Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the first Work Science Center newsletter! Over the past few months we have been building our network, formed an Advisory Team, and begun implementing many of the great suggestions we have received from everyone. In this newsletter we highlight two themes: (1) the psychology of architecture/workspace on work outcomes, and (2) worklife in later adulthood. Also check out new additions to the website, including a Riveting Reads section that lists books to expand your perspective on the modern experience of working, the human-technology interface, the history of office design, etc. If you have read a book recently that you think belongs on our list, let us know!

Future newsletters will continue to spotlight emerging topics and researcher profiles. If you have a theme-related topic you think warrants special attention and/or are interested doing a researcher profile don’t be shy – drop us a line.

Wishing you a great summer!

Ruth Kanfer
Director, Work Science Center
Cort W. Rudolph is an assistant professor of Industrial and Organizational Psychology at Saint Louis University. Dr. Rudolph is an avid collector of antique hand tools such as pliers and screwdrivers. When, however, Dr. Rudolph is not expanding his hand tool collection, he is expanding the literature of work and aging. As the Director of the Sustainable Employability Across the Lifespan, or SEAL, Laboratory, Dr. Rudolph’s research focuses on determining ways for organizations to retain older workers without diminishing their well-being.

He recently published an article that reviews lifespan developmental research on work and aging and offers several propositions for how to integrate different lifespan perspectives.

Relatedly, Dr. Rudolph and one of his colleagues, Dr. Hannes Zacher, have proposed a lifespan model of generations. This model uses the lifespan developmental framework to understand generational differences in the workplace.

Together, they have also written a book chapter on intergenerational perceptions and conflicts titled: “Intergenerational Perceptions and Conflicts in Multi-Age and Multigenerational Work Environments.” Interested readers can obtain a free download of this chapter from https://www.crcpress.com/go/download_free_chapters_from_siops_organizational_frontiers_series.
Office Space: A Look into How Work Space can Affect Productivity, Teamwork, and Well-being

Have you ever desperately wanted to leave work after being stuck in a windowless office for a few hours? Have you ever struggled to focus because your office was messy? What were you thinking about when you decorated your workspace? When you are walking through your office, how often do you run into your colleagues?

As work psychologists, we examine the “who” (e.g. workers) and “what” (e.g. task performance) of work, but we often fail to examine the “where” of work. Workspace, the “where” of work, is an important part of the person-centric work experience, and an area ripe for interdisciplinary collaboration. In this spotlight post, I point to literature from a variety of disciplines that may help work psychologists rethink the way they consider the space in which we work.

WHAT SPACE PROVIDES
A workspace’s design influences the way workers use that space. For instance, a secluded, closed space may be used by workers as a space to complete individual work, whereas a central, open-space may be used by workers to conduct team-based or collaborative work. Space can also be used to convey symbolic meaning such as the CEO taking the largest office with the best view.

DESIGNING SPACE

The Flow Model posits that the office layout should match the flow of information—individuals who constantly exchange information should be situated closer together.

The Serendipitous Communication Model encourages frequent, unplanned interactions among workers by incorporating informal interaction nodes (e.g. café) that bring together individuals from different work groups.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SUGGEST?

Productivity:
- Office layout can affect the density of a worker’s social network (Peponis et al., 2007).
- Workers self-reported that noise from conversations, ringing phones, and machines negatively impacted their performance (Mak & Lui, 2011).
- Speech unrelated to work negatively impacts workers’ stress, fatigue, and performance (Smith-Jackson & Klein, 2009).
Well-being and Satisfaction:
• Physical and psychological privacy are positively correlated, and they are both positively correlated with workspace and job satisfaction (Sundstrom, Burt, & Kamp, 1980).
• In Danish offices with more than six workers, there were 62% more sick day absences in open office plans than cellular offices (Pejtersen, Feveile, Christensen, & Burr, 2011).
• Relocating from a traditional (closed space) office to an open office is associated with decreases in a worker’s satisfaction with their physical environment, coworker relationships, and self-reported performance as well as increases in their physical stress (Brennan, Chugh, & Kline, 2002).

Teamwork and Communication:
• Workspace spatial characteristics such as the distance from the workstation to the meeting space can influence workers’ perceptions of organizational support for collaborative work (Hua, Loftness, Heerwagen, & Powell, 2010).
• By making workers more visible, open workspaces can foster more face-to-face interactions among workers (Rashid, Wineman, & Zimring, 2009).

“We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us.” - Winston Churchill

Intersection of Workspace and Work Psychology:
There are a variety of ways that work psychologists can address the psychological effects of workspace. Here are few ideas to get us all going:
• Use of private space in daily respites to boost energy.
• The effect of co-working space on creativity and productivity.
• The effect of co-working space on social interactions in the workspace.
• The effect of workspace on organizational culture.
• Individual differences in workspace preference.

Sophie A. Kay is a doctoral student at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Her research takes a person-centric view of work, and focuses on emotional experience and emotion regulation of workers.
On Wednesday, March 29th the Work Science Center hosted the inaugural talk of its Work Science Speaker Series. Sonit Bafna, an associate professor in Georgia Tech’s College of Architecture, presented exciting research on the intersection of psychology and architecture.

In his talk, entitled: “What makes buildings human? Questions for psychology in the study of architecture”, Dr. Bafna presented two empirical studies that examine the interplay between psychological processes and architectural design. The first study examined how the room arrangement of an apartment impacted the psychological distress of low income Latino adults. The second study examined the potential role that cognitive structures had in the design and development of the Unitarian Church at Rochester.

To view Dr. Bafna’s full talk, visit: [http://work21.gatech.edu/wsc-speaker-series](http://work21.gatech.edu/wsc-speaker-series).

Keep visiting our website to learn about upcoming speakers!

If you are interested in participating in the Work Science Center Speaker Series, contact Alex LoPilato at alex.lopilato@gmail.com.

**Representative Publications**


NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

The Work Science Center hosted its first advisory council meeting this Spring during the SIOP meeting in Disneyworld!

Council members were agreed on the importance of using multiple formats, mediums, and partnerships to make major work-related findings more visible and relevant to policy makers, organizations, and workers. If you have ideas or would like to work on this issue with us, please contact Ruth Kanfer at rkanfer@gatech.edu.

Not pictured: Dr. David Blustein and Dr. Donald Truxillo.

In the coming months, the Work Science Center will be releasing the first paper of many in a series called “Thinking Forward.” This paper series will provide scientists in psychology and related disciplines with up-to-date knowledge about and recommendations on a vibrant and timely work science research area.