers with whom individuals communicated in Allen and Gertsberger's study (491-2). Alternatively, in a study conducted by Brennan et al., communication decreased when moving into an open concept design because workers did not feel comfortable having private conversations in the office for fear of being overheard (294). The studies on the role of collaboration in open concept offices are split. In

some cases this design can improve communication and collaboration but at other times it can decrease it. In the case of Workplace 2.0, both findings appear.

The use of collaborative spaces was not generally agreed upon by the participants. Some argued they see people using them frequently while most stated they are often empty. When asked if the spaces are used, a member of management stated:

> Yeah. Not a ton. It's not as much as we thought. People use the
>
> kitchens a lot more. Something we didn't have...we had a tiny
>
> kitchen for the whole building. Now it's on every floor, people use
>
> them a lot more. The space in the boardrooms gets used a lot
>
> more.

One supervisor indicated they like to have quick meetings in the collaboration areas. Many participants also noted using them with their teams when boardrooms are not available. From participants responses', using these collaborative spaces appears to be a back-up plan when boardrooms are unavailable.

In "Understanding Workplace 2.0", the government highlights six reasons for incorporating collaborative spaces in the new office design:

> ...flexible furniture can be arranged in any configuration, provides
>
> employees with a spot to socialize, a great space for quick
>
> informal or team meetings, provides a touch down spot for clients

and teleworkers, solve problems quickly and effectively,

encourages teamwork and idea sharing ("Understanding" 19).

Based on participants' responses, the space is sometimes used in the ways it was intended. It was acknowledged by many that the collaborative spaces are used for quick meetings. None of the participants, however, stated that they used the spaces to socialize with others, nor did they mention clients or teleworkers using the space. Employees from other units do occasionally enter the work area for meetings with the group, but it is uncommon that non-government workers are in the workspace.

Two participants stated that, if they were able, they would bring a laptop over to one of the collaborative spaces and work from there. However, as one participant noted, the department has a one device policy. Therefore if someone has a desktop, they cannot have a laptop, and vice versa. The ability to use a laptop at work, for one participant, would eliminate the need to work from home as they would be able to remove themselves from the distractions around their desk.

Few participants use the meeting rooms for personal purposes. Small rooms with two chairs, a small table, and a phone have been added to the new configuration. Many participants stated they are not used frequently. An employee stated these quiet rooms make them feel as though they are in a "fish tank" because others can easily look into these small rooms with a wall of windows. They also argue the room is too small to work in for eight hours at a time. A supervisor stated they employ the rooms for personal use but not for one-on-one meetings, particularly if the meeting is of a sensitive nature. The reason for this is the meeting rooms are

across from their work area and others can easily see who uses them. Another participant had a similar idea about the room. They stated: "The personal rooms, I think they're only really used when people are getting in trouble or someone is having some sort of mental breakdown or something." The negative stigma surrounding using these rooms seems to prevent workers from using them for personal or work purposes.

Participants stated the low partitions helped them speak easily to their coworkers. They can just stand up and speak to those around them. One participant said:

> So a typical day really, if we need to look at documents all
> together, we'll go into a collaboration area. If not we have
> [computer] monitors on a kind of arm, so we can actually raise it.
> So we'll actually just raise the monitor. But I guess we're not a
> typical group here. People talk to each other over partitions; they
> just stand up, which is great. I don't know if you would call it an
> externality or a collateral positive damage. It forces people to
> stand up instead of sitting at the computer all day long.

Another participant stated: "You can't really use lack of communication as an excuse here because you have everything to make it happen". Other participants, however, find this less productive rather than helpful. For the people in between, these over-partition interactions, it can be distracting. The close proximity to others, some participants argue, decreases interaction because they feel as though they have to screen what they say for fear or being overheard. One participant argues this new configuration discourages, rather than encourages,

collaboration. The participant acknowledged that when the Workplace 2.0 design was initially

introduced to the department, an increase in collaboration was one of the major selling factors.

They stated:

> People just don't come over and chat for five minutes whereas in
>
> the other office configuration, they would come and sit down
>
> even if there was no chair in the office. You could chat without
>
> being heard by the whole floor. I think that discourages people
>
> from interacting with each other, which I think is still an important
>
> part of the day. That's how you connect to people and everything,
>
> but I think this configuration discourages that. Originally when
>
> they had sold it to us, it was the other way around. "The
>
> configuration is open, you can talk to each other, everyone is
>
> approachable, there are no offices." It doesn't work like that at
>
> all.

The participant also went on to state that, because it is harder to speak to people due to the

feeling of being overheard or interrupting others, less collaboration happens. The participant

argues that when coworkers have a conversation at work, they do talk about work but they also

engage in small talk. This type of office configuration, however, does not encourage small talk

according to the participant because they constantly feel like they are bothering or interrupting

other people around them. The configuration therefore encourages an inorganic way of

working with others, where they only speak about work and have a harder time building relationships with coworkers due to a lack of talking about personal subject matter.

A participant stated that in their previous office configuration, most people had an additional chair in their office, even if they worked in a cubicle. In the previous configuration, a co-worker could sit down and spend time at someone else's desk. In Workplace 2.0, a participant argues, it is awkward when trying to work with a co-worker using the same computer screen. They state "hovering" behind a person is uncomfortable and it forces people to leave sooner. When the group first moved into the new configuration, the participant stated, there were spare chairs that people brought into their offices. The chairs, however, were moved and put into the collaborative spaces where they are used less frequently. This participant argues this has decreased collaboration between co-workers in a one-on-one capacity.

Another employee argued the configuration and the collaborative spaces promote the idea that everyone must know what others are doing at all times. This participant stated it is best for each individual worker to do their part before meeting with others for comments. This configuration, they argue, nudges workers in a direction where they have to look over each other's shoulders, forcing them to collaborate when there is no need. This in turn produces a groupthink mentality. The participant argues the number of boardrooms encourages an unreasonable amount of meetings among team members. They stated, instead of asking a co-worker a quick question at their desk, time is taken to book meeting rooms, send out emails, then have the meetings; wasting time that could have been spent working.

This particular participant argued that this is the general culture of the government. They argued that government employees always feel as though they have to speak to everyone before making any decisions because they do not want to take accountability for these decisions. Workplace 2.0, in this participant's opinion, facilitates this kind of groupthink through the inclusion of lower partitions, collaborative spaces, and an increased number of meeting rooms. They stated: "There's a bigger issue than Workplace 2.0. It's government culture and I think Workplace 2.0 is really helping that…It's making it easier to procrastinate".

An explanation for this can be found in "Fixing the Bureaucracy" Donald J. Savoie argues the Canadian public service is overstaffed. Because of this "there are far too many people running around pretending to be busy, creating mindless work for themselves and others" (28). A side effect of this overstaffing, Savoie maintains, is conducting meetings between relatively large groups of public servants about minor issues (28). This point is mirrored in the participant's remark above. In their opinion, the Workplace 2.0 design encourages these meetings about minor issues to keep busy and avoid accountability. In this case Workplace 2.0 has not brought about a new behaviour within government employees, but rather helped facilitate something that was already occurring due to the culture of the government.

Conclusion

Several participants mentioned they do not work more collaboratively in this work environment because the nature of their work has not changed since moving into the new configuration. The workers still have the same tasks and responsibilities they did previously. As

a result, the configuration does not necessarily facilitate or encourage more collaboration. Additionally, with the inclusion of these collaborative spaces and meeting rooms in this new office design, collaboration is encouraged among team members. If however, the work required of these employees does not require collaboration it may only be contributing to procrastination in the workplace.

Chapter Five: Analysis and Conclusion

The findings in this research indicate a strong connection between the themes of privacy, productivity, and collaboration in this example of a public sector open concept office. Aspects of participants' everyday work routine and experiences were affected by the change in office design, many of which stemmed from the perception of a new lack of privacy in the workplace. The decreased privacy in the workplace affected what they chose to talk about at work for fear of being overheard. This affected their productivity in that they did not always feel comfortable asking work-related questions in front of coworkers and management. This emerging dynamic also affected collaboration in the workplace by discouraging employees from having personal conversations with their coworkers, something many in the office believed was important for sustaining good work relationships.

Along with the increased sound and visual distractions hindering productivity, constant interruptions from others contributed to the lower productivity levels in the new office. Because employees were no longer able to close their office doors to indicate they were working on something important, others would approach their workstation for discussion. In this circumstance, communication in the workplace was increased but at the expense of productivity. Similarly, the low barriers surrounding workstations prompted employees to speak over them, increasing collaboration but causing distractions for others.

The inclusion of collaborative spaces, private rooms, and numerous meeting rooms in the new office provided employees with areas to collaborate on projects and engage in team work. The employees felt however, that the private rooms and the meeting rooms were not at

all private and felt uncomfortable using them for that reason. The lack of privacy in this case

therefore affects collaboration among employees. Finally, it was argued the inclusion of these

rooms forces employees to collaborate unnecessarily, resulting in distractions and

procrastination that affect their productivity.

A day in the life of a Workplace 2.0 employee

The responses given by the participants in this study help paint a picture of what it is like

working in an office with the Workplace 2.0 design. Once an employee arrives to work they are

greeted by their coworkers who can see them arrive. After sitting down they are immersed in

sound and visual distractions. After looking at their work, if they find something unclear,

instead of immediately walking over to one of their colleagues' desks to ask a question, they

are stuck wondering if the question is worth asking because they fear their supervisor will

overhear and not believe them to be competent. Finally, this worker goes to talk with a co-

worker working at their desk across the hall. Since this co-worker works in an open cubicle it is

difficult to discern whether the other worker is working on anything important. This interrupts

the other worker, breaking their concentration and adding to the other distractions in the open

workplace. Once this employee has asked their question they return to their desk where they

notice their supervisor, who works behind them, is looking at their computer monitor. Unsure

of whether their supervisor has been looking at them the whole time, they continue to work at

their desk, feeling as though they are being watched. After completing some tasks, this

employee receives an email from their supervisor about a meeting that is to occur later that

day. This employee responds to the email and waits for other responses. At the time of the

meeting, the group walks over to the meeting room and finds another group still using it. While

the group waits for the other to finish, they gather at a set of couches to discuss non-work

related matters. After the other group is finished, this group has a half-hour long meeting in

which they discuss an upcoming project. After the meeting is over, the employee returns to

their desk to feel once again under surveillance and distracted.

Workplace 2.0's Ideal Worker

The data collected in this study indicates what types of people thrive in the open

concept environment. The managers appeared to be adapting to this new environment better

than their employees, perhaps due to the location of their workstation. Managers were also

empowered by their ability to watch their employees, which may have acted as a kind of

compensation for losing their closed door offices. Another factor could be their personality

types. These managers all ranked themselves as sociable, outgoing, and talkative. The open

concept favours these outgoing individuals because it forces workers to be in close contact with

others at all times. Additionally, due to the increased distractions, an ideal worker for this

environment would be one who is not easily distracted and is able to stay on task. Finally, since

there is a heavy emphasis on collaboration in these types of offices, the ideal worker would

have to prefer group work over working individually.

Workplace 2.0 Claims vs. Reality

In the document "Understanding Workplace 2.0" released by the government in 2012, 19 benefits of implementing Workplace 2.0 are listed. After speaking with employees who work in the new office, it is clear some of these benefits have been attained while others have not. Table 1 indicates, based on participants answers, which benefits have been consistently seen in practice, which have not, and which are ambiguous based on varying participant responses. The categories left blank are those outside the scope of the study.

Table 1: Workplace 2.0 Benefits

Stated Benefits	Present or Not
Increased Efficiencies	---
Less Travel	---
VOIP	No
Healthier and Happier Employees	Mixed
Green Buildings	---
Employee Retention	No
Reduced Carbon Footprint	---
Sustainability	---
Less Commuting	---
Wireless	No
Work/Life Balance	Mixed
Increased Productivity	No
Telepresence	No
Cost Savings	---
Better Service for Canadians	---

Employee Attraction	---
New Technologies	No
Collaboration	Mixed
Lower Absenteeism	No

Based on participants' responses, the majority of the benefits listed by the government that were explored in this study were not present for employees, or employees had mixed opinions on whether the expected benefits resulted. Many participants noted a lack of new technologies in the office, saying telepresence, VOIP, and wireless had not yet been implemented, although, according to these participants, technological upgrades were expected to happen at some point in the near future. This study did not conclude there was increased productivity in the workplace. In fact it suggests the opposite, with an outcome of higher absenteeism and a breakdown of office work culture as employees resorted to working from home. The benefit "Healthier and Happier Employees" received mixed reviews because the decrease in privacy made employees feel uncomfortable and under surveillance, but the brightness that accompanied the lower partitions did help to improve the moods of those in the office. Additionally, "Work/Life Balance" was not universally agreed upon as some believed it helped them better manage their time while other saw no difference after moving into the new office. Finally, since the interviews were conducted two of the ten participants in the study have left the department, which does not provide a strong argument for the "Employee Retention" benefit.

The findings in this study echo aspects of related literature on open concept offices. Studies on privacy in the workplace indicate a correlation between decreased privacy and more stress and less communication (Hedge 1982; Sundstrom et al. 1982b; Duvall-Early and Benedict 1992; O'Neill and Carayon 1993; Cozzeto and Pedliski 1997). The same was found in this study where participants felt they were constantly being watched. Additionally, fewer personal or private conversations occurred because participants were afraid others would overhear. The same in Sundstrom et al. (1982b) and Becker et al. (1983)'s studies. Where this study diverged is in its exploration into managers' views on privacy in comparison to employees.

In this study, productivity decreased as distractions increased. The same was found in other literature on open concept offices (Hedge 1982; Becker et al. 1983; Jackson et al. 1997; Brennan et al. 2002; Baldry and Barnes 2012; McElroy and Morrow 2010). The increased distractions caused so many problems for the participants that many worked from home or spent extra time trying to catch up.

Finally, literature on open concept offices asserts that communication is increased in some circumstances and decreased in others (Sundstrom et al. 1982b; Becker et al. 1983; Brennan et al. 2002; Baldry and Barnes 2012). This study found that collaborative spaces were being used to have quick meetings and talk to each other over the partitions around their offices. However, participants rarely engaged in personal conversations with coworkers. These findings indicate public sector offices can be comparable to private sector offices that have an open concept design in this regard.

Power Dynamics in the Workplace

Changes in architectural design in the workplace impact workers whether they are in the public or the private sector. This study demonstrates that open concept offices do not inherently lead to increased productivity. It appears instead, that they are implemented for other reasons under the guise of increased efficiencies. Due to a trend of reduction, such as with smaller workstations, it can be safe to assume a significant amount of money is being saved by forcing more employees into smaller spaces. This cost-cutting measure, however, can have negative effects on the people who must work in these offices, suggesting organizations or companies care more about money than the employees that work for them, and at times even the production of work.

Changes in architectural design do not always correspond to changes in office structure and practices. By rewarding members of management with new commodities created by these design changes, such as having more privacy than their subordinates, supposed change helps to sustain the pre-existing bureaucratic environment. This can be problematic because the open concept office is typically marketed as a less hierarchical environment. In turn, there can be disagreement between managers and employees regarding how bureaucratic the organization is, and how this affects work. The constant surveillance of employees in these types of offices shows the actual power dynamic that persists, which is one of exploitation. In Stanley Deetz's view, those in managerial positions within an organization exert control over others using different practices to achieve this goal. From this standpoint, these changes in architectural designs are just another way to exert control over others, rather than to "open" the office to

new modes of doing work. The open office design suggests a type of work that is more collaborative, less hierarchical, and less focused on assigning and tracking tightly specified roles. However, in Workplace 2.0, work is managed more like segmented factory work rather than being creative and complex. Their management style appears more concerned with producing high volumes of work rather than projects that take advantage of an open design.

Limitations

Due to the scope of the study only architectural changes were examined with reference to Workplace 2.0. Other changes that were implemented under the initiative include new technologies and streamlining tasks. As these new technologies had not yet been put into action at the time of the interviews, it would be a subject worth revisiting at a later date. As Workplace 2.0 is still in the beginning phases of implementation, practices associated with it may evolve. Additionally, this study looked at Workplace 2.0 in a specific department under one organization with a small sample size. There is also no standard 'Workplace 1.0', and so employees moving from different offices into a Workplace 2.0 environment may adjust to the space differently. In order to make generalizations about the initiative, it would be worthwhile to conduct another study once Workplace 2.0 has been implemented in more departments with a larger sample.

Suggestions for Office Design

In "The Hidden Influences of Office Design" Suzyn Ornstein argues office configurations "should be based on the nature of the work to be performed" and adopting either an open office or traditional design "should be determined by the importance of privacy and the noise levels resulting from the type of work performed" (144). Ornstein provides several suggestions for improving office designs. Firstly, she states managers should look to employees for input before alterations in office design are made. As the people actually doing the job, employees may know what kind of changes would be most beneficial in helping to improve their job performance and what kind of changes would be detrimental to their performance. Additionally, as the employees would have been able to voice their opinions and participate with regards to the new design, their job satisfaction is likely to go up because they feel a sense of inclusion within the company. Furthermore, a move into a new office or new design will likely go more smoothly as employees will be expecting and more accepting of the changes. Secondly, "managers should thoroughly analyze the work to be performed in the space under consideration" (146). If quiet work environments or privacy are important, a more traditional office model would be ideal. If certain people need to communicate frequently with one another their work areas should be placed close to each other. This should then be evaluated and implemented according to the individual and the group (146). Thirdly, since office arrangements convey messages to both employees and guests, "managers need to consider the values, goals, and behaviors they want to reinforce by their selection of office design" (146). Features including work area placement, size, and type of office can work to reinforce norms, values, and goals within the company. Companies that separate management from employees,

or give managers bigger offices, can give employee and outsiders the impression that it values

hierarchy (146). These guidelines offer an alternative to how Workplace 2.0 could have been

implemented. According to the participants interviewed, employees were not consulted on any

changes in their office design until the planning stages had been completed. The consultations

that ensued were mostly ineffective as major aspects of the Workplace 2.0 design could not be

changed. As Ornstein suggests, if employee input was considered, the space could have been

maximized for the kind of work that the department performs. Additionally, adjusting to the

new work environment may have gone smoother as employees would have been more familiar

with the design. However, large organizations may have limitations when trying to apply these

guidelines. The resources may not be in place for such consultation and these consultations

may not actually give optimal results. In the case of Workplace 2.0, however, the design process

was different than these guidelines and produced issues around privacy, collaboration, and

productivity documented in this thesis.

In the process of conducting this study, which aimed to determine how changes in the

built environment of a public service office space affected how employees communicate at

work, issues of privacy and its connection to productivity were raised. This connection reflects

the strong need for communication in the modern office, but communication of a particular

kind. Informal communication, or gossip, is needed in workplaces to build relationships, and

more studies must be done to discover how a design can facilitate these kinds of interaction.

This study did not address all the changes that underlie Workplace 2.0 or similar offices,

but hopes to begin a more active dialogue about the implications of changing the built

environment of public sector office spaces. The findings in this study suggest several things about how people work in open offices and more generally in work environments. Answers given by participants in this study reflect the expected reality of office life: no individual works all day, every day, during work hours. Workers need informal interactions with their coworkers to sustain a healthy attitude about their work. When they are barred from having personal conversations at work, because they do not feel comfortable having the conversations in their environment, they are missing out on an essential part of work. When this occurs, the morale of employees decreases. Many of the participants who participated in this study had not adapted to the new work environment after working there for over a year and it is not clear that the drawbacks of the new environment are temporary. If some of these design choices were made with the intent to make the organizations work more economical in a period of austerity, this may be backfiring by making work less productive, albeit in a cheaper space.

Changing how space is utilized in the workplace affects office communication, but the expected results from the design process do not always match the outcome. It may seem common sense that decisions to open-up the office, literally removing barriers between and around workers, would allow for communication to flow more easily in the minds of its designers. However this study has shown that communication in the workplace, in practice, requires barriers and moments of privacy. Otherwise, aspects related to surveillance can close down what seems to be an open environment.

Both the findings from the interviews and the analyses of the language used to describe Workplace 2.0 in official documents suggest this design initiative was applied primarily as a

cost-cutting measure. This cost-cutting measure created negative outcomes not necessarily intended by design, as the manipulation of the office space allowed new mechanisms of control to emerge. Instead of the open concept office encouraging hierarchy to disappear, it provided managers with a new venue in which to monitor and control employees. When managers deliberately chose the spaces that would give them more access to their employees, they decreased employee's ability to work independently or organically. The government only gave managers options, and manager chose to continue and increase the logic of more hierarchical office designs. In different office cultures, open offices might encourage different effects on office dynamics. In the case of Workplace 2.0, it continued the existing and reinforced bureaucratic culture.

Public servants are quick to assess how they are perceived by the government as employees. As the interviews have shown, they can be highly critical of the government: they believe the government treats them as though they are all the same rather than individual people, that they require constant supervision, and are easily placated. This suggests a problematic relationship between the government and its employees, where employees do not feel respected in the workplace. The opening of the offices appears to feel like a loss of respect without the benefits of collaborative spaces. They are not made to feel valuable, but rather that they are likely to get in trouble.

This study suggests attempting to shape the physical design of an office around saving money is a bad policy for both saving money and office design. The potential increase in savings led to a perceived decrease in productivity, making the initiative less cost-effective. Initial

financial investment, therefore, should not be a defining factor in planning office spaces as it can end up costing more than expected in lost time. In order to maximize returns for all those involved, it would be worthwhile to consider aspects of work life including privacy, productivity, and collaboration in the workplace and their relationship to direct monetary factors.

This study shows how privacy, productivity, and collaboration are intertwined in offices. In terms of research approaches, critical approaches to organizational communication research would benefit from clarifying the relationships between the key concepts of privacy, collaboration and productivity and their relationship with office power structures. It may, therefore, be better policy to design offices around these three large aspects of working in an office environment. Office design policy in the public sector would also benefit from clearer goals and an examination of management and employee expectations. Open or closed, office design policy in the public sector would benefit from a greater recognition of how productivity is influenced by persistent power dynamics, unintended uses, and informal practices of both management and employees in designed spaces.

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Appendix

Interview Questions

1. How long have you been working in a *Workplace 2.0* office versus a different government set up? Before working for the government, did you work in an office space that was similar in appearance to *Workplace 2.0*?
2. Thinking about your previous government office space and your new Workplace 2.0 office, which office arrangement do you prefer and why?
3. What was your knowledge of Workplace 2.0 before moving into this building last year?
4. Were you consulted/warned about the implementation of Workplace 2.0 before moving into this environment? Did you have any say in the matter?
5. What do you think the main goals for implementing Workplace 2.0 were? Do you think these goals were met?
6. What does a typical day in this office look like for you? What spaces do you use? What technologies do you use?
7. Do you spend more or less time at your desk than you did with the previous office arrangement? Are there any reasons for this?
8. Have your work habits changed since moving into the new office? (telework, collaboration, use of technology, etc). Do you have any examples?
9. There are many collaborative spaces away from your desk in which to work in this Workplace 2.0 configuration. Do you use these spaces frequently? Why or why not?
10. Do you find that you work more collaboratively with others in this environment to complete tasks you would normally do on your own? Do you have any examples?
11. The lower panels were incorporated into the Workplace 2.0 design to increase interaction. However, with increased visibility comes less privacy. Do you view this configuration as lacking privacy? Is this issue important to you?
12. How are the noise levels? Are they the same/different in this office compared to the last? Is there a reason for this?
13. Do you communicate online more or less than you did in the previous office arrangement?
14. Has Workplace 2.0 changed the way you communicate with your coworkers in any other way?
15. Do you have any agency with the space? Are you able to move furniture around? Are you able to individualize it?
16. How do you feel your work-life balance has changed since moving into the new office space?
17. What would you change about the office space?
18. Are there changes that Workplace 2.0 prompted that hasn't been brought up in this interview?

Survey Questions

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence the relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future. The study will be completely confidential. At no point in time will your real name or location of work be revealed in the study.

Please answer the following questions:

- Name: _____

- Year of birth: _____

- Language first learned in childhood and still understand: _____

- Highest level of education you have completed: _____

- Position title and rank: _____

For the following questions, circle the answer that most corresponds with the previous statement by using the following scale:

1. Strongly Disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither disagree nor agree
4. Agree
5. Strongly Agree

I see myself as someone who...

...Is talkative

     Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly Agree

...Tends to find fault with others

     Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly Agree

...Does a thorough job

     Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly Agree

...Is original, comes up with new ideas

     Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5 Strongly Agree

…Is reserved

       Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

…Is helpful and unselfish with others

       Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

…Is relaxed, handles stress well

       Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

…Is curious about many different things

       Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

…Generates a lot of enthusiasm

       Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

…Tends to be disorganized

       Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

…Perseveres until the task is finished

       Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

…Prefers work that is routine

       Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

…Is easily distracted

       Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

…Likes to cooperate with others

       Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

…Is outgoing, sociable

       Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

…Does things efficiently

       Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

…Is inventive

       Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

…Prefers to work individually rather than in a group

Strongly Disagree   1   2   3   4   5   Strongly Agree

Research Ethics Certificate