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# A COFFEE SHOP ATTRIBUTES' IMPACT ON WORK BEHAVIOR: PERCEPTIONS OF REGULAR WORKING PATRONS

HALEY GWIN

89 Pages

Coffee shops are a global phenomenon. They need to be understood as multifunctional spaces and complex social environments. A single coffee shop can serve diverse customers while offering socio-physical attributes that encourage remarkable ranges of parallel activities such as social gatherings, focused intellectual work, and creative endeavors. Coffee has reportedly been perceived as fueling the creative processes of many young professionals, creative entrepreneurs, and students (Attaianese, 2018).

Fast-evolving communication technologies and the recent pandemic have accelerated existing questions and changed conventional conceptions about where one can do focused work, what qualifies as a place of work, and how workspaces should look and feel to help professionals and students be productive. Next to coworking spaces that have recently become prominent alternatives to traditional office environments, coffee shops started to house more working individuals than ever before (Yang et al., 2019).

This case study was designed to understand which aspects of a coffee shop environment in a U.S. Midwest college town were important to patrons' decisions to regularly spend extended time working there. My engagement as the participant observer was prolonged. I spent thirty-three hours over six weeks creating behavioral maps, tracing patrons' locations and activities, and writing fieldnotes before conducting semi-structured interviews (Leech, 2002) with eight purposefully chosen '*campers*' (Waxman, 2006).

In a two-phase coding process, the data were coded for aspects that emerged from the data and concepts retrieved from the existing Dinescape (Ryu, 2005), Place Attachment (Waxman, 2006), and Servicescape models (Bitner, 1992) before studying prominent code co-occurrences to determine the overlapping patterns. The emerging themes were (1) working patrons preferred the atmosphere's warm and familiar nature in comparison to the atmosphere their offices offered. (2) Working patrons enjoyed the lively acoustic environment as they believed it fueled their productivity. *Campers* reported appreciating (3) the combination of daylight and artificial diffused overhead lighting and (4) the casual and comfortable seating options. Perhaps most importantly (5) patrons, who primarily worked at the coffee shop, valued existing opportunities to socialize with fellow patrons and baristas as a secondary activity.

Office spaces designed to mimic the described desirable aspects of the coffee shop work environment at the core of this study might help raise the recently considerably diminished interest of office employees attending their place of work in person. In conclusion, the researcher argues that the prominent aspects of coffee shop environments can and should inform current and future workspace design.

To further grow our understanding of the popularity of coffee shops as spaces to work future research could address questions such as: What social affordances do coffee shops offer to their regular patrons that their spaces of work do not? Do coffee shops promote a sense of belonging in their working patrons and if so, how may this differ from patrons not there to work? Should coffee shops be designed around *campers* (Waxman, 2006) needs, or is the diverse range of users' and patrons' behaviors present an important part of the appeal to working patrons?

**KEYWORDS:** coffee shop; remote work; third place; office; user-perception

A COFFEE SHOP ATTRIBUTES' IMPACT ON WORK BEHAVIOR: PERCEPTIONS OF  
REGULAR WORKING PATRONS

HALEY GWIN

A Thesis Submitted in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of

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A COFFEE SHOP ATTRIBUTES' IMPACT ON WORK BEHAVIOR: PERCEPTIONS OF  
REGULAR WORKING PATRONS

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## CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	i
CONTENTS	ii
FIGURES	v
CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION	1
A Coffee Shop Attributes' Impact on Work Behavior: Perceptions of Regular Working Patrons	1
Purpose and Goals of this Study	1
Research Questions	2
Brief Literature Review	3
Contemporary Work Environments	3
Changing and New Uses for Coffee Shops	4
Coffee Shops as Alternative Workplaces	5
Method	6
Research Design	6
Site Selection	7
Participant Selection	8
Data Collection and Ethical Considerations	9
Theoretical Framework	11
Limitations in the Servicescape & Dinescape Models	12
Data Analysis	16
Emergent Themes	17
Findings	18



Warm and Familiar Coffee Shop Atmosphere Preferred Over Office Space Environment	18
Atmosphere’s Influence on Productivity	19
Atmosphere’s Influence on Loyalty	20
Lively Acoustic Environment Influences Productivity	21
Crowding’s Influence on Noise Level	23
Acoustics' Role in Patron Loyalty	24
Daylight and Artificial Diffused Overhead Lighting is “Just Right”	24
Lighting and Headaches	25
Window Views and Points of Entry	26
People Watching and its Relation to Views	26
Lounge-like Physically and Mentally Comfortable Seating Options	27
Influences of Seating Choice on Perception of Safety	29
Crowding’s Influence on Seat Choice	30
Table Size	31
Contrast to Traditional Office Setup	32
A Space to Focus on Work but Still Socialize	34
Work and Socialization Code Co-Occurrences	35
Connections to Third Place Phenomenon	36
Formation of the Coffeescape Model	36
Limitations	41
Conclusions	42
Important Considerations for Future Workspace Design	43
Implications and Goals for Future Research	47

Closing Thoughts	47
CHAPTER II: EXTENDED LITERATURE REVIEW	49
Literature Road Map	49
Place, Place Attachment, and Third Place Theory	50
Third Place Affordances, Multifunctionality, and Customer Loyalty	51
New Influences on Third Places and the Service Industry	53
Technology's Impact on Place	53
Covid-19 Pandemic's Impacts on Place	54
Contemporary Work Environments	56
Coffee Shops as Alternative Workspaces	57
REFERENCES	61
APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM	65
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE	67
APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTION SEQUENCE	70
APPENDIX D: BEHAVIOR MAPS	73

## FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Behavior Map 2/27/23 @ 11:00 AM	11
2. Servicescape Model (Bitner, 1992)	13
3. Dinescape Broken Down (Ryu, 2005)	14
4. Dinescape Outcomes and Changed Behavioral Intentions (Ryu, 2005)	15
5. Place Attachment Model (Waxman, 2006)	16
6. Behavior Map 3/4/23 @ 2:00 PM	29
7. Behavior Map 3/4/23 @ 3:00PM	33
8. Formation of Coffeescape	39
9. Coffeescape Model	40
10. Literature Review Road Map	50

## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

### **A Coffee Shop Attributes' Impact on Work Behavior: Perceptions of Regular Working Patrons**

Coffee shops have a special kind of atmosphere, one that has historically attracted people from all different walks of life. Coffee shops are often occupied by customers of different ages, and backgrounds, thus having different visiting intentions. The environment present in these coffee shops is so attractive and sought after that companies have tried to recreate the coffee shop environment phenomenon. Capital One, a bank holding company with no apparent relation to coffee or cafés, have opened their own version of these spaces. These Capital One Café's are “welcoming spaces where banking meets living—where everyone can relax, refuel and unwind, whether they're Capital One customers or not” (“9 Things,” 2019). Additionally, they specify that they would love to see working patrons come to their Capitol One cafés to get their work done. Coffee shops provide a physical space where social activities, focused work, and community gathering can thrive in the same space. What about these spaces attracts a plethora of people taking part in different activities, and what can we learn about these spaces?

#### **Purpose and Goals of this Study**

Only if architects and designers understand how built environments impact human interaction, and behavior, can they be confident that their design solutions will serve their users' needs. Coffee shops are interesting environments to investigate because they seem to foster a wide variety of interactions and behavior in the same space. Coffee shops are not only an important part of everyday life for avid consumers of coffee but are also increasingly perceived as alternative workspaces (Ferreira et al., 2021). “Coffee is inextricably linked with images of intellectual endeavor” (Stafford, 2003, p. 358). This study seeks to further the understanding of

patron perceptions of coffee shop environments, their socio-physical aspects, and how they influence new and long-term users to spend extended time working there. Understanding patron perceptions is the key to understanding what goes into designing these coffee shops, and how designers can carry those strategies into designing workspaces. Waxman, one of the most prominent coffee shop design researchers, suggests “It would be interesting to better understand the differences between people who come to the coffee shop to interact and those who come to quietly sit and watch. What different needs do they have in the space and how can their needs be accommodated?” (Waxman, 2006, p. 49). Further research is needed on the contrasting personalities between people who go to the coffee shop to work, those who come to sit and watch, and those who come to socialize. She emphasizes the vast deviation from one person to the next and suggests that the information currently available is lacking to explain how those differing needs are best accommodated by the coffee shop environment. Researchers also lack a theoretical model that can be used to research these coffee shop environments. Existing literature focuses more on dining environments and restaurant contexts, hence the necessity to create a model that caters specifically to coffee shops. Another purpose driving factor for this study was to create just that, a model that can guide future studies in coffee shop environments.

### **Research Questions**

- Which physical attributes of the coffee shops do regular patrons perceive as supportive of their work activities?
- What social attributes of the coffee shops do patrons perceive as contributing factors in their decision to work there?

- What role do recent developments in technology, changing workspace design, as well as changes caused by the pandemic, play in patrons' decision to work remotely, using a coffee shop as a workspace.

## **Brief Literature Review**

### ***Contemporary Work Environments***

Technology's ever-changing nature coupled with the new challenges that the pandemic brought to the world, has shifted workspace design. Harris researched workspace design in 2015, and found that companies were experiencing drastic changes in work culture, as well as work modes. Harris argued that work was more complex in collaboration, more team-based, and featured an emphasis on social skills and technological competence. Work also appeared more time-pressured, time-sensitive, and featured a greater amount of mobile and remote work (Harris, 2015). The new work mode consisting of employees working from home some days and in office others, grew and so did the number of employees working fully remote. This led businesses to rent office spaces instead of owning a typical office building (Harris, 2015). Likewise, the offices that still exist look more like hotels than like offices in recent years. These office spaces are more focused on high levels of amenities for guests and staff and try to allow for a seamless blend of work and leisure time for the employees. Subsequently, offices have become more open, featuring fewer cubicles, have modernized with technology, and leave more room for "fun" (Leadon, 2015)

These changes to workspaces, although interesting, also bring about challenges. For example, the open office plan that is still widely used today creates room for a potentially noisy workspace, which can be bothersome to certain employees. While there are drawbacks, Attaianesse found evidence that linked daylighting and views as well as specific acoustic settings

to creative thought in the workspace. In the study, the stochastic background noise was found desirable to many employees who favored an environment that had a meager chatter present similar to what one would expect in a café or library space (Attaianese, 2018). This sheds light on some of the benefits of new office designs and their ability to influence creative thought and productivity. When selecting a preferred office space, the subjectivity and wide range of preferences possible from one employee to the next, can be profound and surprising. Studies suggest the importance of being aware of the different personality types present in each workspace, making flexibility and customizability very important in the design of the space (Leadon, 2015).

Corporate office spaces have begun to implement the findings and understand the trends that have surfaced in recent research developments. Despite these efforts, the growing number of people yearning for remote or hybrid work modes and locations continues to rise (Deskmag, 2018). Coworking spaces can teach us so much about office design. They cater to a wide range of individuals and activities. A coworking space is a “shared physical workspace and (often) intentional cooperation between independent workers” (Waters-Lynch et al., 2016, p. 2). Coffee shops and other spaces commonly used today as coworking spaces also fall into the category of a community hot spot, known as a third place.

### ***Changing and New Uses for Coffee Shops***

Coffee shops can be understood as a “third place,” according to social commentator Ray Oldenburg (1999) who coined the term. Being neither home nor work, a third place fills the gaps between a casual community stop and an individual's cherished home away from home. Rapidly expanding, quickly moving technological advancements as well as the Covid-19 pandemic have raised new questions about how we use all spaces, workspaces, and other social or professional

gathering spaces included. New and changing work modes have turned the coffee shop into not just a third place for community gathering and socialization but also a workspace for many professionals, creative individuals, and students.

### *Coffee Shops as Alternative Workplaces*

In 2018, 1.7 million people were already working in coworking spaces around the world (Deskmag, 2018). This number has surely sky-rocketed since then, especially given the change the pandemic has brought about. Coworking spaces are designed to foster collaboration, community, and creativity (Brown, 2017). Han (2013) outlined that there were two main categories amongst coworking spaces (1) spaces for work, including private offices, open workstations, meeting rooms, and areas for copying/printing; and (2) spaces for amenities, including reception areas, lobby, lounge, breakout rooms and work café or kitchen. Only the most cutting-edge workspace design accomplishes the same environmental affordances as a coworking space, which is why coworking spaces are often the inspiration for new office designs (Yang, 2019). The design features present in coworking spaces help to provide benefits to the users but also cater to specific activities, users, and style preferences. Coworking spaces are chosen by users based on their preferences and subjective opinions about the space, this can be referred to as the users' "style". The people who are working regularly at a given coworking space choose to go there because they are drawn to the atmosphere it provides. An assigned corporate office cannot cater to all employees in the same way. Commonly, coffee shop users feel a strong attachment to their chosen coffee shop, as well as the community it resides in (Waxman, 2006). Waxman mentions this phenomenon is especially prevalent when the patrons at hand are 'campers'. These are patrons who come to the coffee shop frequently and stay for hours on end during each visit (Waxman, 2006). People may choose their coffee shop of choice



for subjective reasons but there are commonalities across the choices patrons make. From privacy to spatial allocation, from comfort, to acoustic environments, coffee shops form a psychological comfort for their patrons that sets the space apart from any other, leading them to come back for more. Leadon (2015) argues that loyalty is linked to their feeling or sense of control in the space, their creativity, and their territoriality to the coffee shop itself. All of this encompasses the many reasons why coffee shops are great spaces to work.

Although prior research has begun to dissect this phenomenon, there is still more research needed that pays special attention to the user perceptions of the coffee shop spaces the working patrons choose to dwell in. Therefore, the researcher began the inquiry in a Midwest college town in the United States where a coffee shop commonly used for coworking is located. Data was collected and analyzed to inquire about what socio-physical aspects of coffee shops were important to patrons' decisions to regularly spend extended time working there. This study attempts to dissect and distinguish recommendations and themes that can inform future workplace design.

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

This study used qualitative research methods to study patron perceptions. These perceptions are the center or basis for constructing meaning and informing results in this study. The participants have unique experiences that shape their subjective perspectives which need to be explored to draw conclusions. Qualitative inquiry seeks to shed light on these meanings for the individual and their role in the big picture (Eisner, 1998).

Flyvbjerg (2011) outlined the benefits of conducting extreme or deviant case studies. Extreme or deviant case studies are well suited for theory development because they help

researchers understand the limits in the existing research literature on a given topic. This allows for theory development through expanding on existing theories and developing new concepts. Subsequently, it seemed necessary to conduct an extreme or deviant case study in this study (Flyvbjerg, 2011) of a coffee shop near a college campus in central Illinois, because it was perceived by the baristas to be used as a workspace more than other coffee shops in the area. The selection of an atypical or extreme case provides a deeper level of richness than other coffee shops and allowed me to obtain more relevant and specific data. As Flyvbjerg (2011) explains, randomly sampled cases and representative cases do not provide the same richness of information. Because the focus is to shed light on coffee shops as an alternative space of work, it was vital to use an extreme case that appeared to be representative of that niche.

### **Site Selection**

Site selection began with locating and identifying a coffee shop with an abundance of workers and students. This location was selected for geographical convenience as well. The coffee shop selected was located just outside of a public university college campus in central Illinois. The site selection methods used are later supported by the findings of this study when comparing analytical code counts of working patrons versus patrons not visiting the shop to do work.

This coffee shop is located in a small historical downtown area. The walls of the shop are painted a subtle light blue color and feature large, framed artwork made by local artists. The lighting in the shop has a cool white hue and is relatively dim yet sufficient for the work tasks participants engaged in. The hardwood flooring has a medium oak tone. Most of the tables and chairs are either wood or painted black. The booths have a high backrest and are upholstered with a durable blue leather-looking material along with the bar stools. The two bar tops where

the bar stools are placed are made of live edge wood plank, which is a rawer cut of wood where some bark and knots of the tree are still showing. The wood present in the space provides some much-needed texture to the space. The employee countertops are stainless steel, featuring a bright teal blue painted wood on the base cabinets facing the customer area. The large storefront windows are almost floor-to-ceiling height, bringing a lot of natural lighting into the space. The space has high ceilings painted white, with exposed stainless-steel HVAC, contributing to the historical retro charm. The space features many cool tones with stainless steel, the blue upholstery, the blue walls, and the natural lighting, contrasted by the wood in the space which warms it up creating an inviting neutral palette.

### **Participant Selection**

The participants for this study were purposefully chosen and recruited during the observation and behavioral mapping sessions to represent a diverse range of regular coffee shop patrons engaging in a variety of tasks. Participants who were observed during observation sessions and recorded on the behavioral maps were asked to participate in the interviews. To aid in this participant recruitment process, I relied on the baristas, some of whom I was already acquainted with, to help with the identification of regulars and to facilitate initial introductions. After prompting the question about whether or not the patrons were interested in the short interviews, they were shown and briefed on the study and provided with the consent form. Once the patron agreed to participate in the interview sessions, this form was signed. A copy of the consent form is located in Appendix A. The total sample size for interview participants consisted of eight adult patrons. All participant names were replaced with pseudonyms to ensure anonymity within the study. The pseudonyms are Molly, Fitz, Joan, Maria, Raven, Lewis, Samara, and Walter.

“Molly” is a female college student between the ages of 21-25 who is a regular at the coffee shop used in this study. “Fitz” is a female graduate student between the ages of 21-25 who is a regular at the shop. “Joan” is a female college student studying art education and is between the ages of 18-21. Joan is also a regular at the shop and mentions that the shop holds a special place in her heart. “Maria” is a female between the ages of 25-30 who is a remote worker, primarily working outside the office. Maria is a regular at the shop and comes a few times per week to work remotely. “Raven” is a female between the ages of 21-25 who recently graduated and is now a remote worker, only working one day in the office per month. Raven works in a coffee shop almost 4 out of 5 days per week and considers herself a regular. “Lewis” is a male college student and possible graduate student, between the ages of 25-30. “Samara” is a female college student between the ages of 18-21 who comes to the shop to socialize occasionally. “Walter” is a male college student between the ages of 21-25 who comes to the shop to socialize occasionally as well.

### **Data Collection and Ethical Considerations**

Data was collected from a variety of sources to improve validity. I began data collection by spending substantial time with field observations, captured by ethnographic field notes (Emerson et al., 1995), followed by a phase during which I conducted semi-structured interviews (Leech, 2002). These interviews were guided using the interview guide to ensure a strategic question sequence for each interview. The interview guide and question sequence guides can be found in Appendix B, and Appendix C. Field notes and interview transcripts became my main sources of data. Observation periods filled any time not allocated for the semi-structured and open-ended interview sessions (Leech, 2002). The interviews were 10-20 min long, taking place in the coffee shop itself, with audio recordings taken using a password-protected audio recording

app on a cellular phone. Six question categories were addressed within the interview questions: (1) General Information, (2) Tasks Performed and Technology, (3) Socialization, (4) Pandemic, (5) Physical Attributes, and (6) Closing Questions. The full interview guide and the alignment table that matches the research questions with the interview questions that inform them can be found in Appendix B and C. After data collection and analysis were finalized, all participants were debriefed on the study and its results through email. The email consisted of notifying them on the study's progress and the findings. They were then given my information yet again to ensure that they could contact me with any further questions.

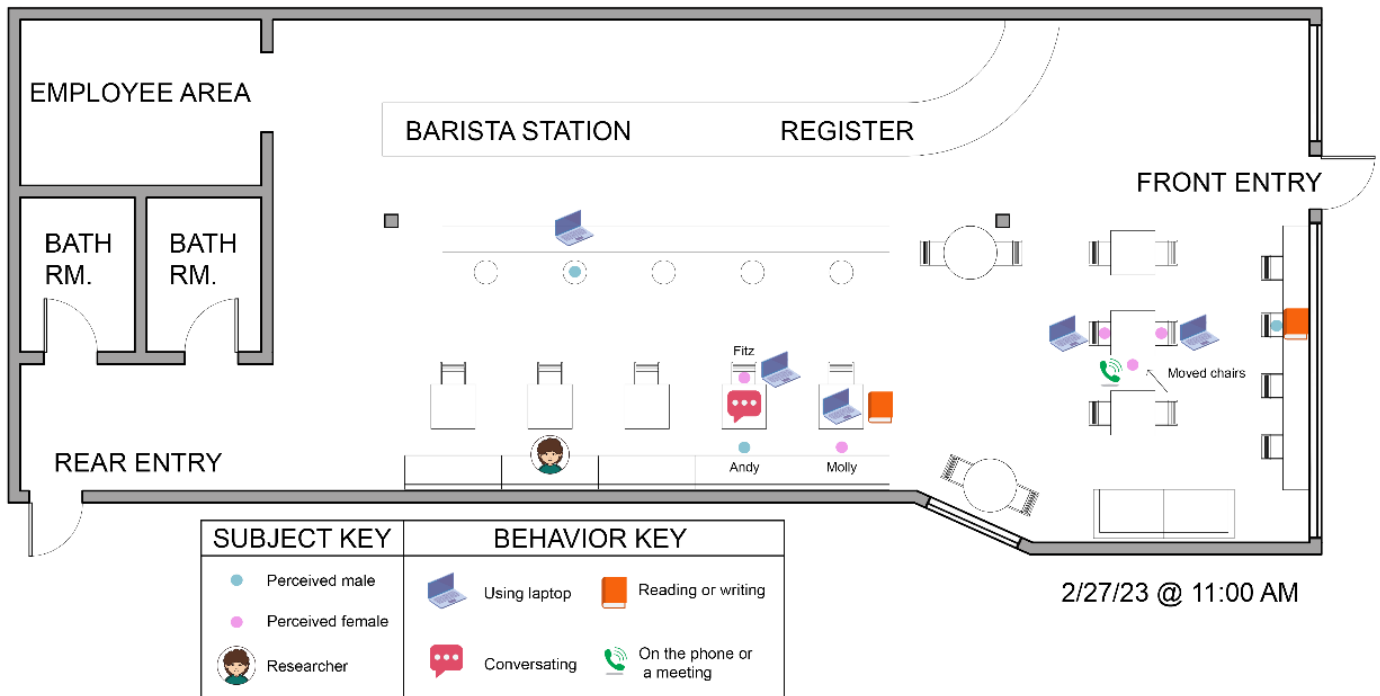
Furthermore, the floor plan of the coffee shop space was drafted, and the main areas and furniture arrangement were noted. I later used these floor plans to create behavioral maps for the patrons and their differing activities (Ng, 2016). The behavioral maps will serve to illustrate observations not captured in the field notes as well as to underscore participants' perceptions in the final report. This method of triangulating between data sources creates a richer account of the environment and the behaviors present than any single data source could offer. Supporting findings relying on multiple forms of data sources improves validity overall.

Behavior maps were created every 30 min systematically while observing and documenting in a clockwise manner around the room to ensure consistent data collection proceedings across all maps. The maps share the same symbol-based subject key and behavior key that denotes the locations and activities of each patron. There is also a symbol that marks my location during the behavior map production. The different service zones within the floor plan are noted to help the reader understand the placement of the main physical environmental features. During the behavioral mapping process, all possible candidates for interviews were tagged with their associated pseudonyms anytime they were present on the behavioral maps.

Figure 1 is one of these behavioral maps for reference. The complete set of behavioral maps can be found in Appendix D.

**Figure 1**

*Behavior Map 2/27/23 @ 11:00 AM*



### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework guiding data analysis consisted of three parts, the Servicescape (Bitner, 1992), the Dinescape (Ryu, 2005), and the Place Attachment Model (Waxman, 2006). Below they are established and explained as valuable tools to investigate patron behavior for this case study.

Later, a discussion about the shortcomings of these models is followed by a description of how they informed the formation of a new model deemed the “Coffeescape” model. This new, for now untested model, could be useful to future studies of coffee shop environments I created the Coffeescape model, during the analysis process. It is part of the results of this inquiry.

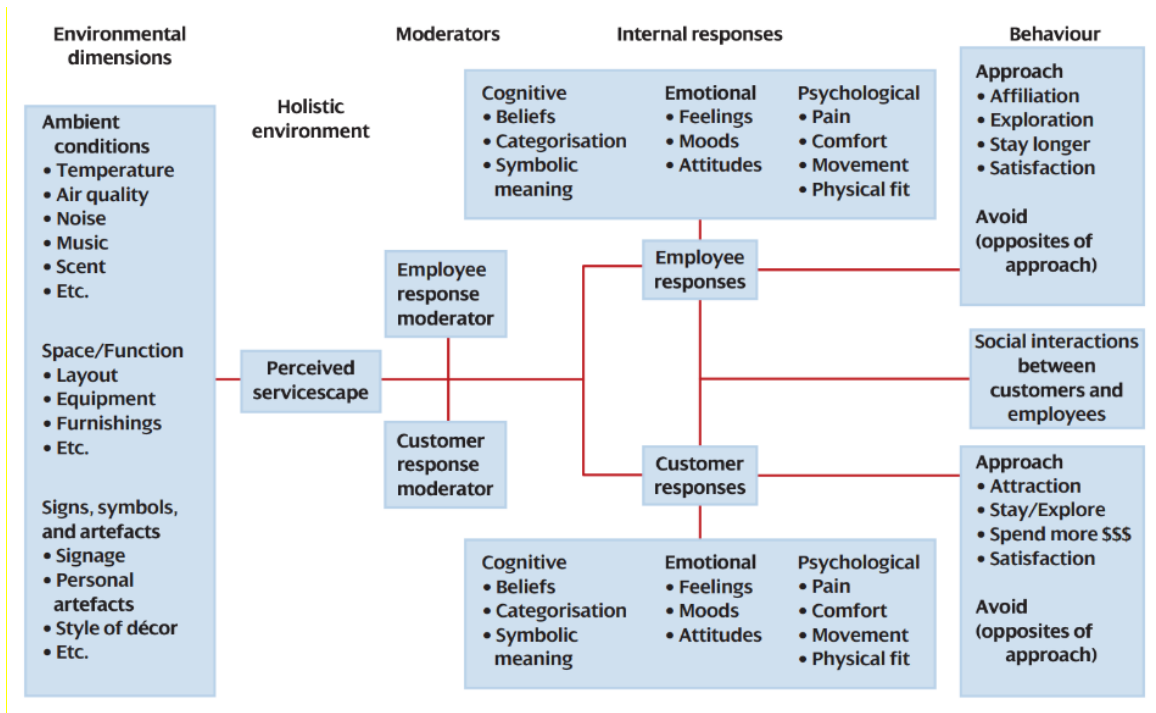
### *Limitations in the Servicescape & Dinescape Models*

Place attachment in connection to socio-physical home and work environments has received the attention of social scientists for decades (Altman & Lowe, 1992). Studies of place attachment and multi-use present in commercial third places also exist but have been typically focused on restaurants, producing the Servicescape (Bitner, 1992) and Dinescape models (Ryu, 2005).

The Servicescape model is a framework developed by Mary Jo Bitner in 1992. The Servicescape can be understood as the physical space where services take place (Bitner, 1992). The Servicescape investigates the physical and built environment, while also surveying how it affects the internal responses of the employees and customers. It excludes the natural and social environment and is instead limited to physical factors that can be manipulated by the service owner or company. The main purpose of the model displayed in Figure 2 is to note the physical factors of the environment as well as the possible impact these have on the enhancement of responses and behaviors of the customers and employees (Bitner, 1992) There are three main environmental dimensions to the Servicescape, (1) ambient conditions (typically related to aesthetics); (2) spatial layout and functionality; and (3) signs, symbols, and artifacts. There are also two main moderators, employee responses, and customer responses that are then broken down further. The model shown in Figure 2 suggests that the ambiance and dimensions of the Servicescape have a direct impact on customer behavior (Bitner, 1992).

**Figure 2**

*Servicescape Model (Bitner, 1992)*



*Note.* From “Servicescapes: The Impact of Physical Surroundings on Customers and Employees,” by M. J. Bitner, 1992, *Journal of Marketing: American Marketing Association*, 56, 57.

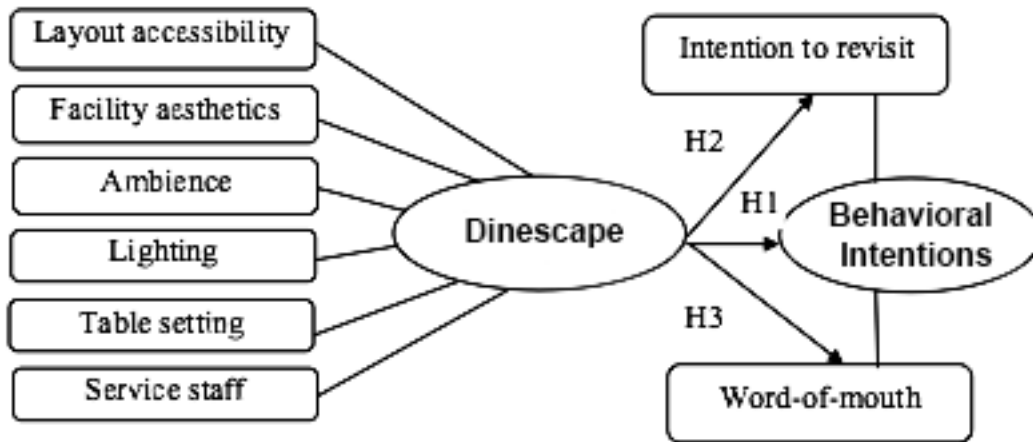
The Dinescape model (Figure 3; Ryu, 2005) is thought of as an evolution of the Servicescape model (Bitner, 1992) that is more focused on the niche of upscale restaurants in the service realm. The Servicescape tends to focus more on key physical factors of the environment and therefore less on how the overall environment affects patron behavior and purchasing decisions (Bitner, 1992). The main purpose of the formation of the Dinescape model was to create an overarching conceptual model that can be empirically tested to study these effects (Ryu, 2005). Ryu sought to fill the gaps created by the small number of studies that observed the upscale dining context. On the right-hand side of Figure 3, displays changes in patrons’ mindsets



and behaviors in response to the physical factors of the Dinescape. The intention to revisit, word-of-mouth advertisement, and behavioral intentions overall are all hypothesized to be affected by the different physical variables of the Dinescape (Ryu, 2005). Likewise, Figure 4 provides a more careful look at the patron's feelings of arousal and pleasure, created by the environment, and how this influences their behavioral intentions (Ryu, 2005).

**Figure 3**

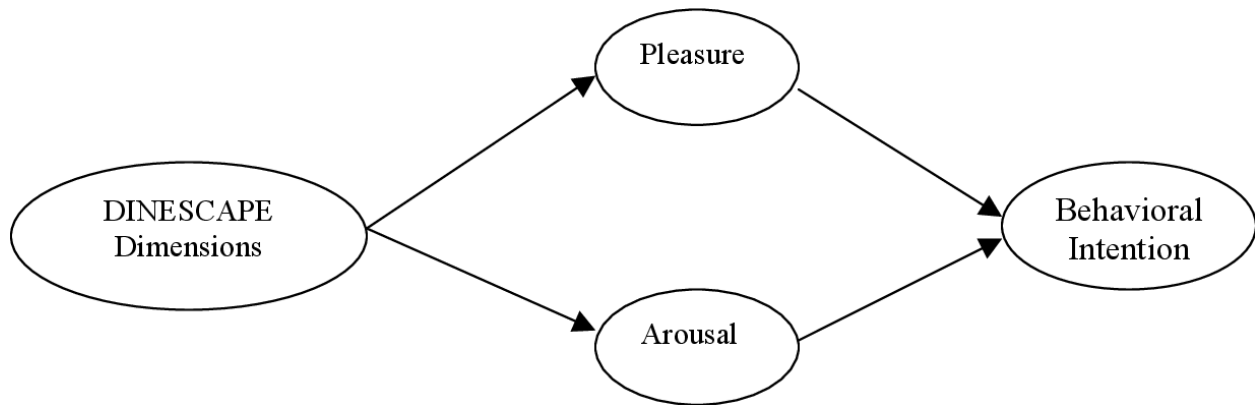
*Dinescape Broken Down (Ryu, 2005)*



*Note.* From “Dinescape: A Scale for Customers’ Perception of Dining Environments” by K. Ryu, 2005, *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, 11, p. 8.

**Figure 4**

*Dinescape Outcomes and Changed Behavioral Intentions (Ryu, 2005)*

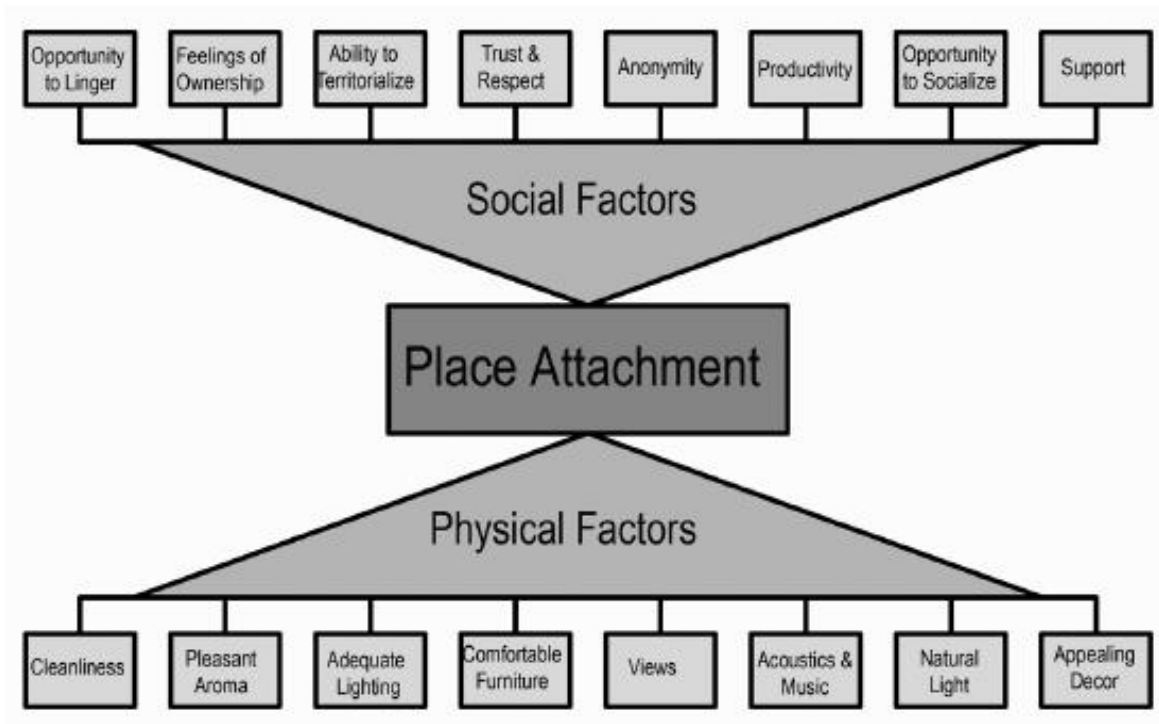


*Note.* From “Dinescape: A Scale for Customers’ Perception of Dining Environments” by K. Ryu, 2005, *Journal of Foodservice Business Research*, 11, p. 7.

Place attachment is the bond between a person and a place that is created by specifiable characteristics of the space and people residing within it (Shumaker & Taylor, 1983). The Place Attachment Model (Figure 5; Waxman, 2006) is very relevant to this study as is place attachment. Waxman’s model (2006) sought to explain how the social and physical factors of a third place can influence place attachment. The key difference between Waxman’s model and the model I created is that she focuses more on the social aspects.

**Figure 5**

*Place Attachment Model (Waxman, 2006)*



*Note.* From “The Coffee Shop: Social and Physical Factors Influencing Place Attachment” by L. Waxman, 2006, *Journal of Interior Design*, 31, p. 50.

### **Data Analysis**

The interview recordings were immediately transcribed after the participants’ names were replaced with pseudonyms. A transcription service was used that is password protected. Data analysis included two coding phases consisting of open and focused coding using Dedoose, a qualitative data management software. During the initial coding phase, excerpts were sorted into prominent codes that emerged from the data at hand. The next phase consisted of more focused coding during which the categories from the existing Dinescape (Ryu, 2005), Servicescape (Bitner, 1992), and Place Attachment Model (Waxman, 2006), guided the analysis. The relevant aspects of these models were used as codes to code through the interview transcripts. This coding

process allowed meaning to appear in the data gradually. The goal of this procedure was to develop an understanding of the overlapping patterns present in the data, (Saldaña, 2009) which I have condensed into theme statements that will serve as the core findings of this inquiry. While the pandemic has shifted the way we use spaces, and how we work, it became a secondary focus in this study. After coding the data twice, I noticed that the interview questions about the pandemic were not eliciting rich responses in the interviews. This was a result of using questions in the interview that were limited to inquiring about when the interviewees established their patronage at the shop. The questions did not prompt rich responses on the pandemic's role which is the reason I decided to exclude the pandemic as a factor for this final report.

Towards the conclusion of data analysis and during the review of analytical log notes, themes emerged out of the data. These themes consisted of surprising findings that were present across most of the interview participants. Themes were also formed as a byproduct of prominent code co-occurrences and high code frequencies. Dedoose analysis software was used to quickly compare transcripts, locate coded excerpts, and analyze the data through charts and diagrams.

### **Emergent Themes**

The five themes that emerged during data analysis were (1) working patrons preferred the atmosphere's warm and familiar nature in comparison to the atmosphere their offices offered. (2) Working patrons enjoyed the lively acoustic environment as they believed it fueled their productivity. 'Campers' reported appreciating (3) the combination of daylight and artificial diffused overhead lighting and (4) the casual and comfortable seating options. Perhaps most importantly (5) patrons, who primarily worked at the coffee shop, valued existing opportunities to socialize with fellow patrons and baristas as a secondary activity.

The behavioral maps (Ng, 2016) as well as field notes (Emerson et al., 1995) were analyzed to verify the theme statements, and other findings present. These maps were not coded the same way the transcripts were, but rather were used later as a form of verification. These supplemental materials are shared in Appendix C to maximize the transparency of the research process.

## **Findings**

Below is an explanation of each of the five emerging themes that represent the findings of this study.

### **Warm and Familiar Coffee Shop Atmosphere Preferred Over Office Space Environment**

Many of the working patrons mentioned that they liked the coffee shop because it felt warm, cozy, and familiar. It is expected that a coffee shop yields this kind of environment because it is the epitome of a third place. This place is not home, nor is it traditionally thought of as a workplace by design, therefore it is a third place (Oldenburg, 1999). “I feel like it kind of has a living room feel. It’s nice to feel like I am out in public getting work done, but I’m also not uncomfortable. It doesn’t feel like I am in a store or something” (Molly). This comparison to a store is intriguing because it seems to imply that Molly feels more connected and more comfortable in this space. Coffee shops are often understood as a casual community stop where all are welcome. A place to exchange ideas, socialize, and build relationships with people that we would not meet elsewhere (Oldenburg, 1999). Despite this separate category striving to delineate a third place from a second or first place, the lines appear more blurred than expected. The number of patrons using third places to work is highly accepted and comprehended today, even though coffee shops traditionally were not used as a workspace. Interestingly patrons there to socialize as well as patrons there to work both reported to enjoy the warm, cozy, familiar

atmosphere. The working patrons agreed that the physical environment present in the shop made them feel comfortable and aided in their ability to be productive during their visits.

### *Atmosphere's Influence on Productivity*

Although this study did not aim to determine how the socio-physical atmosphere present in the shop can aid in productivity, it is important that the patrons reported feeling this way. Even if their productivity levels were not measured, the patron perceptions provide valuable information leading to the overall theme present. Fitz explains it like this, “If I’m coming here to accomplish stuff, I know what I need to do and I have a list of things I need to get done. Usually, I hang out here while completing my list of what I need to do.” Fitz holds herself accountable to be productive while residing in the coffee shop. Having no problem doing so keeps her coming back as a regular working patron.

Likewise, Maria touched on this saying, “I feel like everybody else working keeps me motivated. If I find myself scrolling too long on TikTok, then I look and see somebody else typing away on their laptop. I’m like that’s right. I have to get back to work”. Similarly, Molly described,

“A lot of the reason why I like to go to places like this to get some work done is because I have ADHD. And so, something that is like a technique that people use for focus with ADHD is called body doubling... and so, being around a bunch of people that are working and getting their work done and studying, helps me.”

This idea of parallel productivity featuring one productive individual in the same space as other productive individuals is also present in the typical open office setup, yet the social atmosphere varies between the two. This is well explained by Fitz when she notes,

“If I’m in my office, it's more like I'm getting things done where I can't socialize, I can't have any distractions. If I'm just getting some work done, I like it here better just because

it's livelier and more relaxed. There are people I could talk to, people I could get coffee with. It's still a workspace, but a more relaxed one per se.”

This notable contrast contributed to the theme comparing the typical office space to the coffee shop. Many patrons emphasized that they come to the coffee shop rather than an office-like space if they wanted to focus on their tasks and be productive. The patrons felt that even a handful of productive visits created a behavioral expectation for future visits. They began to perceive themselves as productive and began to hold themselves accountable when visiting.

### *Atmosphere's Influence on Loyalty*

The loyalty of the ‘campers’ appeared to play a role in this as well. People grow to expect a particular atmosphere and a certain outcome when they develop place attachment to a specific space (Altman & Lowe, 1992). This bond between a person and a place is created by these specifiable characteristics of the space and the people residing within it (Shumaker & Taylor, 1983). This can then form place identity and place dependence. The coffee shop itself is a place that people attach meaning and symbolic value to, thus making the coffee shop a medium for individually subjective experience (Waxman, 2004). This intrinsic value individuals may develop for a given place allows them to seek replication at every future visit (Altman & Lowe, 1992). Lewis, one of the interview participants mentioned “It offers a different experience that I can’t get anywhere else.” Lewis noted later that this coffee shop was his favorite and is the one he is most loyal to despite being someone who visits other shops in town as well. Samara, also discussed her loyalty to this coffee shop being stronger compared to her loyalty to other coffee shops. Samara proclaimed, “It just feels like a better atmosphere.”

Many participants described their appreciation for the vibe of this coffee shop. “The vibe” was one of the most prominent codes coming out of the analysis of the interview

transcripts. Maria agreed saying “I would say the biggest drawing factors are the vibe in the place and also the coffee.” Raven also mentioned, “All I can say is just the vibe is good. I come here a lot. I love it.” Whether it is “a relaxing little trip out of the apartment” as Walter explains, or as Molly explains, “A great place for a lot of people to get their work done,” the coffee shop is preferred by the participants over their office environments.

### **Lively Acoustic Environment Influences Productivity**

During data analysis, the two codes in the ambient conditions category used with the highest frequencies were acoustics and lighting. As previously mentioned, many patrons shared that their favorite part of the atmosphere was “the vibe.” While “the vibe” describes the space very vaguely, and encompasses many different factors, some of the more tangible aspects are the acoustic qualities and the lighting in the space. The theme present focuses on the acoustic aspect of the ambient conditions and overall atmosphere of the coffee shop.

Many ‘campers’ and working patrons argued that they enjoyed the livelier acoustic environment present in the coffee shop. Similar to the previous theme, many of the patrons went as far as to say they believed it aided in their productivity. Although this was also not measured, the validity and value of the statement stems from how common this perception was among participants. It was easy for the patrons to compare this acoustic environment to that of the office spaces available to them because of the drastic differences between the two. The coffee shop atmosphere overall is less predictable, especially the acoustic environment as it is directly affected by the number of people and associated noise level in the space on a given visit. Participants noticed that the noise levels increased parallel to the increase in patrons and conversations.



When asked about noise level preferences when working Maria mentioned, “I feel the noise level is pretty good. I've never heard somebody talking or yelling in the space. So then that way everything's kind of a meager little chat kind of value. So I feel that's good.” The background noise was a common subject for many interviewees. When asked about productivity Joan reported, “I know it sounds kind of crazy with all the noise and stuff, but it’s easier for me to focus on the words I’m reading if I have something already going on in my head.” She argued to enjoy the sometimes-unpredictable nature of the coffee shop with its occasional noisy atmosphere. Molly agreed, “Here it’s a roll of the dice with noise level.” There is no way as a patron to control your desired noise level in a coffee shop unless you bring something such as headphones. This was described by several participants when speaking about their procedure for keeping focus during times of intense noise level in the shop.

This threshold of noise was commonly touched on by the working patrons. Many believed that there was a certain point in which the noise level could change from being believed to aid in their productivity, to then being so loud that it may hinder it. The noise level surpassing the individual’s desirable threshold of noise would mitigate the typical positive effects of the acoustic profile in the shop. Several interviewees noted that they did have a way to counter this by using headphones. Lewis argued, “Depends on the number of people in here. If it's too loud, yeah. Throwing headphones [on] and playing, whatever.” Molly confirmed, Molly confirmed,

“I definitely wear headphones when I'm like out in public like this if the noise is too much. I usually think ‘oh, I'll go to the coffee shop but I need to get these two things done.’ So I'll probably go into it kind of knowing what I'm going to do and then keeping my headphones on so that I don't get too distracted helps.”.

While headphones are not always commonly used in workspaces, they are welcome at this coffee shop and are regularly used by many working patrons. My experiences in traditional office environments consisted of headphone use being discouraged or frowned upon because of the management's encouragement for collaborative work. The headphones were seen as a deterrent for employees to collaborate and quickly pass ideas or questions along to their colleagues.

While this space has the potential to be too loud, the noise level present in other coworking or office spaces is argued by the patrons to be too quiet.

“The center for visual arts building on campus has some really good spots. Not as loud though. And so it kind of gets kind of creaky quiet in there then you feel awkward. So I don't go there as often, but I have done some stuff in there” (Joan).

Several other patrons argued and believed the noise level at the coffee shop was more often desirable than it was undesirable in comparison to other spaces available to them instead.

### ***Crowding's Influence on Noise Level***

Small spaces typically have a larger opportunity for crowding and overflow into adjacent areas, given that the footprint of the space cannot accommodate for large circulation zones and ample amounts of personal space. These small spaces typically have higher ‘spatial density’, which provides less space for each individual residing there (Dean et al., 1975; Duval et al., 2002). Likewise, ‘social density’ increases as more people occupy a space, which can explain why there is an auditory, visual, and psychological feeling associated with the crowding present in the shop. Although some patrons loved the acoustic environment in the shop, others noted its association with crowding. The “working” patrons noticed that their focus diminished as the crowd expanded or grew nearer to them in proximity, not only causing a visual disturbance but an auditory one as well. This led to strong opinions on seating choice, and layout of furniture

because oftentimes the patrons would decide where to sit based on their experiences with where people would start to gather as more patrons entered the space. Other than this observation of crowding and its effect on the shop atmosphere, the working patrons enjoyed being surrounded by other working or socializing individuals.

### ***Acoustics' Role in Patron Loyalty***

As previously outlined, prior research has suggested that daylighting, views, and certain acoustic settings could help to produce creative thought and higher productivity levels (Attaianese, 2018). The perfect blend of unpredictable coffee machine noises, with the murmurs of mostly working individuals, some being social, and some sitting quietly all added together to create a unique acoustic environment the patrons perceived as “just right”. This typical acoustic environment plays a vital role in creating psychological comfort for patrons as they begin to expect a certain atmosphere during their visits. Leadon (2015) argues the atmosphere helps patrons develop territorial feelings toward the coffee shop. By being able to choose where to do their work rather than having to work at one particular office by way of contract, the patrons feel they have more control. The working patrons regularly coming to the coffee shop to work have come back time and time again because they favor specific elements that are typically present in the environment during their visits. The acoustic environment, although less predictable, is still positively regarded by the patrons next to other physical elements like lighting.

### **Daylight and Artificial Diffused Overhead Lighting is “Just Right”**

For the working task-oriented individuals, lighting and shop acoustics were believed by the patrons to be the most important in affecting their focus, productivity, and ability to get their “work” done. Similar to the idea of “just right” in terms of acoustics, many patrons agreed that the lighting present in the space suited their needs as well. The lighting concept within the coffee

shop consisted of a large floor-to-ceiling glass storefront window that brought plenty of daylight into the space. Accompanying the daylighting was an array of warm-toned and indirect artificial lighting. The lighting was both reflected off the bright white ceiling and was indirectly cast onto the walls containing artwork. Many of the service areas of the shop were lit through track lighting that allowed for lighting to be cast upon the horizontal and vertical surfaces. The overhead lighting present in the seating area was recessed downlighting that had what appeared to be a diffusing lens, providing light without glare issues on laptop and phone screens. “the soft lighting in here is so... It's exactly what I need to have vibes to get my homework done” (Joan). None of the participants reported perceiving the lighting as too bright.

### ***Lighting and Headaches***

Samara emphasized how important the low lighting levels are for her well-being while working:

“I like how the lighting is more dim. That's a big one for me. I hate working in places where the lighting is just so intense. I tend to get migraines with harsh lighting. So I feel all the lighting here is not super in your face if that makes sense. Maybe it's cause the ceilings are so high or something?”

She noticed the tall ceilings, which do allow for the light to travel further in distance to the surfaces, thus making it less harsh and more diffused. Maria drew connections about the quality of the light and her decision to choose this coffee shop as a workspace, “So it's a lot of natural light... So I feel even if I'm not going to socialize with people, like the baristas or my friends, then it's a good space to be in to do my work”. While some believed the lighting was bright, this was perceived as a positive brightness, and not one of harshness. The lighting present was understood to be bright enough to complete the desired tasks yet dim enough not to cause visual

disturbances on screens or cause psychological discomfort. Joan also made connections between headaches and environmental lighting conditions “I would say the lighting. I get like pretty decently bad headaches when there's like big LED, like the blaring lights”. Many patrons attributed the lighting concept as contributing to the welcoming atmosphere of the space. The working patrons emphasized that the lighting had influenced their decision to visit regularly and work here.

### ***Window Views and Points of Entry***

“You can see the front door from almost anywhere in the place” (Joan). Almost every seating location in the space has direct views of the storefront window bringing plentiful amounts of natural lighting into the space. Raven “loved” the windows “They're almost down to the floor, which is nice. So the lighting is always really nice, just bright and open”. Molly had similar thoughts on the daylighting present in the space. Her favorite seat was “Probably by one of the tables by the window. It's really bright over there”. Analysis of the behavior maps confirmed that many of the working patrons chose a seat either close to the front door windows or sat somewhere farther away from windows yet positioned in such a way that they could see outside.

### ***People Watching and its Relation to Views***

When speaking about the lighting in the space, some patrons used this as a segway to begin the conversation about people watching. People watching was a prominent code that emerged during analysis, which I had not expected to be a topic of interest to my participants. Although not directly related to the lighting within the space, the storefront also provided views of the lively downtown area adjacent to the college campus, a hub for walkers with and without dogs and bikers, and the occasional town event. Molly’s favorite spot to sit was “probably facing

the window. Like, there are a lot of people that walk by, lots of dogs and that's always very exciting to watch". Choosing a seat potentially depended on the views available from that seat location, coupled with seat comfortability played an important role in seat selection.

### **Lounge-like Physically and Mentally Comfortable Seating Options**

The informal nature of the coffee shop creates a space that can provide not only several seating options but comfortable and even casual seating in plentiful amounts. Seat comfortability was important to all eight interview participants.

"I guess I would say a lot of coffee shops don't have comfortable seats, which is a random thing, but I feel I always find myself wanting to sit somewhere comfortably if I'm going to be working for a while. So the booth definitely is really helpful" (Maria).

Coffeeshops provide ample opportunity to linger because there are many comfortable seating options and setups (Waxman, 2006). We would not choose to sit for hours on end on an uncomfortable chair in a setup that we did not enjoy. Waxman outlines this well stating that, unlike restaurants that have a commonly understood process of sitting, eating, then getting the bill, and being on your way, coffee shops provide a space where patrons are welcome to stay as long as they want. She goes on to talk about third places being able to afford this phenomenon, especially given that the 'campers' typically influence much of the social atmosphere in the coffee shop (Waxman, 2006).

In this case study a theme about shop furnishings emerged amongst the more "work" focused individuals who tended to linger for longer than the average patron. Comfortability was believed to be very important to Molly as well.

"The tables by the window. It's really bright over there. And I feel it's kind of one of the bigger spaces in the place. So, I really like that. So, yeah, I'd say like probably closer to

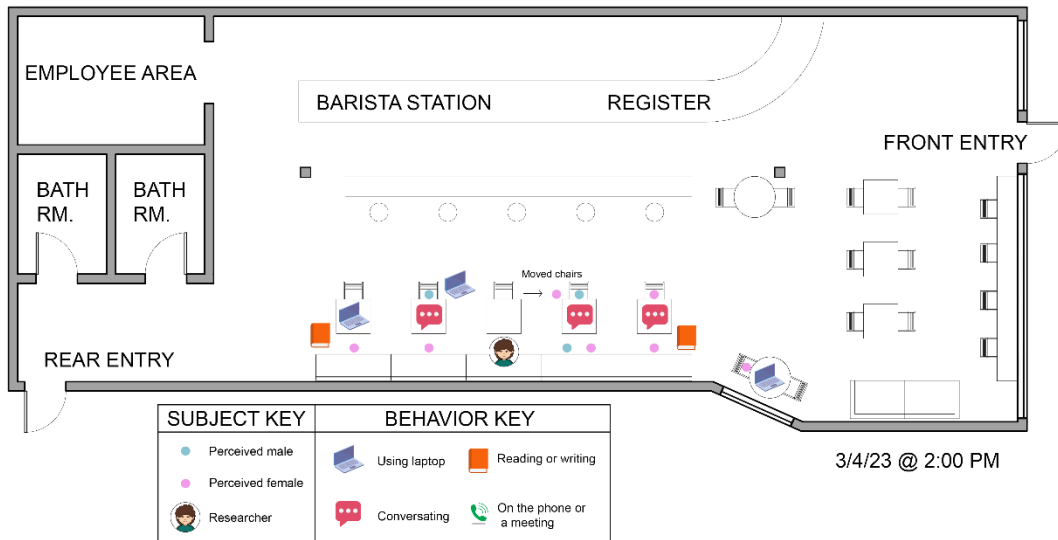
the front. And then they also have like the little booth ones, where it's a table and a chair and then like a booth side. And I'd probably sit on the booth side. Those are really comfy". (Molly)

Fitz appreciated that there is a lot of seating, "a lot of good little places to sit and relax and get your stuff done". Most interviewees identified the booths as one of their top seat choices in the space because of the comfort they provided. Booths are typically large and are accompanied by a large table as well. This ample amount of space is desirable to the working patrons who will linger for some time. The substantial amount of space they require might be one of the reasons that they are not always available in coffee shops.

Oftentimes the seating choice was based on not only the seat comfortability, but the table size next to it, and the view from it. The number of differing seating options, seating arrangements, and tables to choose from was another common topic for the working patrons. Many had a favorite seat, one that they gravitated towards if it was available. Oftentimes, they had a second or third option they used when the coffee shop was busy and their favorite spot was already taken. The booths were the most common favorite seat choice, specifically the side that would leave your back to the wall. Almost all behavior maps that were created during data collection featured at least one individual other than myself, sitting at the booths. The booths can be observed as a shop favorite for seat choice as shown in Figure 6 in which nearly all booth seating is occupied by patrons while all other seats are still available.

**Figure 6**

*Behavior Map 3/4/23 @ 2:00 PM*



### *Influences of Seating Choice on Perception of Safety*

Furthermore, I observed both Raven and Maria sitting at the booths often during their stays and this is reflected in their statements made during the interviews. “I always go to the booth, obviously, and it's kind of towards the edge of the wall, so that way I feel I'm not in the middle of the room for everybody to look at. I get nervous about that” (Maria). This was a common statement made by the patrons. They did not only choose seats based on physical comfort but also based on mental comfort. Maria felt safer if she did not have anyone behind her, and she could view the whole space in front of her instead.

“I like to be kind of close to the doors. Where we're sitting now, I have direct access to the back door, and I can see if there was a problem coming in the front door. And I think that just has to do with like a lot of my anxiety as well. Being able to see the doors, be



positioned in the right place to be able to exit if needed... It kind of determines where I sit as well". (Joan)

In a nutshell, many patrons believed that being in a public realm, they needed to be aware of their surroundings. This is something I expect to be less important in workspaces since typically the general public are not allowed to just stroll into the office. A coffee shop being open to the public on the other hand may be influencing the patrons to keep an eye out for the entry points. Nevertheless, the patrons who regularly worked at the coffee shop felt secure in their decision to work there. Joan describes this when saying "I never feel like afraid in here, I guess." Walter also talked about this "I mean the crowd, at least during like the rushes gets to be a little bit much. I'm not much of a people person, so having a lot of people in a very tight space kind of gets me in the wrong head space". This idea of physical and mental comfort appears to play a large role in the patron's decision on seat choice as well as their decision to stay for extended periods of time.

### ***Crowding's Influence on Seat Choice***

Similarly, the patrons outlined that they thought in great detail about the possibility of 'spatial density' (Dean et al., 1975) or 'social density' (Duval et al., 2002) near their seat choice. Fitz mentioned

"Yeah. I like that, first of all, it's like a single table and they're spaced out, so I don't feel like I'm crowded, I'm in my own area. And I also like that I can see everyone and everything going on from this place".

Molly also talked about the spatial density and social density's potential to influence her seat choice.

“I think the only other thing that I really like is that it's not a high-traffic area. But the people who come in, the door's a little further away, the line's a little further away. So, I feel like you're kind of out of the way and not just in the middle of things, which is nice”.

Samara described that the line of patrons waiting to order sometimes started to occupy the spaces between the tables in the entire seating area. “Yeah. The lines are just so close to the seating area that once it gets busy, it's not hard for it to bleed over into the seating area”. For these patrons, who sat hours on end getting work done, it was important to be in a comfortable location where they felt they had enough space to carry out their desired activities and a comforting amount of personal space (Sommer, 2002).

### ***Table Size***

Another aspect important to my participants was the appropriate table size. However, their opinions about the best table size varied substantially. Molly described noteworthy differences between patrons and their activities in a local community coffee shop and a franchised coffee shop chain.

“I think they have better seating than something like Starbucks. Starbucks has a smaller seating area typically with less tables. It isn't really a workspace in my opinion because there's like more people going in and out. Here I think more people come to work as opposed to do like meetings or just grab a coffee”.

Coffee shops like the one at the core of this case study appear to cater more to working individuals by offering smaller tables. Lewis explained that in other coffee shops, he experienced tables that could seat larger groups, more setup for social interaction, and believes that the location of this shop is why the setup caters to workers or students since it is near a college campus. Although to some the smaller tables are perceived as a hindrance, others saw them as

contributing to their productivity because they do not allow for the occupation by larger groups which could cause distractions. Joan on the other hand often has many different items to place on the table, which is difficult when the table is small

“Typically when I'm alone ... I take up a lot of the table. But I would say when I am with others I don't want to take up as much table space, so that makes it kind of difficult too based on how small the tables are. And I like to put all of my shit on the table. I like everything to be looking at me, I'm looking at it.”

While Joan mentioned this, she didn't let this stop her from coming to this shop. Many other patrons noted the table size to be adequately sized to accommodate their activities. The takeaway from these patron perceptions on table size ties into their perceptions of seating choice too. The overarching idea that having ample choice in seating and table options is vital to working patrons' decision to work at the shop and remain there for hours on end.

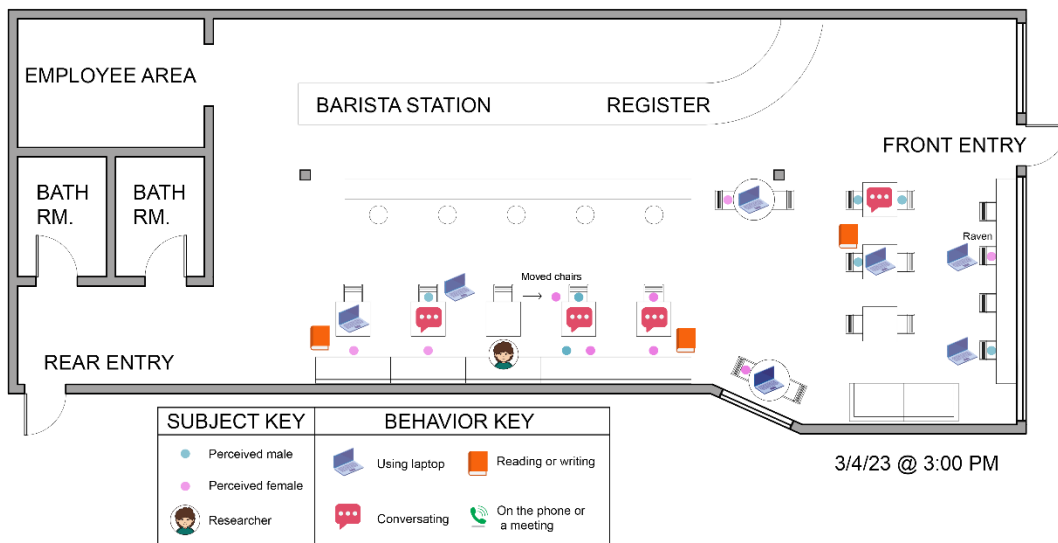
### ***Contrast to Traditional Office Setup***

The unconventional “working” environment within a coffee shop appears more attractive to these patrons than conventional office spaces. A change of scenery and physical space from their typical office to the coffee shop is perceived by the patrons to aid in their work and give them a break from the day-to-day routine. Waxman outlined that comfortable yet malleable seating options and working setups directly influenced the length of stay of a working patron. Traditional workspaces are often not catered to the user by providing setup options and flexibility because each workstation is set up a particular way, leaving little room for modification. The coffee shop allows for more fluidity in options as seats and tables can be moved to accommodate larger groups or create a focused spot for an individual (Waxman, 2006). The working patrons did not need an ergonomically sound chair and desk setup, they favored

simply being able to select a work area, a seat, and a setup from an array of options at the coffee shop. This is an important aspect illustrated in the behavior map in Figure 7. A group of three decided to move a chair from one table to the next to accommodate their setup preference. This is an example of the way a coffee shop can be altered to fit the patron's needs at that moment. The table and chairs can be easily moved around, and moved back at the end of the visit, which is something not as simple to do in the workspace. Oftentimes assigned workstations that are stationary and lack adjustment options are the majority of what is available in office spaces.

**Figure 7**

*Behavior Map 3/4/23 @ 3:00PM*



This connects to one of the previous themes discussed the desirable aspects of the coffee shop in direct contrast with the typical office space. It is not that the coffee shop can function as a workspace, and draws similarities from the typical workspace environment, it is rather the differences that are believed by the patrons to draw them here. Some of the biggest companies in the world like Google attempt to create eclectic and interesting work offices to accomplish this desired effect (Saval, 2014). The stark contrasting elements mentioned previously such as the

lighting, acoustic environment, and other atmospheric elements are appealing to the ‘campers’. The social environment present in the coffee shop is one of those stark differences.

### **A Space to Focus on Work but Still Socialize**

The social climate present in the coffee shop is less predictable than that of an office space. Nevertheless, many patrons still decided to use the coffee shop as their favorite space to work and be productive. What is intriguing to understand is the fact that most patrons did not come to the shop for just one reason to either work or to socialize. Even patrons who came to the coffee shop to work rather than socialize felt a strong connection to the coffee shop through relationships and social interactions with its staff. Not only did this play into the patron’s loyalty toward the shop, but it was also recognized as an integral part of the coffee shop’s atmosphere. Joan summed this up beautifully “I mean, I’ve gone to other coffee shops. I feel like I know a lot of the baristas like personally it almost seems like I’d be betraying them by going somewhere else”. Although Joan was a self-proclaimed camper, regularly working at the coffee shop, she still spoke about how important socialization with others in the shop was to her. Later in the interview when I asked what else she wanted me to know about her visits to the shop

“It’s not only a physical atmosphere... it’s also an atmosphere of the people who come in and the people that I see here. And I associate this place heavily with big friends and talking and... Me and my mom go here sometimes. So it’s a place that’s closer to my heart than like other coffee shops because of that”.

She also later mentioned that she believed the pandemic played a role in her growing to enjoy the social climate present at the shop. It allowed her to notice more about her intentions of going and what she was gaining out of her time there. She mentioned, “Especially once the pandemic hit, this was like the one outing that we had... even if it was just coffee or just a donut that they had.

That was so beneficial for my mental health”. Other patrons were also aware of their strong feeling of belonging to this coffee shop. “The people here are amazing and they almost try to get to know you. It’s not like a Dunkin’ drive-through where they don’t really want to have a conversation with you or anything. Here they are really cool about that” (Fitz). Fitz also being a self-proclaimed camper further established the theme here when explaining how important socializing with the staff is to her. The social climate aids in both establishing and maintaining the atmosphere these patrons have grown to know and love (Waxman, 2004).

### ***Work and Socialization Code Co-Occurrences***

An interesting code co-occurrence that emerged during data analysis called attention to the close connections between work and socialization. Patrons often talked about both in the same sentence. The lines between their work and socializing time seemed to be pleasantly blurred during their coffee shop visits. Even patrons who came to the coffee shop to work rather than socialize, often found themselves socializing as a secondary activity. Waxman discusses the intersection between working and socialization when she overviews participant responses about doing homework or working in the coffee shop. She notes that one working patron mentioned that they enjoy coming to the coffee shop to meet with their study group. She explains that this is a neutral ground where no one is necessarily playing host. There is no fear of being too loud because oftentimes there is a level of chatter already present (Waxman, 2006). Joan elaborates,

“I am typically with others. I would say I tend to meet people here or I come with them. I think I’ve gone alone like a couple of times and I mean I get my homework done faster when I come alone, but that doesn’t happen super often”.

Joan is stating here that she socializes with others even while she is visiting the coffee shop to get stuff done. Whether it be with the staff, another regular, or a friend they met there, many

patrons did not work without some socialization and did not socialize without a bit of doing work as well.

### ***Connections to Third Place Phenomenon***

Although interactions between patrons not already acquainted with each other were not regarded as highly important, there was a familiarity described that contributed to the cozy or welcoming feeling when patrons spotted other regulars that they recognized at the shop. It is interesting to consider the fact that while third places are transforming as a result of the digital age, and remote working, they still maintain some of their classic third-place attributes. These patrons may not know all the other regulars or even the staff on a personal level, but for the purpose of their visits, familiarity is helpful and positively regarded. Oldenburg (1999) coined this idea that third places are home to social interactions with people we would not have met if it were not for the third place itself and the affordances it offers. The people who preferred to work in the coffee shops talked about preferring the company of strangers over the company of their immediate colleagues or over working alone, hence the overlap present between work and social time witnessed in this study that helped to form the theme.

### ***Formation of the Coffeescape Model***

As a result of this case study, I used the understanding of the data I had developed during analysis, as described in the findings section, to combine, tweak, and expand the existing Dinescape (Ryu, 2005), Servicescape (Bitner, 1992), and Place Attachment models (Waxman, 2006). This comprehensive new framework called the “Coffeescape” model may serve useful during future studies of coffee shops as coworking spaces. Further research using this model is necessary to evaluate its value to understand work behavior in coffee shops and its usefulness to inform the design of future office environments.

The most applicable and prominent aspects of the Servicescape model (Bitner, 1992) are the environmental dimensions outlined on the left side of Figure 2 that was introduced earlier. Equally important is the section about behavior and social interactions on the right-hand side of Figure 2. Figure 8 emphasizes the sections on the left-hand side in blue and associated with the number one. The Servicescape model helped to create a lens for the analysis of the physical space of the coffee shop and its relevance to customers' behavior (Bitner, 1992). Both the research findings this model emerged from, and the model itself served as a point of departure for this study.

The second important model that informed the data analysis is the Dinescape model (Ryu, 2005). Five out of six Dinescape model dimensions proved to be important and relevant to this study. Those dimensions consist of Ambience, Lighting, Facility Aesthetics, Layout Accessibility, and Service and Staff. "Table Setting" was excluded due to its irrelevance in coffee shops for obvious reasons. That excluded element is "table setting". The Dinescape (Ryu, 2005) dimensions being built upon in the Coffeescape model are displayed in orange color and associated with the number two in Figure 8.

The most comprehensive studies previously done in coffee shops are those conducted by Lisa Waxman. In Figure 5 shown earlier, you can see the Place Attachment Model (Waxman, 2006) that I use as a basis in the formation of the Coffeescape model. The Coffeescape model includes most of the physical aspects Waxman outlines, with the removal of most of the social aspects present at the top of the model (Waxman, 2006). The social aspects do play a large role, especially in the formation of place attachment, as Waxman outlines, however, the Coffeescape model incorporates these in a new section labeled "Coffee Shop Activities". This decision was made given the fact that this study is less focused on place attachment and more focused on



working patron behaviors and perceptions. The social factors present in the coffee shop shown in Waxman's model are considered when observing the patron's behaviors. The coffee shop activities section consists of several main categories. The act of being social, working, and reading, amongst others, are grouped under this category shown in grey in Figure 6.

The Coffeescape model formation (Figure 8) includes the Servicescape (Bitner, 1992) environmental dimensions and the Dinescape model dimensions (Ryu, 2005) being brought over in the new model. These dimensions and associated factors are accounted for in the five main categories of the Coffeescape model. Those categories are "Layout and Accessibility", "Shop Aesthetics and Branding", "Ambient Conditions", "Furnishings", and "Staff and Services". Subsequently, the relevant physical factors, as well as some social factors present in the Place Attachment Model (Waxman, 2006), were merged into the Coffeescape model creating the secondary category labeled "Coffee Shop Activities". These additions and changes are reflected in the completed Coffeescape model graphic (Figure 9).

**Figure 8**

*Formation of the Coffeescape*

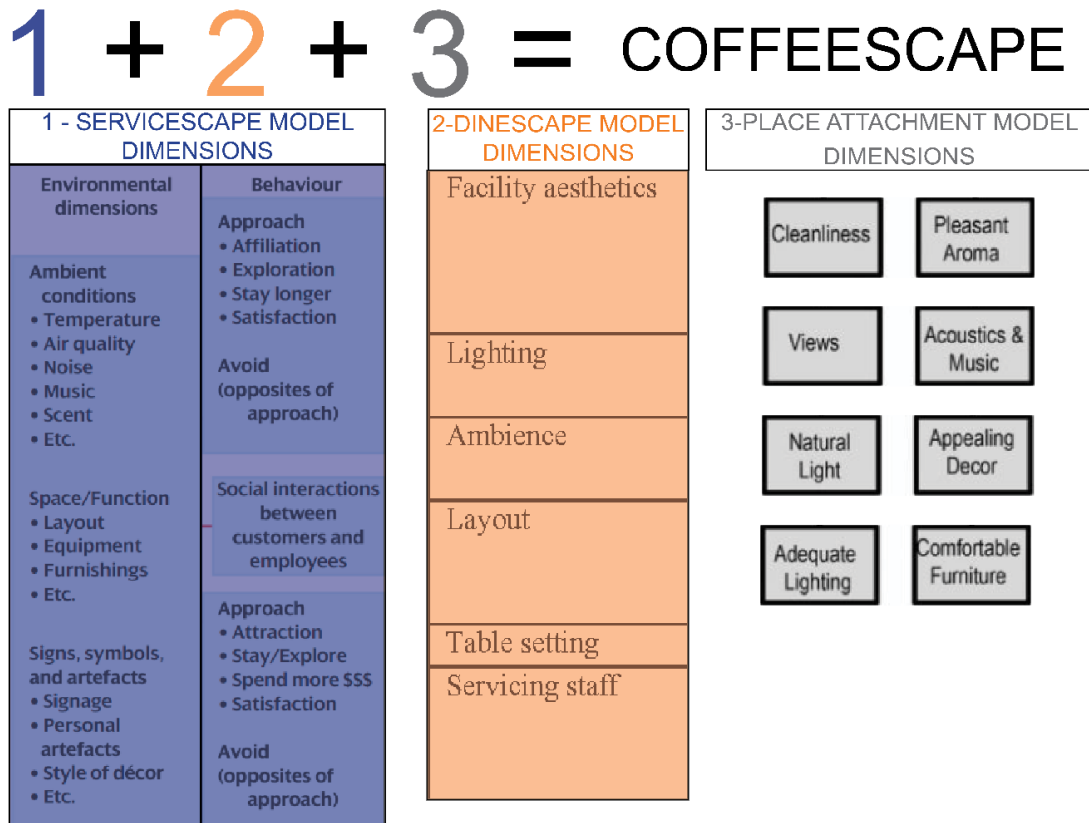


Figure 9 shows the Coffeescape model. In yellow are all the elements important to consider when analyzing layout and accessibility. In red are the important elements to consider when analyzing coffee shop aesthetics and branding. In blue, are the notable ambient conditions some of which are further broken down into sub-elements. In green are the notable furnishings present with some sub-elements also included. In purple is an overview of important elements related to coffee shop staff and services provided to patrons. The grey section overviews the commonly observable patron activities present in the coffee shop and some associated sub-activities.

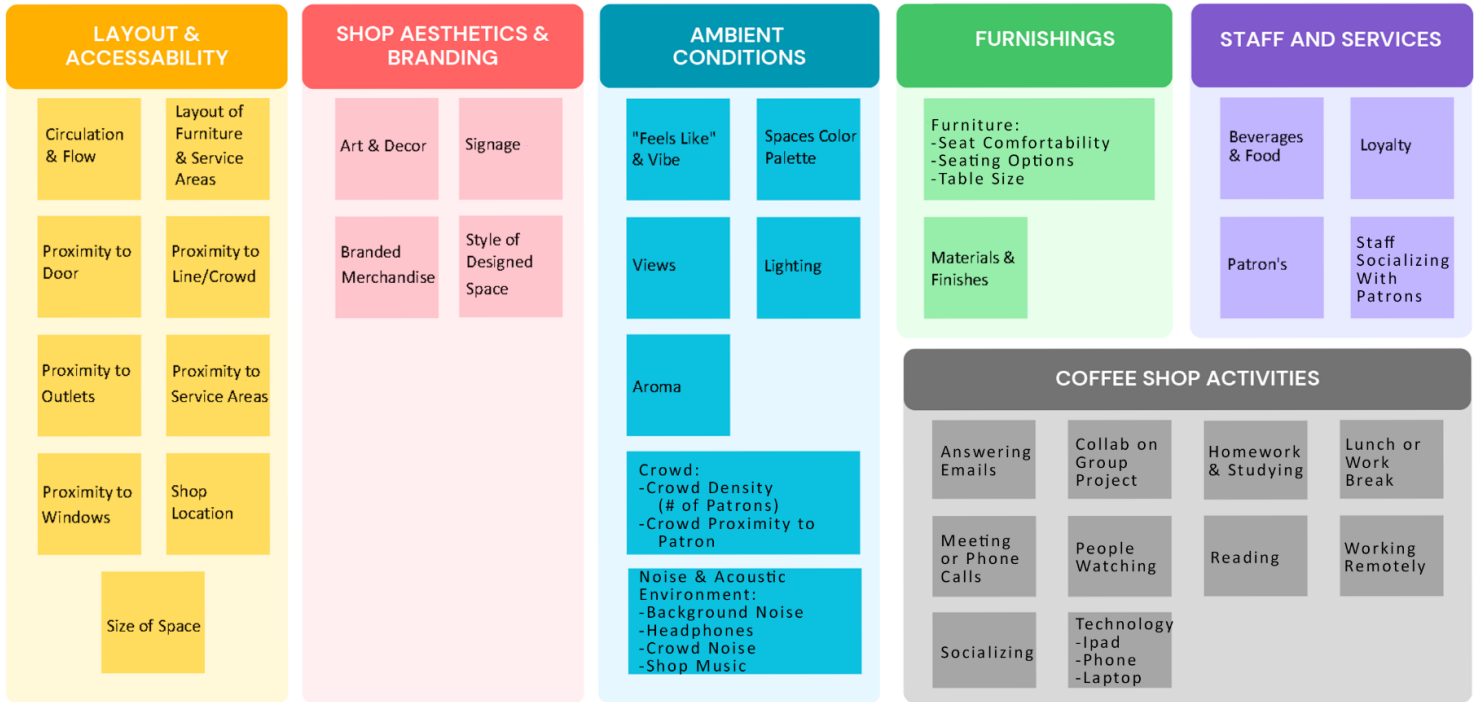
**Figure 9**

*Coffeescape Model*

# COFFEESCAPE

The new conceptual model created to guide the analysis of coffeeshop environments. This model is a blend of existing ideas pulled from prior models with new ideas. This model more specifically focuses on coffee shop environments.

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## **Limitations**

The small sample size and the investigation of only one coffee shop in a single case study allows for deep insights but at the same time limits the applicability of the findings to coffee shops in similar contexts, those near college campuses bringing many working patrons into the shop. Coupled with the small sample size was the limited age range represented in this study being only participants from 18-30 years old, most of whom were college students or recent graduates working professionally. The oversampling of one specific kind of patron, in this case college students may skew the data to only be representative of that niche.

Unfortunately, I was not able to take photos of this coffee shop environment. The shop manager provided me with access to the shop but wanted the coffee shop to remain anonymous. As many designers are visual learners and thinkers, it would be beneficial to compare and verify patron perceptions with real images of the interior aspects of the shop. This could have potentially created new themes regarding seat selection, an overview of ambient conditions, and be used as effective additional prompts during the interviews.

Another limiting aspect was the data collected on the pandemic and its influence on patron behavior in the coffee shop. While writing the proposal for this thesis, and during the initial review of the literature, the pandemic was perceived to play an important role in this study. Throughout data collection, and after data analysis subsided it was noted that the pandemic could have played a large role but the data collected was not shedding light on whether it played a crucial role or not.

This study, although currently relevant, may develop less relevancy as it ages because of the rapidly growing and changing technological world. Technology continues to impact how we use all spaces and could influence more drastic changes in the near future, making this study's

findings less applicable. Nevertheless, there is much to learn from this study in the present time, and there is always the possibility of longevity and timelessness in the findings depending on the path the world takes moving forward.

### **Conclusion**

This case study used a qualitative approach to collect and interpret the meaning behind the working patrons' perceptions. The workspace realm has shifted allowing for coworking spaces to recently become prominent alternatives to traditional office environments. Thus, coffee shops started to house more remote workers, students, and creative professionals than ever witnessed before. Higher demand and new and growing uses for coffee shops fueled the purpose of this case study, developing a necessity for investigating their role as a workspace. Coffee shops offer complex social environments, fit for hosting many diverse activities and patron behaviors within the same space. The evolving technologically advanced world and the recent pandemic have accelerated existing questions and changed conventional ideas about where one can do their work and studying, what qualifies as a space of work, and how workspaces should look and feel to help professionals and students be productive (Yang et al., 2019). The questions focused on in this study were:

- Which physical attributes of the coffee shops do regular patrons perceive as supportive of their work activities?
- What social attributes of the coffee shops do patrons perceive as contributing factors in their decision to work there?
- What role do recent developments in technology as well as changes caused by the pandemic, play in patrons' decision to work remotely, using a coffee shop as a workspace?

At the conclusion of this study, several themes emerged from the data consisting of (1) working patrons preferred the atmosphere's warm and familiar nature in comparison to the atmosphere their offices offered. (2) Working patrons enjoyed the lively acoustic environment as they believed it fueled their productivity. 'Campers' reported appreciating (3) the combination of daylight and artificial diffused overhead lighting and (4) the casual and comfortable seating options. Perhaps most importantly (5) patrons, who primarily worked at the coffee shop, valued existing opportunities to socialize with fellow patrons and baristas as a secondary activity. The themes lead to the formation of recommendations for future office space design and will be elaborated further in the paragraphs that follow. These findings contribute and provide more insight into characteristics of physical coffee shop environments that are perceived as supporting focused work in spaces that are not home or formal workspaces. Furthermore, I have deepened the understanding of the role of social aspects of coffee shops in connection to work behavior. The recommendations presented at the conclusion of this study are a contribution to the currently prominent conversation about desirable changes in workplace culture. The recommendations can inform and guide designers 'concepts and solutions for current and future workspace design problems. Coffee shop owners and connoisseurs may also pay attention to these considerations if they aim to maintain coffee shops as coworking spaces.

### **Important Considerations for Future Workspace Design**

Not all coworking spaces reside in coffee shops, and many professionals do not have coffee shops or similar environments as an optional space to work. Instead, many professionals are still confined to their nine-to-five job residing in a corporate physical office five days a week. The results of this case study can and should be considered when designing contemporary workspaces as well. Designers seeking to create contemporary work environments that mimic

the look and feel of coworking spaces like coffee shops need to be aware of patron preferences. As outlined in this case study, the participants liked being able to choose their seats and alter their setup to their liking. Participants moved chairs around or sat in a specific area to best meet their furniture needs. Some of the seating should be casual and comfortable, designed for focused work on the individual level. Some of the seating should be able to comfortably accommodate larger groups. Modular seating and table options allow the user to customize their experience to how they feel the most comfortable, which is argued by the participants to aid in their production levels and willingness to be in the space for extended periods of time. If the employees develop or customize a favorite area or setup within the office, this could potentially influence them to seek that space out more often in turn raising the number of individuals working on site rather than remotely. The malleability of the coffee shop seating and furniture arrangements was positively regarded by the patrons and potentially provided them with more sense of control in the space.

Furthermore, I argue that the combination of residential and commercial design aspects of coffee shops creates spaces that cater to many different kinds of patrons. Plenty of different seating and table options in office environments, some more task-focused, others more comfortable are likely to create a more informal work atmosphere associated with a less traditional workspace. Companies should seek to create spaces that offer this sort of flexibility and malleability in working setups. Careful monitoring of the changing quantities of remote workers and employees who attend their place of work in person could inform how many different seating options can be offered.

Likewise, I suggest providing flexibility, choice of views, and lighting levels for employees' workstations. Moveable furniture and technology involving color temperature

adjustment for lighting and dimming options may prove to be useful strategies to achieve this. Pay close attention to areas with daylighting and be careful to allow equal access to these areas regardless of employee status in the company hierarchy. Ideally, the look and feel of a work setup should be able to accommodate the needs of the individual employee. One employee likely wants to view the windows and see outside, while another finds that distracting. Customizable furniture, layouts, and lighting will help individuals to create a work environment that works best for them. Catering to only one kind of individual, or catering to the majority provides limitations for the oddball employee who may not thrive in the space. It is necessary to avoid too little variation because that would imply that all employees should have the same work style and setup style, which is limiting. Too little variation in acoustical environment options can also be detrimental.

I suggest offering both a variety of predictable and unpredictable acoustic environments to mimic the natural sound profile of a coffee shop or other lively acoustical coworking spaces as my participants were intrigued by this aspect of the studied coffee shop environment. Keep in mind the threshold of noise that is desirable for productivity and creativity as outlined in this study and by other researchers. Too little noise is detrimental and depletes a feeling of privacy and comfort, whereas too much noise is distracting and overbearing. Patrons described enjoying background noises and certain levels of chatter, yet their opinions on noise levels noticeably changed when the threshold of sound broke their desired level. When the shop was socially dense, this influenced the noise level and number of conversations happening in the space. Offices should seek to create areas that are designed to be louder and more collaborative friendly as well as areas that are designed to be quieter, allowing for work activities that need more focus. Although this idea is hardly new, this case study proves its ongoing relevance. The key is not



limiting the employees to a single acoustic environment but rather allowing them to choose their preference in an acoustic environment. This would allow them to choose to blend work and social time or keep them separate, based on the individual's preference.

Produce areas that foster collaboration and socialization but do not enforce it. The employees will try to use the space however they want, even if it is listed as a specific area. For example, phone call booths are not only used in office spaces to take phone calls. Sometimes they are used for a brief bit of focused time for an individual employee who believes that is what they need at the moment to get their desired task done. Enforcement of noise levels in quiet zones or loud collaboration zones can naturally occur when careful design solutions are present. Furniture designed to seat one person as opposed to a large sectional sofa will naturally express the noise level and what kind of activities are expected to thrive in that seating area. Natural socialization appeared to be the widely mentioned social activity in this case study. The patrons could choose when they wanted to socialize, and it came naturally to them.

Designers should be innovative in their approach to change the way the traditional workspace appears. Some of the most highly regarded aspects of the coffee shop the patrons enjoyed were all things not typically present in a typical ergonomic office setup such as lounge-like seating, informal table setups, bar stools, and music being played. Designers should defy the status quo and create interesting spaces that blur the lines between focus time and social time, office space or leisure zone, and zones for work and play. I believe that coffee shops blur these lines seamlessly because when glancing into a coffee shop you will witness a range of activities from an individual working alone on their laptop, to a couple out on a date there to chat and enjoy coffee. Offices should strive to blur the lines between social and focus time, as well as between work and play. Some of the most successful companies like Google have the most

innovative and eclectic office spaces which often pave the way for upcoming office trends elsewhere (Saval, 2014).

One can also assume that these considerations as well as other themes, and important findings of this study can and should be applied when designing future coffee shops. If coffee shops want to maintain their level of ‘campers’ they could consider learning from the most innovative office space designs to make sure the café will suit the users’ needs. If coffee shops do not want ‘campers’ to spend their time at the shop, then I suggest doing the opposite of the suggestions and findings of this study.

### **Implications and Goals for Future Research**

Although this study deepens the understanding of working patron’s perceptions and how they impact their decisions to work at the coffee shop, more questions exist. Future research could address questions such as: What social affordances do coffee shops offer to their regular patrons that their places of work do not? Do coffee shops promote a sense of belonging in their working patrons and if so, how may this differ from patrons not there to work? Should coffee shops be designed around ‘campers’ needs or is the diverse range of users' and patrons’ behaviors present an important part of the appeal to working patrons?

Likewise, a need for research focused on franchise coffee shops such as Starbucks, and Dunkin, which offer a very similar experience in every location, remains. Nevertheless, this study will help to start filling the gap in our understanding of working patrons' perceptions of coffee shop environments being used as a workspace.

### **Closing Thoughts**

The findings of this case study provide more insight into the characteristics of physical coffee shop environments that are perceived as supporting focused work in spaces that are not

home or formal workspaces. I also have deepened the understanding of the role of social aspects of coffee shops in connection to work behavior. People who prefer to work in coffee shops argued to prefer the company of strangers over the company of their immediate colleagues or over working alone. The recommendations presented at the conclusion of this study will contribute to the currently prominent conversation about desirable changes in workspace culture. In conclusion, the author argues the themes present and the recommendations given can and should inform current and future workspace design. We should not dismiss the unique affordances of coworking spaces like coffee shops because they can teach us so much about user behavior, work modes, trends in the workspace, and about successful research-based design. If Capital One sees the potential of Coffee Shop-like spaces and coworking environments, even while having no relation or experience with selling coffee, there are fascinating changes happening in the corporate world around us.

It is very important to consider the different ways individuals function and the plethora of personality types found in the workspace or other spaces like coffee shops. Different people, utilize spaces differently, and use a range of techniques to remain productive. Everyone functions uniquely, creating the necessity for designed spaces to resonate with a large array of people and personality types. Designing spaces that can meet the needs of a variety of people should be a key strategy in both workspaces and coffee shop design because they are commonly home to people from a broad range of backgrounds whose preferences vary. Few of us get to choose their coworkers, their place of work, or the people they are socializing with at work. If workspaces are designed to allow their users to control important aspects of their environments the increased sense of control might be accompanied by an increased sense of attachment to the entity one works for

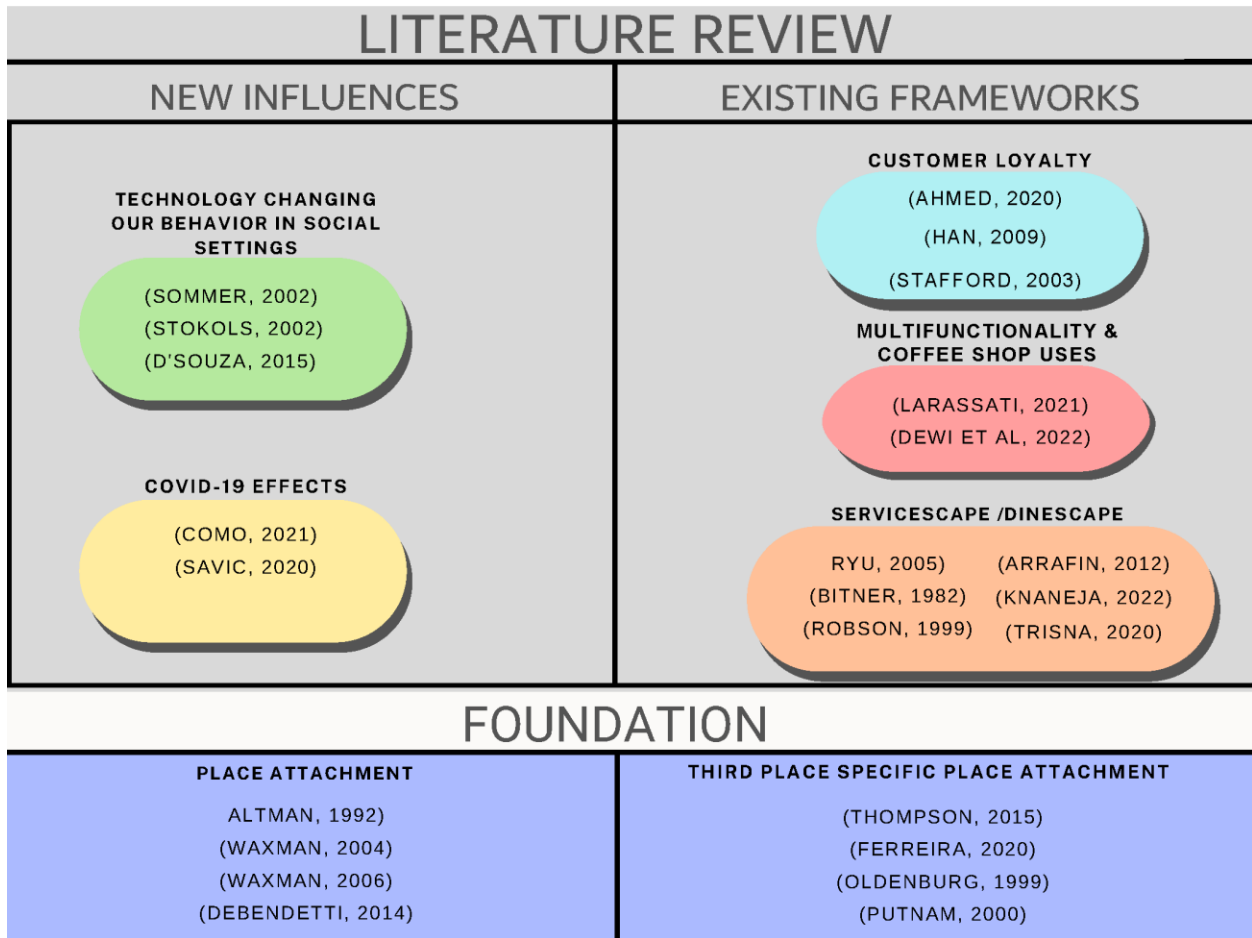
## CHAPTER II: EXTENDED LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Literature Road Map**

The literature roadmap (Figure 10) illustrates associated concepts, topics, and frameworks and how they relate to this study. I begin with a review of concepts that serve as foundations for this study being (1) the concepts of place, (2) place attachment (Altman & Lowe, 1992), and (3) third place theory (Oldenburg, 1999). After these foundations are established, I provide an overview of the literature on coffee shop functions, customer loyalty, and customer profiles (Han & Ryu, 2009). I discuss the important and new contextual aspects influencing the nature and experiences fostered in coffee shops. This includes a discussion on how the Covid-19 pandemic and deeply embedded technology in our society may affect coffee shop experiences. Following this is a discussion on current trends in contemporary post-Covid office spaces, and coffee shops being used as alternative workspaces.

**Figure 10**

*Literature Review Road Map*



**Place, Place Attachment, and Third Place Theory**

The foundations of this study consist of Place, Place Attachment, and Third Place Theory. Place can be defined as a physical space that affects cultural, individual, and social processes (Altman & Lowe, 1992). Place attachment is the bond between a person and a place that is created by specifiable characteristics of the space and people residing within it (Shumaker & Taylor, 1983). We each develop our own place attachment to these treasured places when we attach a meaning to the place that is specific to us. This can then form place identity and place

dependence. The coffee shop itself is a place that people attach meaning and symbolic value to, thus making the coffee shop a medium for individually subjective experience (Waxman, 2004). The reason each person visits the shop is unique to them and may be subjective from one patron to the next. The theory of place attachment helps to lay the foundation for understanding the intrinsic value individuals may develop for a given place (Altman & Lowe, 1992).

Coffee shops can be understood as a “third place,” according to Ray Oldenburg (1999) who coined the term and studied their contexts. It is neither home nor is it work, it is a third place, one that fills the gaps between a casual community stop where all are welcome and an individual's cherished home away from home. Third places consist of coffee shops, plazas, community centers, restaurants, etc. These spaces create the kind of affordances that Altman and Lowe state are necessary for developing place attachment. There is a link between Oldenburg's third place theory and place attachment that is further explained when investigating the personal bond that is created between the individual and the physical place itself. Third-place affordances offer more influence on quickly developing place attachment. Third places are familiar community places where we exchange ideas, socialize, and build relationships. We typically meet and socialize with people in these third places that we wouldn't meet elsewhere (Oldenburg, 1999). Each patron or individual who visits these third places forms their own place attachment to the third place itself.

### **Third Place Affordances, Multifunctionality, and Customer Loyalty**

Third places are multifunctional in many ways, and this influences customer loyalty. It is fascinating how coffee shops, founded on simply selling coffee, also offer a wide variety of other customer activities outside of simply purchasing coffee and then leaving. The observed activities include focused work, social gathering, studying, and reading to list a few (Larassati et al.,

2021). To foster a variety of activities, third places like coffee shops must create an environment that can quickly indicate to prospective customers what their experience will be like there. Customers scope out the ambiance and affordances the space provides in relation to their visit's intended outcome (Robson, 1999). It is important to understand what socio-physical aspects of coffee shops are relevant to allow them to be used for such an array of activities. Treasured third places create a blend of familiarity, security, and provide a certain experience that is granted by the space and its socio-physical aspects. Once place attachment has been solidified, it sticks with the users and turns them into regulars (Debenedetti et al., 2014). The place attachment bond then begins to aid in the development of loyalty to that place. Han and Ryu (2009) found that customer satisfaction and loyalty have a direct link with customers' perceptions of the built environment in which they resided. The better the space and its services are perceived, the more satisfied the customers are with their choice to be there, which influences future visits as well (Han & Ryu, 2009). Similar studies found that patrons presented territorial and prideful feelings towards various areas within the space such as a favorite seat (Waxman, 2006).

Many criteria have been tested to understand what design attributes or general attributes are most common in third places. Vaux (2015) conducted studies of public interior plazas on a college campus. She then created guidelines to inform the design of third-place environments. In the case study, I observed location, path, entrance, seating, lighting, food, and technology were the most important factors to the patrons, which are similar to the findings of Ryu (2005; Vaux, 2015). Likewise, most of these studies focused on the physical environment's influence on arousing our five senses, and how this arousal affects our behavior within the environment. Physical factors that become patterned or typical across third-place contexts may be a way to measure the behavioral intentions of the patrons residing in these spaces (Robson, 1999).

Outlined by Ray Oldenburg, third places are spaces that offer a sense of familiarity and are places where we exchange ideas, socialize, and build relationships. What is so special about coffee shops is the fact that they fit into the third-place category. The shop fosters patron's place attachment and has physical factors that allow patrons to engage in an array of activities.

Although third places, by definition, are lively social environments, coffee shops tend to also attract patrons who sit alone and do not need to participate in adjacent conversations to feel that they are a part of the social atmosphere provided in the space (Waxman, 2006).

### **New Influences on Third Places and the Service Industry**

#### ***Technology's Impact on Place***

In a rapidly expanding and quickly moving technologically advanced world, it is necessary to understand that there is not a single use or only one attached meaning associated with a place, in this case, a coffee shop. Technology has changed the way our world appears as well as how we use it, especially in some of these multi-use third places. Place attachment is not reserved for the interactions between people and their physical spaces anymore. People's attachment to places has begun to include virtual aspects. Technology impacts place attachment in physical-virtual continuums such as coffee shops (D'Souza & Lin, 2015). Understanding the effects of how technology continuously changes the social world is necessary to design environments that can host a variety of uses for a vast array of people. The generational differences in technology use are relevant to this study as coffee shops tend to cater not only to young adults but strive to also attract middle-aged customers as well as older adults and seniors. Rather than assuming that technology has turned our world into a non-place-based society, it is important to consider how technology has altered how we use our surroundings (Stokols &



Montero, 2002). Coffee shops have drastically grown into spaces that are altered by technology, where new activities can be observed alongside traditional activities and original services.

### ***Covid-19 Pandemic's Impacts on Place***

The Covid-19 pandemic also played a huge role in this significant demand for multi-use spaces. The pandemic led many business owners and professionals to rethink their daily activities and be more creative in their approaches to work and play. During the pandemic, many coffee shops rapidly became remote working spaces for people who did not experience their homes as a space that sufficiently supported their work. Many challenges arose for people who tried to blend home spaces which have long been considered first places, with workspaces commonly considered second places. Quickly, coffee shops, as third places, had to become more flexible to support multiple functions. Most coffee shops already offered free Wi-Fi and a comfortable atmosphere, which allowed patrons to embrace the space as an alternative work environment. The function of making and selling coffee persisted but became less important compared to the many other functions of the coffee shop such as social gathering, studying, or doing work (Dewi et al., 2022).

Although technology has been growing rapidly and has reshaped how we interact with built environments for some time, the pandemic changed the spaces we use, drastically and unexpectedly. Remote working phenomena were already prevalent, which changed the way people work. It allowed people to work from not only the office and at home but in third places such as coffee shops (Trisna & Utami, 2020). The pandemic has changed common perceptions of what a workspace can be, and what it should look like (Savic, 2020). The coffee shop or “coffices” shifted into spaces where many spent time working, studying, or being in solitude, as a way to get out of the house and create an alternate environment for productivity (Ferreira et al.,

2021). The influx of remote workers who began using coffee shops as an alternative work environment yet again tested the affordances of coffee shops (Savic, 2020).

The pandemic also changed commonly shared social rules for semipublic spaces in the US. It shifted what we considered comfortable and safe in terms of proximity, spatial density, and social density. Spatial density is understood as the amount of space each individual person has within the space. When spatial density is higher it means that the individual person has less personal space which can have negative consequences. It may lead to a sense of crowding, low productivity, and a lack of social interaction (Dean et al., 1975; Duval et al., 2002). On the other hand, social density increases as more people are in the same space. Spaces with less social density have been shown to produce more feelings of privacy for the individuals residing in the space (Sundstrom et al., 1982). The spatial density, social density, and proximity preferences of individuals have changed drastically in response to the pandemic. The need for personal space has become more widely talked about because of safety concerns associated with Covid-19. Although the research on this is still developing per the recent pandemic, it is well understood that by increasing the size of personal space or in other words lowering spatial density available to an individual there are beneficial effects (Jicol et al., 2023).

Continuing technological advancements and the pandemic have increased the already changing world of work environment design. Even as coffee shops are an alternative home for remote workers, many still find themselves in office spaces. Nevertheless, research-based design has continued to inform the cutting-edge design trends for work environments, and coworking spaces.

### *Contemporary Work Environments*

Constant change in workspace design is necessary for companies to maintain relevant and useful work environments. Harris (2015) collected data to understand recent shifts in company organization, work modes, and work culture. Harris argued that work recently had turned e more cognitively complex, team-based/collaborative, more dependent on social skills and technological competence, and time-pressured, as well as featured a greater amount of mobile work than in prior years (Harris, 2015). These changes are present today in workspaces, hence the necessity to continuously reimagine and re-design office spaces. A common theme of flexibility and choice in the selection of office/workspaces is important to employees. This has led businesses to rent serviced office spaces and/or coworking spaces instead of owning real estate which is more expensive to alter or change (Harris, 2015). Workspaces are increasingly being used as a hub for bringing colleagues together, allowing them to network, collaborate, and share knowledge. The focus on spatial-based individual work has drastically declined, with more focus on mentoring and sharing ideas collaboratively (Harris, 2015). Likewise, offices look more like hotels than like offices in recent years. They are more focused on high levels of service for guests, and a blend of work and leisure time for the employees. Careful balance between collaboration and focused workspaces is necessary for productivity (Leadon, 2015). Harris (2015) emphasized that the workspace should be used as a medium for expressing work culture/values. The space should be designed for continuous adaptability, should be activity based, facilitate collaboration in shared spaces without guidance, feature amenities and services, and create memorable experiences to attract talent.

These changes to workspaces, although exciting, still bring about challenges. In terms of acoustics, the open office plan that is still widely used today creates room for a potentially noisy

workspace. While some people enjoy a noisy workspace, others do not, which leads them to use headphones, or even request phone booths to make calls or private office spaces. Spatial layout solutions and the proximities between spaces should be carefully analyzed to account for the facilitation of collaborative and individual work. To achieve this, the ease of communication between spaces, as well as appropriate levels of privacy, are key elements to consider when space planning within workspace interiors (Leadon, 2015). A study done by Attaianesi (2018), found evidence that linked daylighting and views as well as acoustic settings to creative thought. The stochastic background noise was found desirable to many employees who favored the meager chatter present in a café or library space. This sheds light on some of the passive benefits of the new office design's ability to influence creative thought and productivity. The subjectivity and strong contrast in preference possible in the office, between one employee to the next, can be profound. It is important to be aware of the wide range of personality types present in each workspace, making flexibility and customizability very important in the design of the space (Leadon, 2015). Corporate office spaces have begun to accommodate new research suggestions for workspace design, design trends, and have aimed to solve the influx of new and recent challenges. Despite this, the ongoing changes to work culture have not stopped there. The growing number of people yearning for remote or hybrid work modes and locations has risen as well. This is potentially why coworking spaces can teach us so much about office design because, in simple terms, they are the epitome of flexibility and cater to an extremely wide range of individuals and activities.

### ***Coffee Shops as Alternative Workspaces***

In 2018, 1.7 million people were already working in coworking spaces around the world (Deskmag, 2018). This number has surely sky-rocketed since then when considering the

pandemic's role in increasing the presence of remote work. The purpose of coworking workspaces is to foster collaboration, community, and creativity (Brown, 2017). Han (2009) outlined that there were two main categories amongst coworking spaces (1) spaces for work, including private offices, open workstations, meeting rooms, and areas for copying/printing; and (2) spaces for amenities, including reception areas, lobby, lounge, breakout rooms and work café or kitchen. Only the most cutting-edge workspace design accomplishes the same environmental affordances as a coworking space, which is why coworking spaces are often the inspiration for new office designs (Yang, 2019). When companies seek out prospective coworking spaces, they should pay close attention to spaces that are large, and open, and allow for flexibility in use. This can be done through flexible furniture, spacious worktables, modular components, and an array of lighting both artificial and natural. Various color palettes created through material and finish selections should be presented to provide the user a choice in what atmosphere they want to work in (Orel & Alonso-Almeida, 2019).

When comparing the effects of coworking space design on user performance and creativity, evidence suggested that daylighting, views, and certain acoustic settings could help to produce creative thought and more production overall (Attaianese, 2018). These design features help to provide benefits to the users but also cater to a specific kind of user. The most important thing to remember about coworking spaces is that they are chosen by users based on their preferences. The people who are working regularly at a given coworking space such as a coffee shop, choose to go there because they are drawn to the atmosphere it provides. An assigned corporate office cannot always cater to the individual, lacking flexibility in workspace preference. Many offices and coworking spaces alike seek to achieve the kind of flexibility offered to workers by coffee shops (Yang et al., 2019). Commonly, coffee shop users feel a

strong attachment to their chosen coffee shop, as well as the community it resides in (Waxman, 2006).

Another interesting aspect of coworking spaces like coffee shops is the acoustic environment they have. Unlike corporate offices, coffee shops, libraries, and cafes have less predictable acoustic environments because they are open to the public and vary in noise level and number of people residing in the space. This can cause some challenges but can also aid in the reasoning for choosing a specific coffee shop. It was found that many college students who work in coffee shops found the acoustic environment favorable over that of the library. They thought the library was too quiet and did not have as energizing of an atmosphere as the coffee shop. Waxman (2006) also notes that these students were observed as campers, people who come to the coffee shop and stay for several hours. Droumeva (2021), determined that the sweet spot for acoustic environments aiming to aid in productivity is 72-75 decibels. Interestingly, many coffee shops that were observed in the study carried out by Droumeva fell into that sweet spot range. The murmurs of mostly working individuals and individuals being social, mixed with the unpredictable acoustic events of the coffee machines and the occasional loud patron created an acoustic environment that was just right according to the patrons they interviewed (Droumeva, 2021). This notion of 'caffivity' is provided by the drink itself and the acoustic environment present in the coffee shop. This is something unique to the semi-public space present in a coffee shop (Droumeva, 2021). From privacy to spatial allocation, from comfort, to acoustic environments, coffee shops form a psychological comfort for their patrons. This is argued to be linked to their sense of control in the space, their creativity, and their territoriality to the coffee shop itself (Leadon, 2015). There is a common theme that coffee shops are great places to work, and although prior research has begun to dissect this phenomenon, there is still more research

needed that pays special attention to the user perceptions of the spaces in which working patrons choose to dwell.

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## APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM



### Participant Consent Form

**You are being asked to participate in a research study conducted by Haley Gwin, and her advisor/primary investigator Elke Altenburger, who are a part of the Family & Consumer Sciences department at Illinois State University.**

The purpose of this study is to pin-point what socio-physical aspects of coffee shops, in a post pandemic & digital world, influence new and long-term users to spend extended time working in a coffee shop.

This study is anticipated to be funded by the universities Symposium Project/Presentation Assistance Grant in the form of reimbursement.

#### **Why are you being asked?**

You have been asked to participate because you are 18 years of age or older and have been perceived to be a regular at this coffee shop. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You will not be penalized if you choose to skip parts of the study, not participate, or withdraw from the study at any time.

#### **What would you do?**

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be observed and interviewed by Haley Gwin, to collect data that could inform the direction of this study. The interview questions revolve around your perceptions of the shop, and what you do while spending time here. You are expected to participate in the interview and engage in responses to the questions asked but may withdraw from answering questions at any time. The interview will be audio recorded and later transcribed. In total, your involvement in this study will last no longer than approximately 15 minutes. One interview will be sufficient to collect meaningful data, therefore no other interventions will need to take place.

No interventions will take place during the observation periods conducted by the researcher, therefore your involvement in observational periods will not appear to take up any of your time or seek your participation. Observational periods are designed to obtain information on patron's "normal" coffee shop activity. There will be photos taken of the coffee shop interior. Patrons and participants may appear in these photos, but all people in the photos will have their faces and identities blurred out.

#### **Are any risks expected?**

We do not anticipate any risks beyond those that would occur in everyday life.

#### **Will your information be protected?**

Your responses will be anonymous; nothing that will identify you will be linked to your responses. The findings from this study will be presented in Haley Gwin's graduate master's thesis. The findings may also be presented in various research journals if publication takes place. Nevertheless, no identifiable participant data will be collected or released anywhere.

#### **Will you receive anything for participating?**

For participating in the interviews, you will receive a \$10 gift card to the coffee shop where the interview is taking place. You will receive the gift card directly after the interview has been completed. You can also refuse to accept the research incentive payment if you so choose.

Information consisting of who receives compensation will be kept entirely separate from the research data and will be securely stored by the researcher for audit purposes only.

The IRS may consider these payments to be taxable compensation. Recipients of a research participant incentive payment may want to consult with their personal tax advisor for advice regarding the participant's situation.

1/6/22



## Participant Consent Form

**Who will benefit from this study?**

There are no direct benefits for participants from this study, but the goal of this study is to possibly inform future coffee shop design and even workplace design down the road.

**Whom do you contact if you have any questions?**

If you have any questions about the research or wish to withdraw from the study, please contact:

-Researcher: Haley Gwin [hrgwin@ilstu.edu](mailto:hrgwin@ilstu.edu)

-Primary Investigator: Elke Altenburger [ealtenb@ilstu.edu](mailto:ealtenb@ilstu.edu)

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If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, contact the Illinois State University Research Ethics & Compliance Office at (309) 438-5527 or [IRB@ilstu.edu](mailto:IRB@ilstu.edu).

**Documentation of Consent**

Sign below if you are 18 or older and willing to participate in this study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Optional Contact Information**

Please provide your preferred method of contact to receive updates on the study and a full debrief once the study has concluded. This is completely optional!

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Thank you for your time and participation in this study!

**APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW GUIDE**

**Initial questions will be asked as follows:**

- How often do you visit?
- What time of day do you typically visit? Morning or afternoon? (How long do you typically stay?)

**Closing questions will be asked as follows:**

- Is there anything else I should know about this coffee shop, or about why you come here?
- Do you have any questions for me?

**Themes associated with each question are as follows:**

Tasks performed/technology, Socialization, pandemic, and Physical attributes

**Alignment Table: Research questions, themes, and the associated interview questions.**

<b>Research Question</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Interview Question</b>
<b>Which physical attributes of the coffee shops do regular patrons perceive as supportive of their work activities?</b>	Physical Attributes	Why do you visit this coffee shop? Do you visit others? (If they visit only this one, ask why they chose it over others, and if they visit others what draws them there?)
	Physical Attributes	What are the features of the space we are in that you like or dislike? (What about other coffee shops?)
	Physical Attributes	How does this environment meet your needs in terms of noise level? (Too loud, too quiet?) (Does this aid or hinder your work?)

	Physical Attributes	What things about the design of this space would you change if you could?
	Physical Attributes	What physical aspect of the design of this space draws you here the most?
	Physical Attributes	Tell me about your favorite seat. (I notice you always sit over here, please explain why that is)
	Physical Attributes	What do you like about the spot you choose to sit at? (Lighting, access to window views, etc)
<b>What social attributes of the coffee shops do patrons perceive as contributing factors in their decision to work there?</b>	Tasks Performed/Technology	What do you typically do at the coffee shop? (Study, visit friends, work, etc.)
	Socialization	How did you find this coffee shop?
	Socialization	Why do you always come here alone (or with others)?
	Socialization	What people have you met here that are regulars that you have engaged socially with?
	Socialization	How would you describe the kinds of people that are frequent here? (Do you like the people here)
	Socialization	How does socialization play an important/not important role in why you visit here?
	Socialization	How comfortable is the level of crowdedness or number of people residing within this space? (In your opinion)

<b>What role do recent developments in technology as well as changes caused by the pandemic, play in patrons' decision to work remotely, using a coffee shop as a workspace.</b>	Tasks Performed/Technology	What kinds of technology do you use here? (Laptop, phone, etc)
	Tasks Performed/Technology	What activities are you doing while you are here? (Emails, reading, meetings, writing, etc?)
	Tasks Performed/Technology	What activities do you prefer to do here versus at home or in the office?
	Tasks Performed/Technology	What do you do for a living? (Access to an office or work from home)?
	Tasks Performed/Technology	If you have a nice comfortable chair setup with double screens at home or in the office why do you prefer working here? How do you stay productive here?
	pandemic	How long have you been coming here? (Was it before the pandemic or after?)
	pandemic	Did you come here before, during, or after the pandemic started and why? Tell me about it...
	pandemic	How much more frequently or less frequently do you come here as a result of the pandemic?
	pandemic	Did you notice more or fewer people here working or coming here during the pandemic? What about after?



## QUESTION SEQUENCE:

1. How did you find this coffee shop?
2. How long have you been coming here?

**If recent then skip this:**

3. Did you come here before, during, or after the pandemic started and why? Tell me about it...
4. How much more frequently or less frequently do you come here as a result of the pandemic?
5. Did you notice more or fewer people here working or coming here during the pandemic? What about after?
6. Why do you visit this coffee shop? Do you visit others? (If they visit only this one, ask why they chose it over others, and if they visit others what draws them there?)

7. What are the features of the space we are in that you like or dislike? (What about other coffee shops?) What physical aspect of the design of this space draws you here the most?
8. What things about the design of this space would you change if you could?
9. How comfortable is the level of crowdedness or number of people residing within this space?  
(In your opinion)
10. How would you describe the kinds of people that are frequent here? (Do you like the people here)
11. Why do you always come here alone (or with others)?
12. What people have you met here that are regulars that you have engaged socially with?
13. How does socialization play an important/not important role in why you visit here?
14. Tell me about your favorite seat? (I notice you always sit over here, please explain why that is)
15. What do you like about the spot you choose to sit at? (Lighting, access to window views, etc)
16. What do you typically do at the coffee shop? (Study, visit friends, work, etc.)

17. What kinds of technology do you use here? (Laptop, phone, etc)

18. What do you do for a living/school? (Access to an office or work/study from home)?

19. What activities are you doing while you are here? (Emails, reading, meetings, writing, etc?)

**Follow-up questions about working here :**

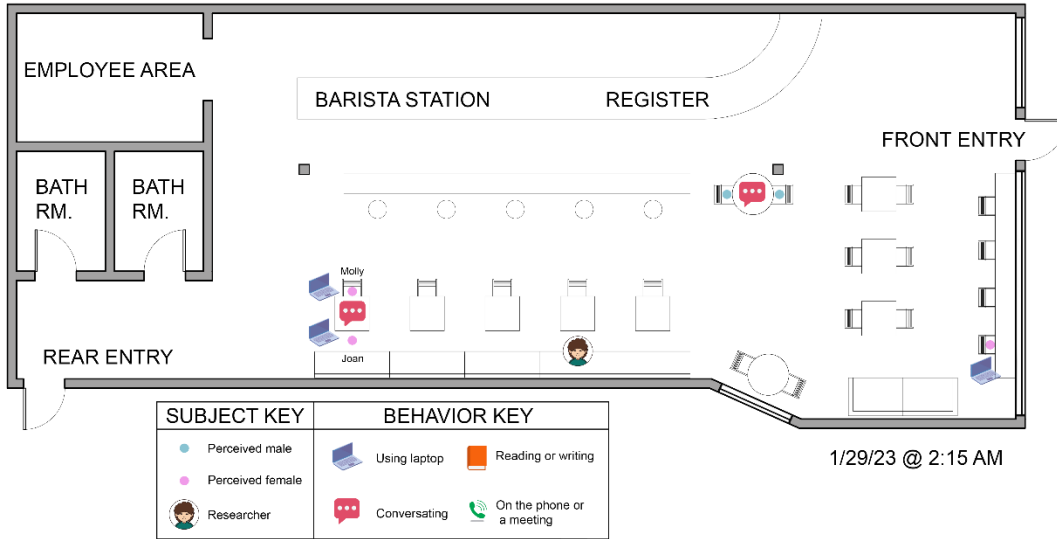
20. What activities do you prefer to do here versus at home or in the office?

21. If you have a nice comfortable chair setup with double screens at home or in the office why do you prefer working here? How do you stay productive here?

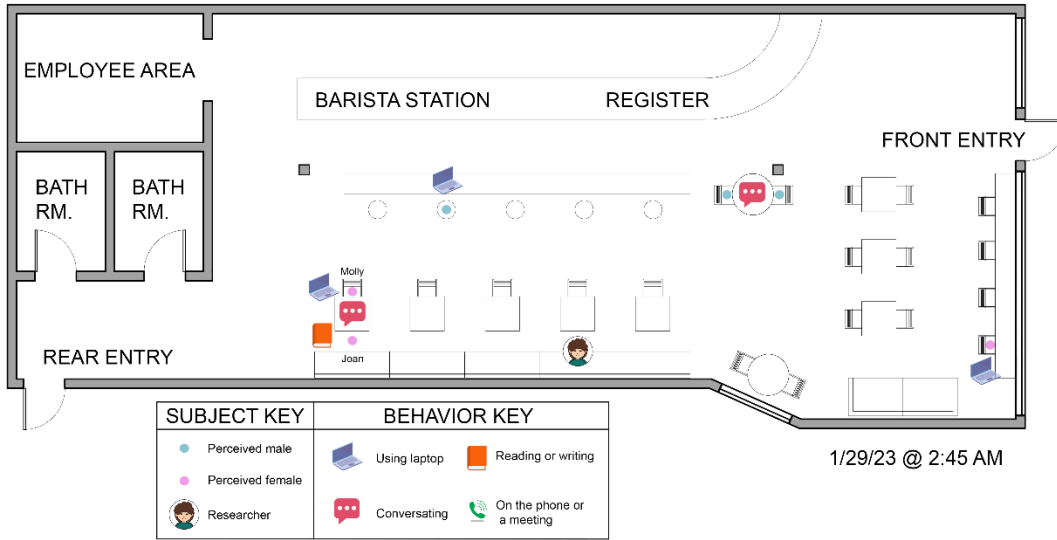
22. How does this environment meet your needs in terms of noise level? (Too loud, too quiet?) (Does this aid or hinder your work?)

## APPENDIX D: BEHAVIOR MAPS

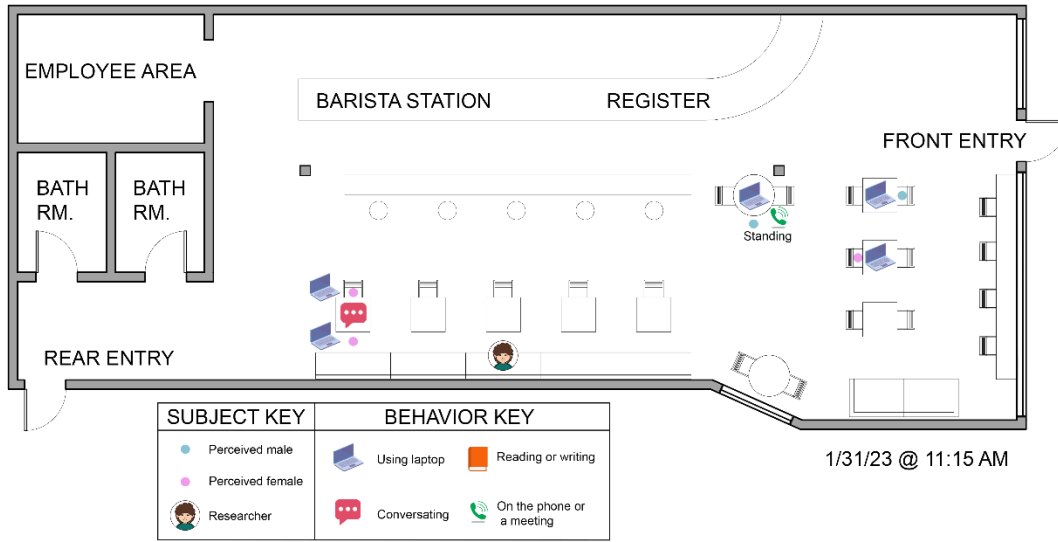
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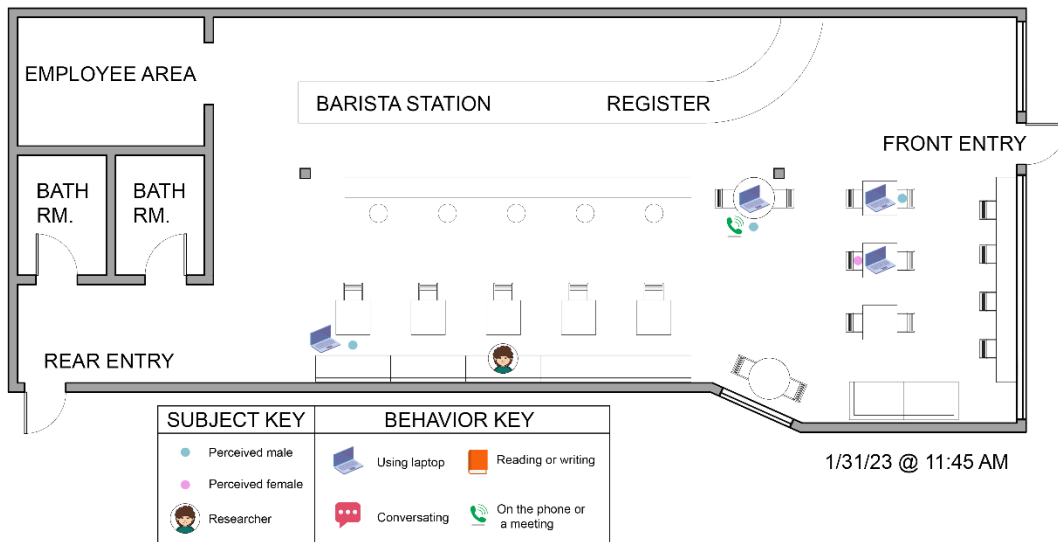
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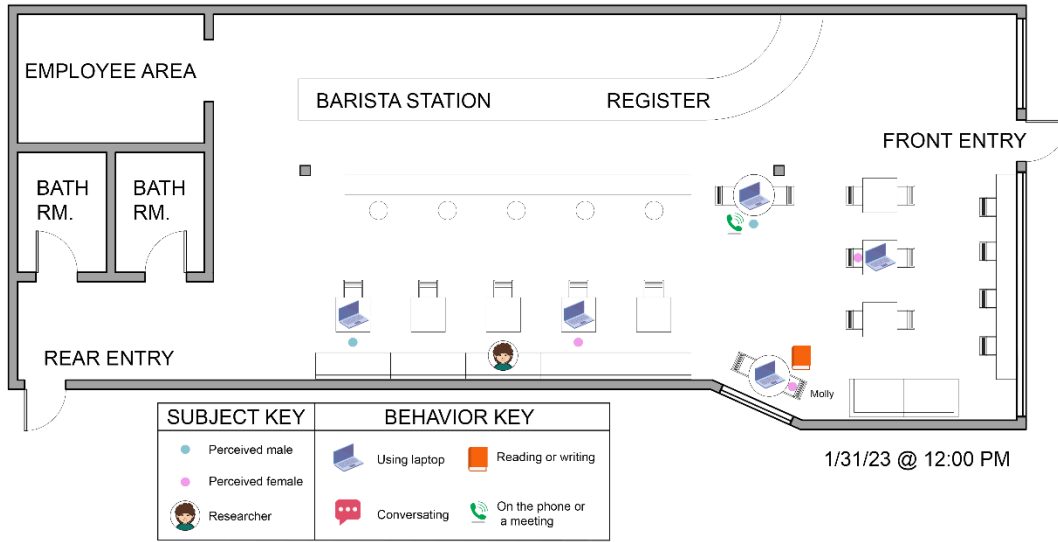
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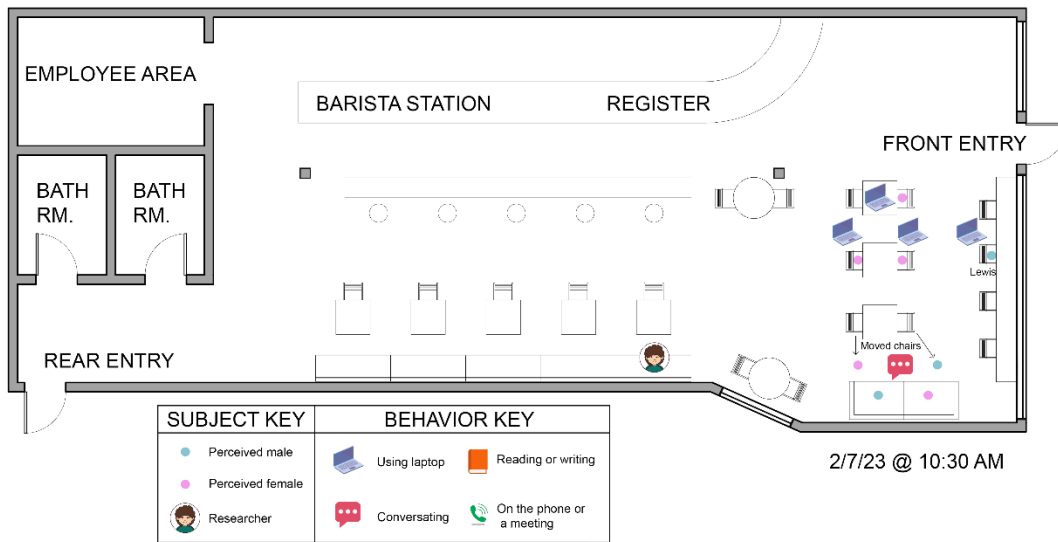
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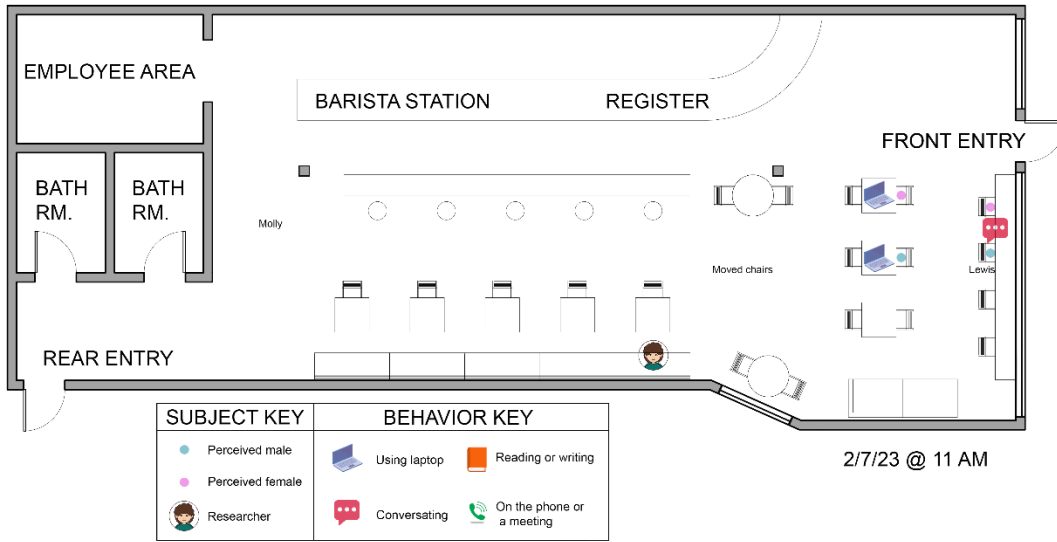
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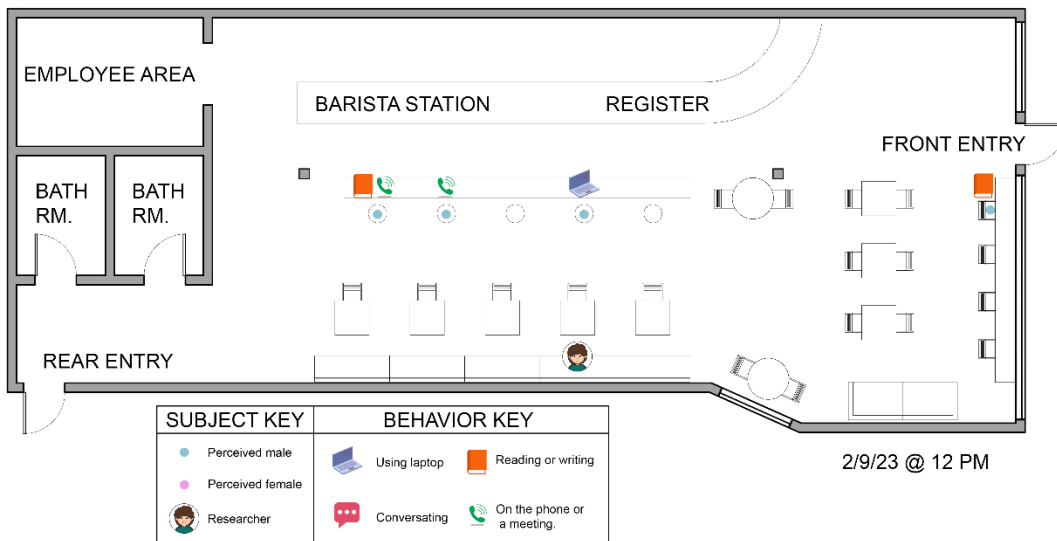
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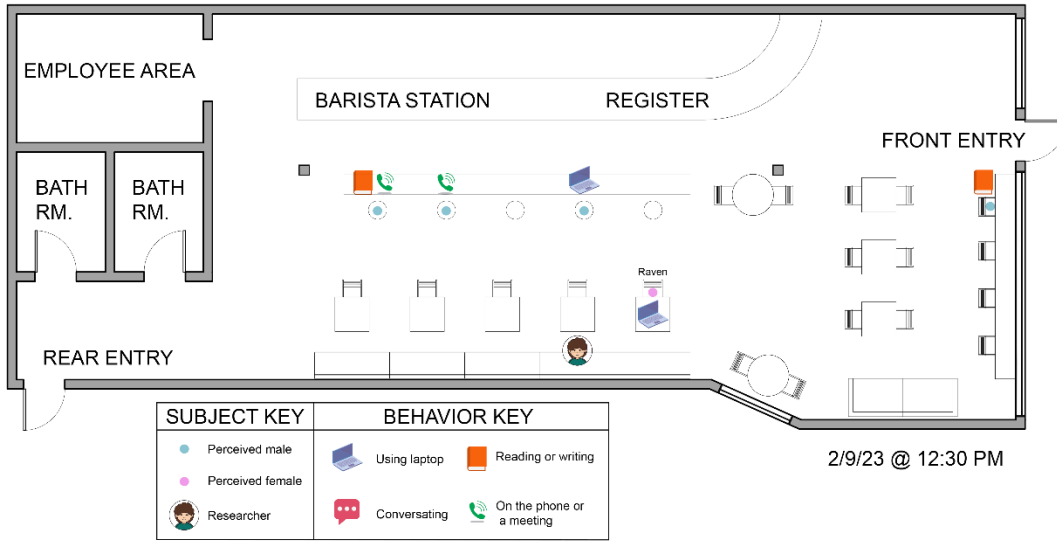
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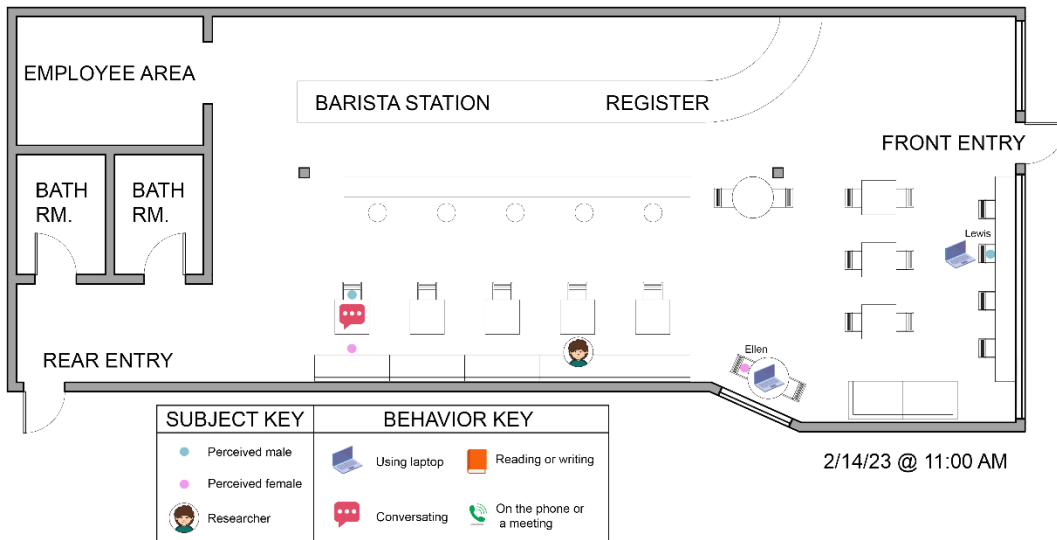
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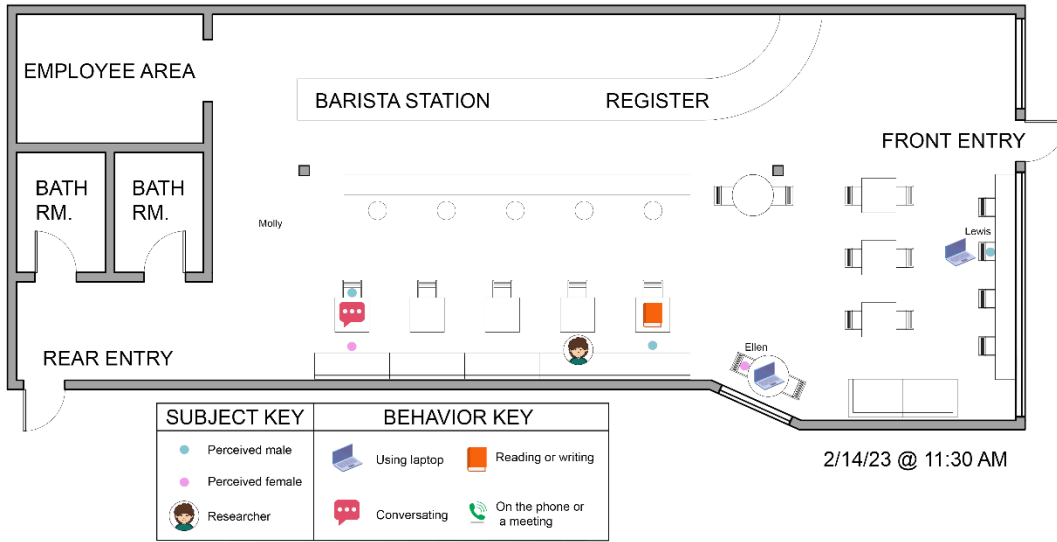


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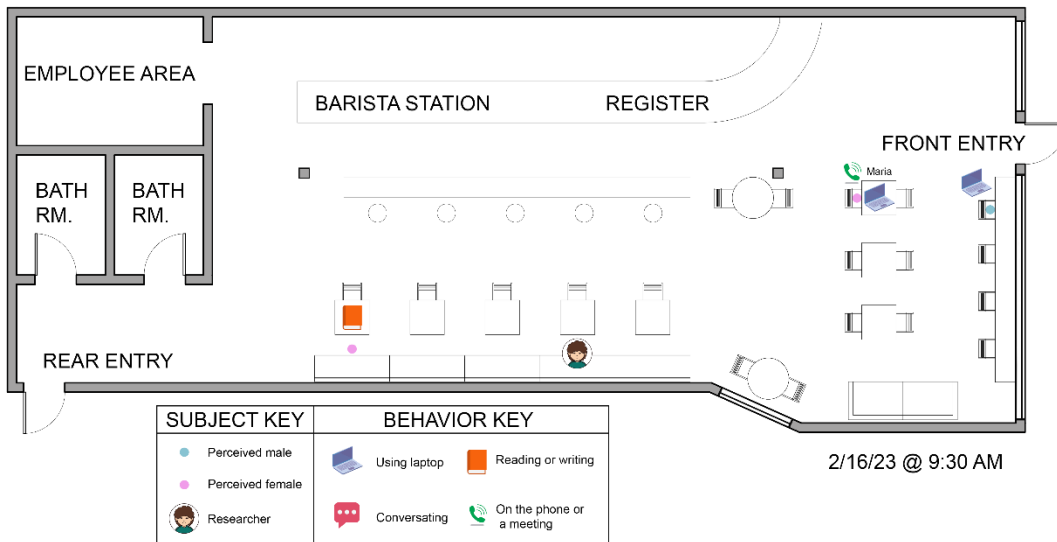




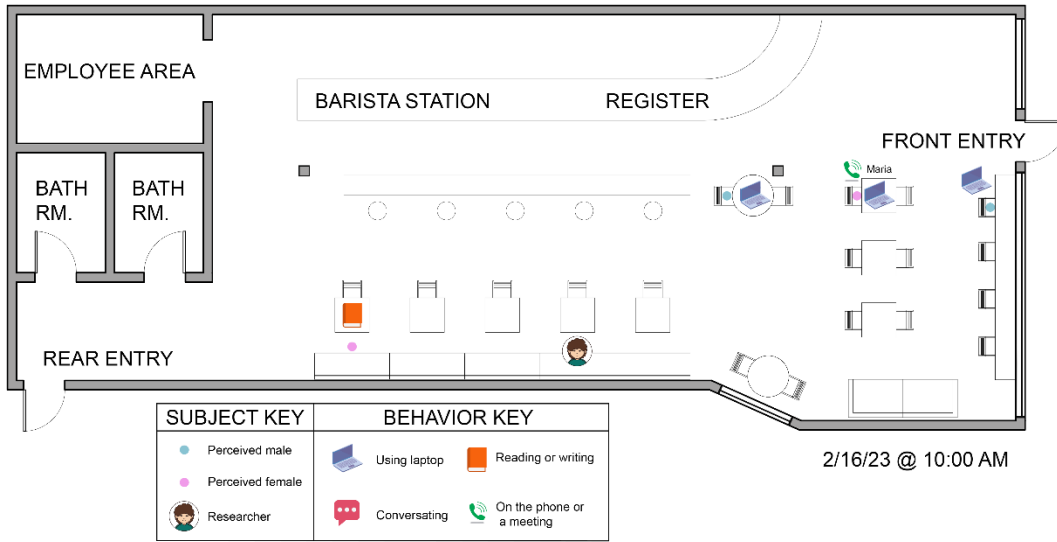
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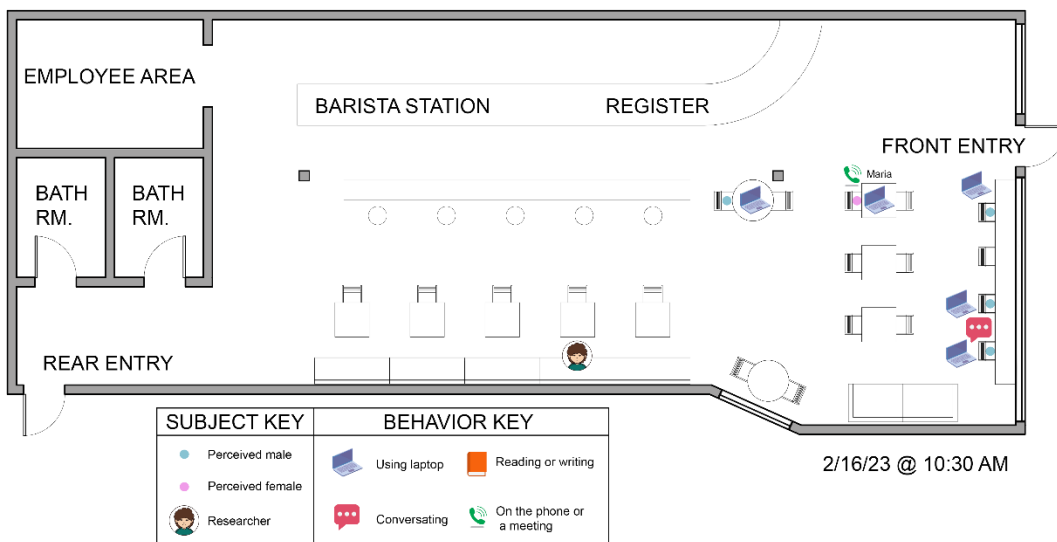
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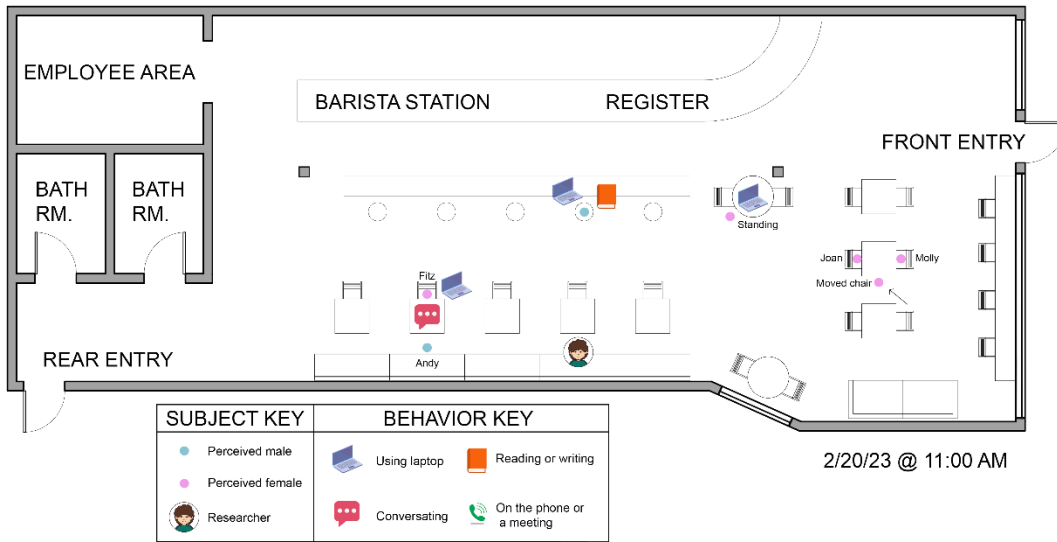
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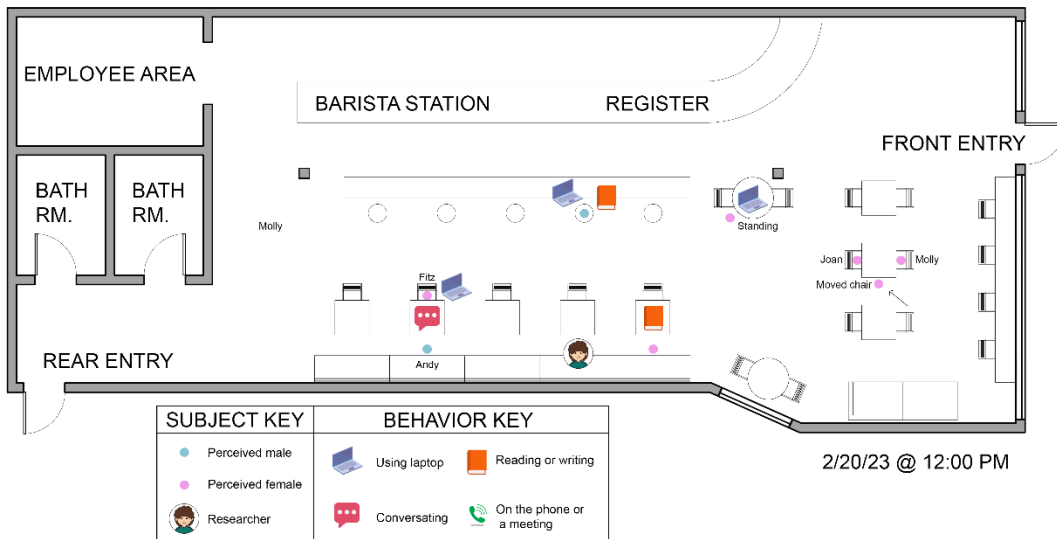
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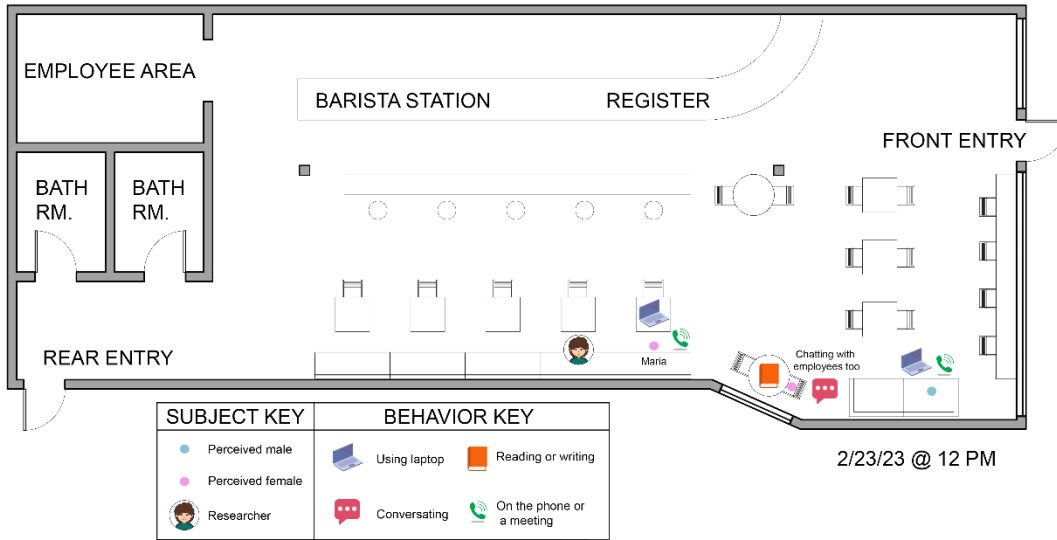
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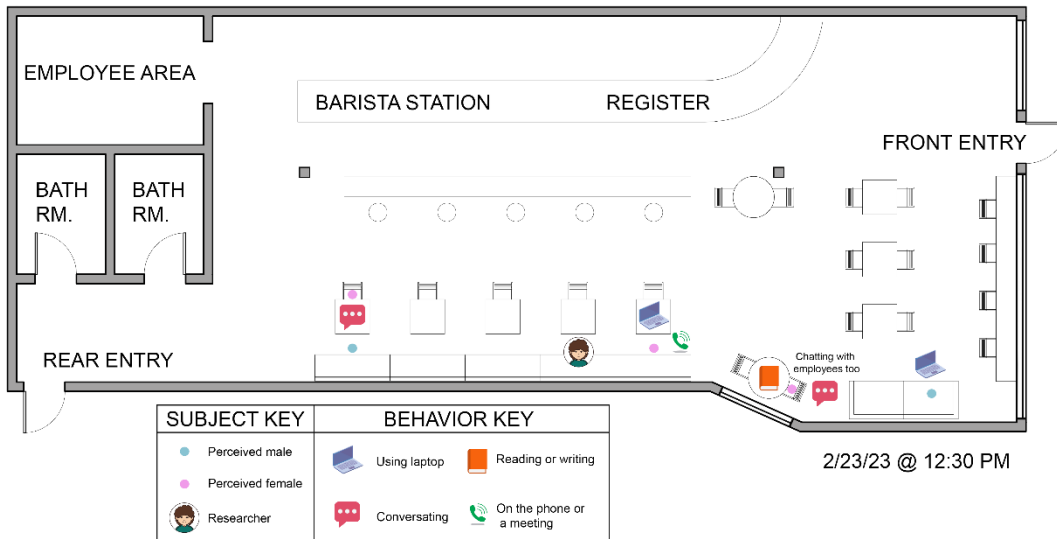
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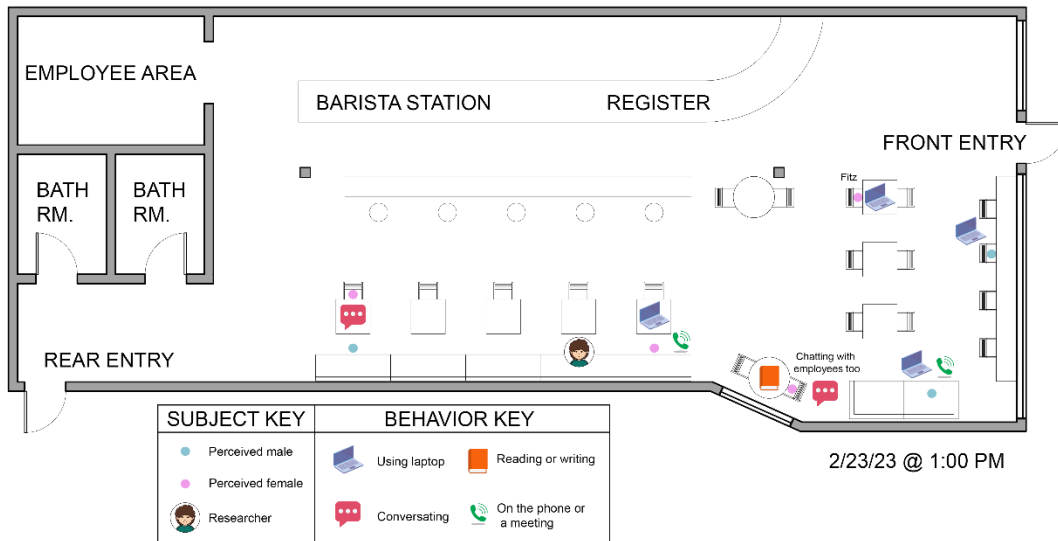
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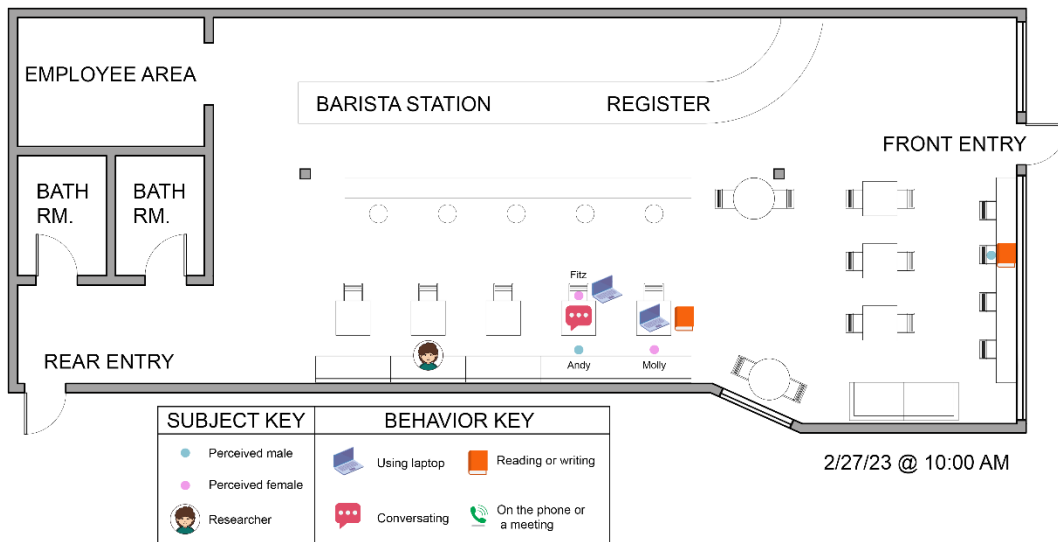
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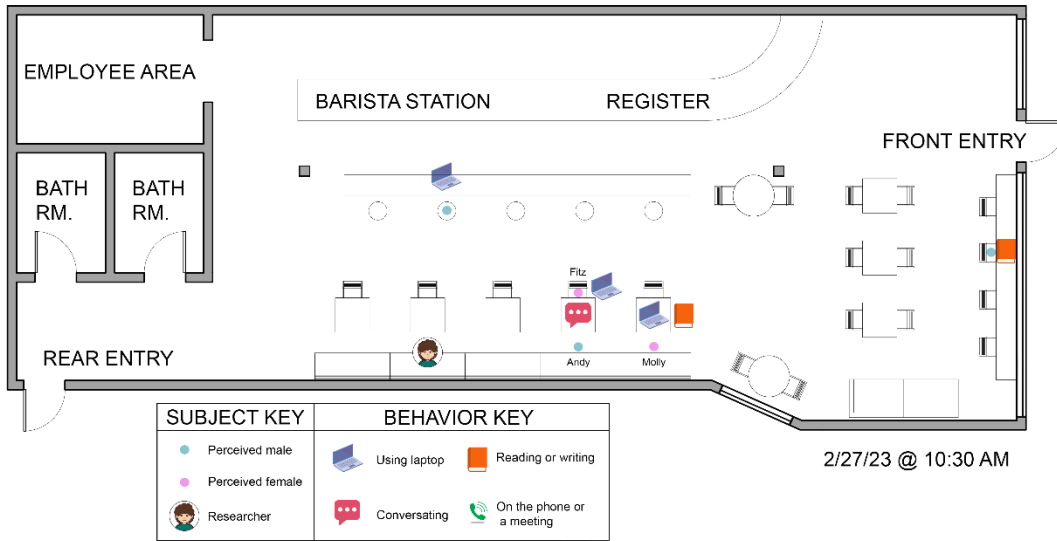
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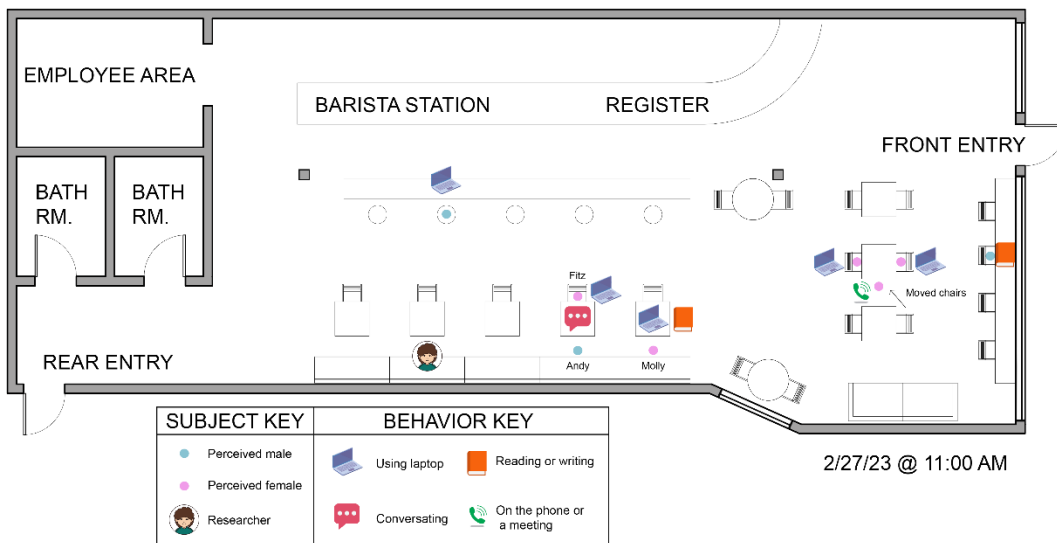
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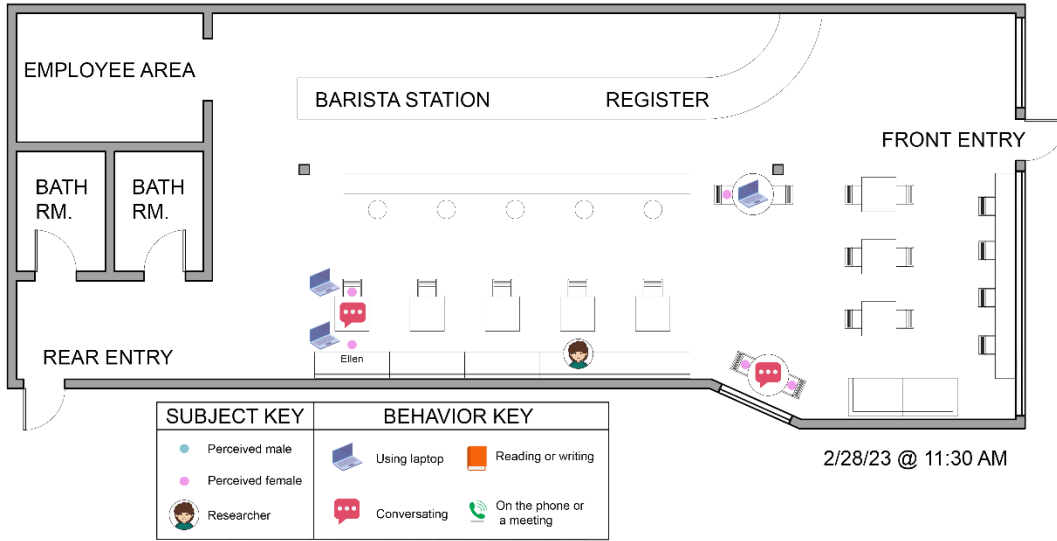
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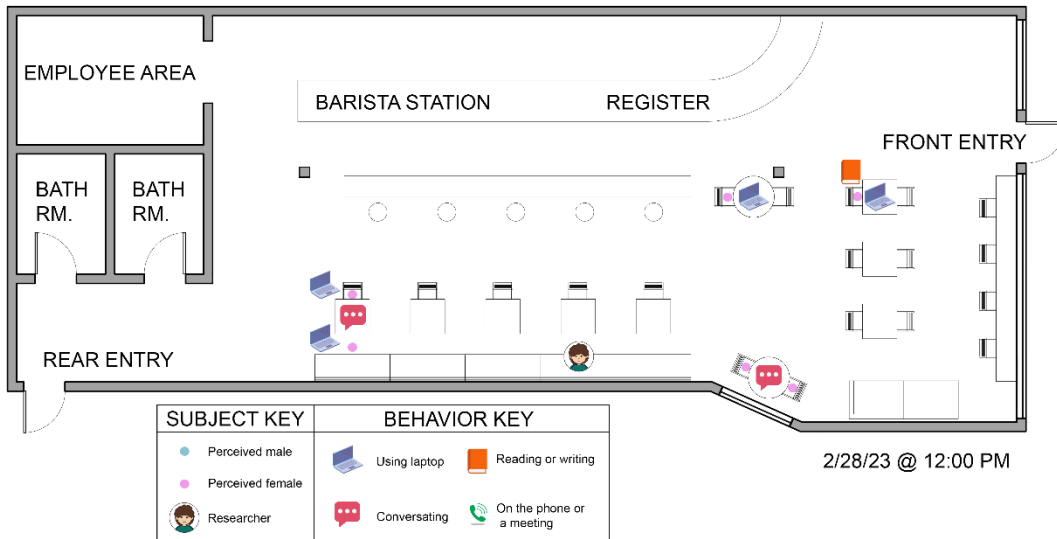
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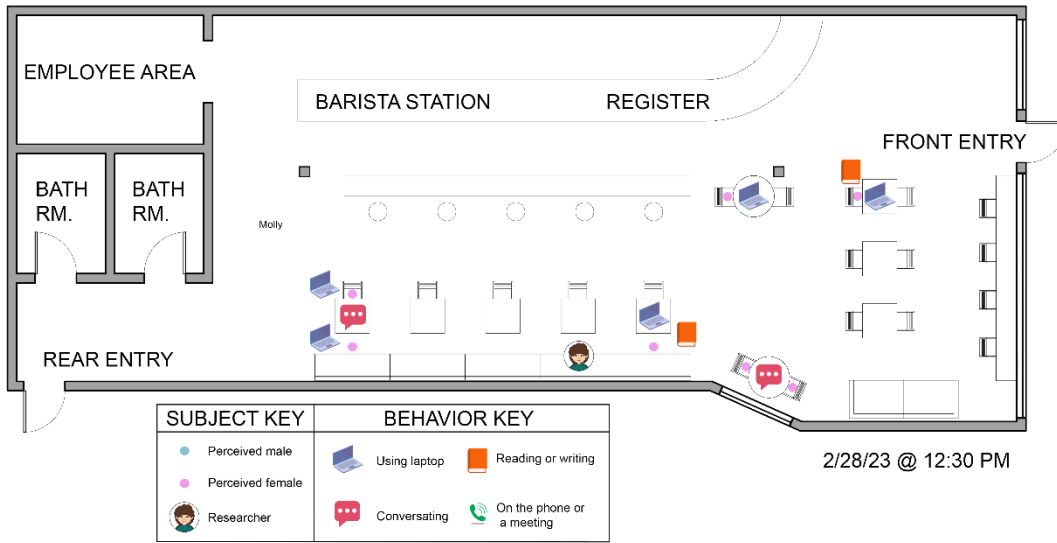
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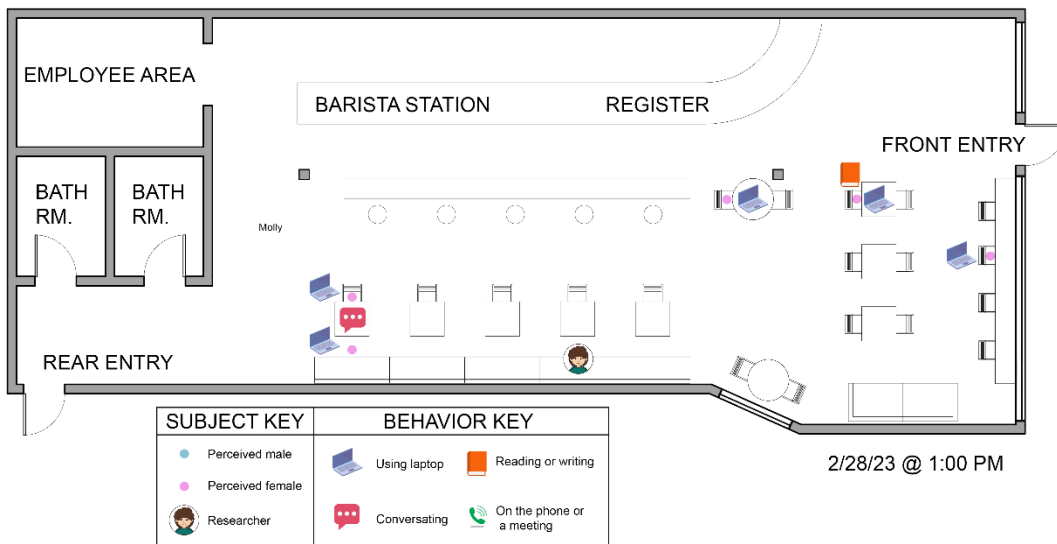
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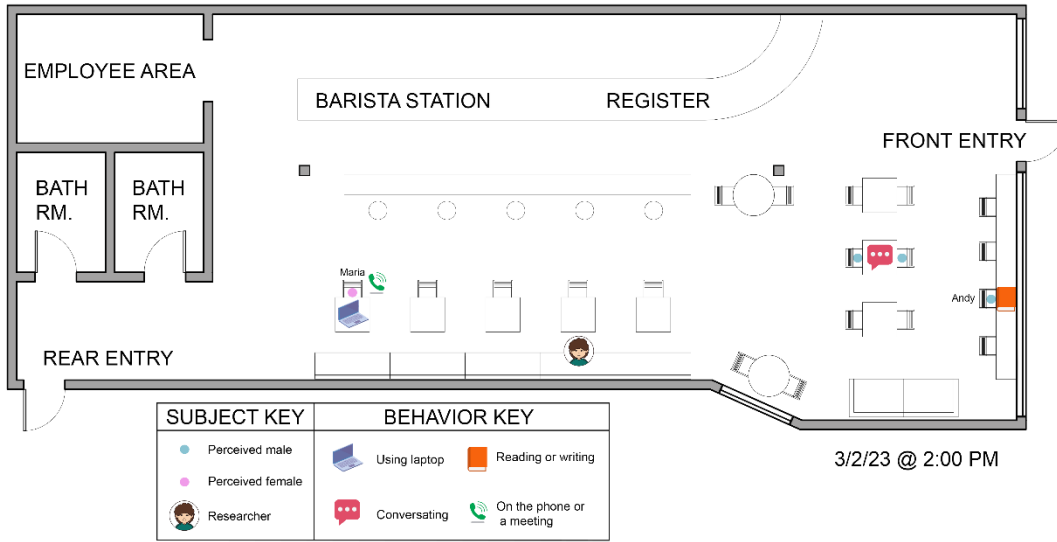


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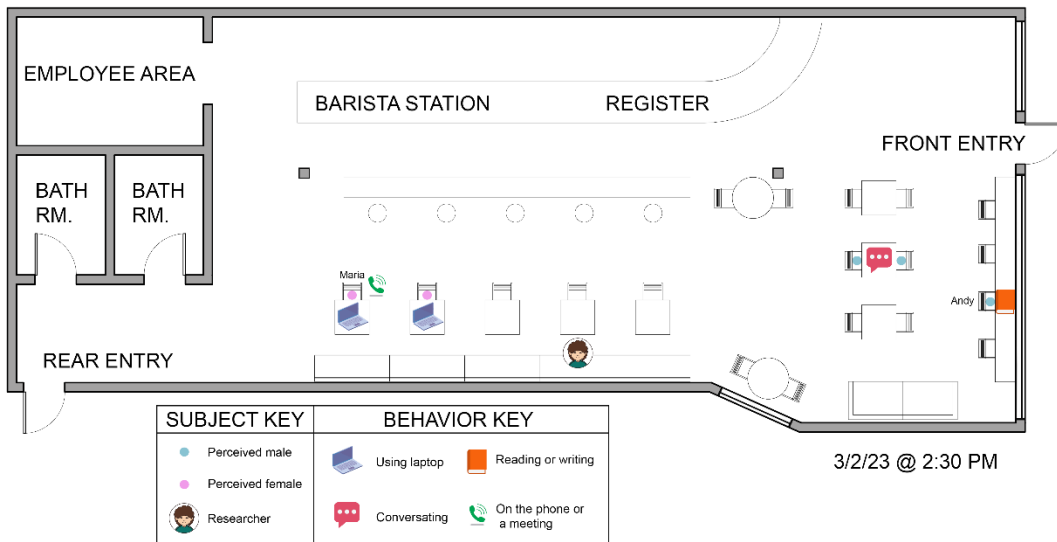




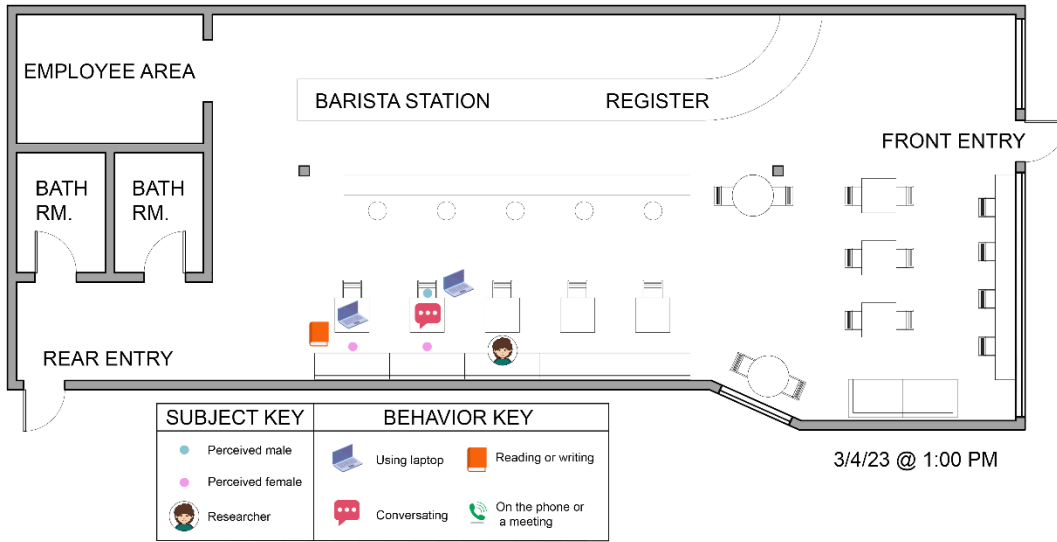
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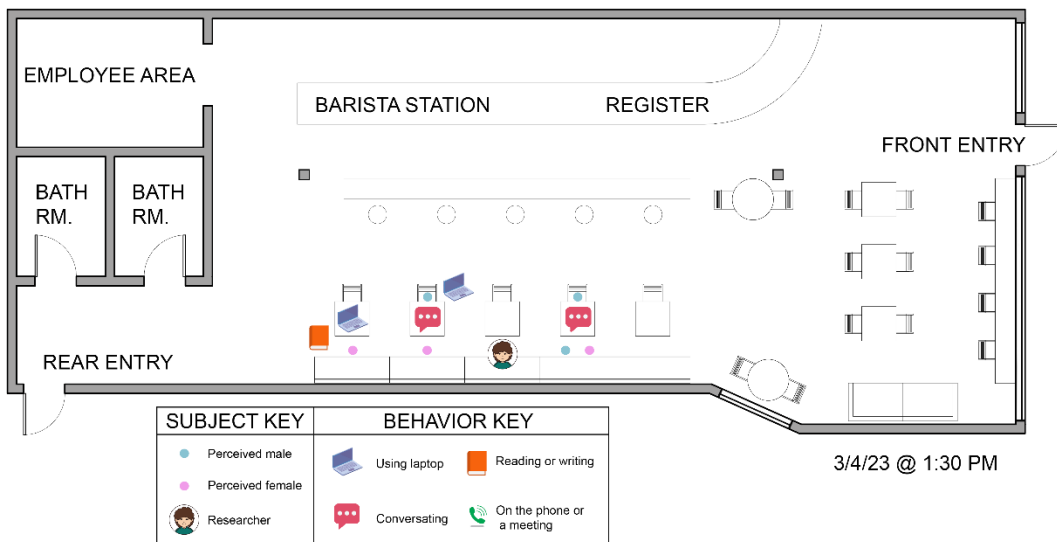
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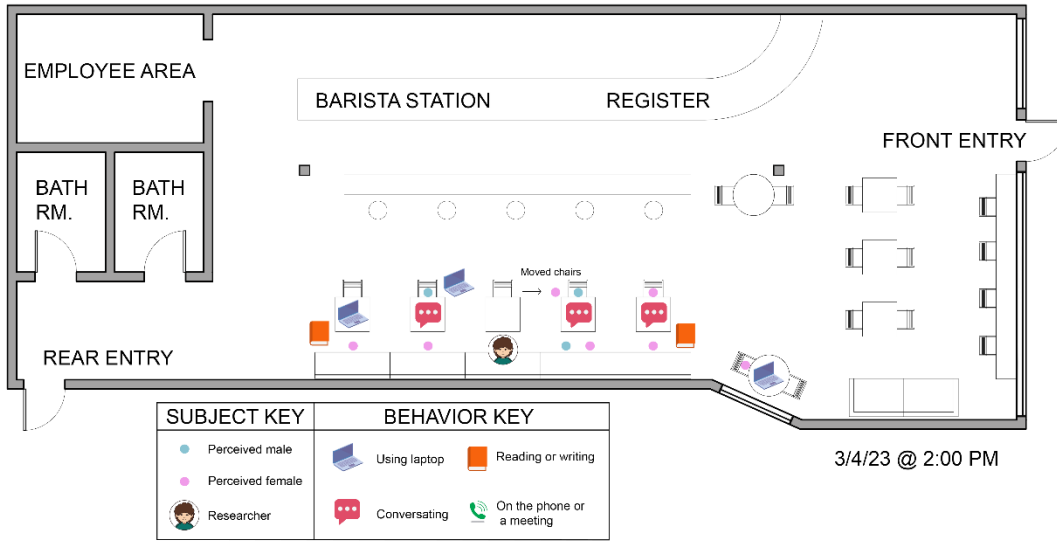
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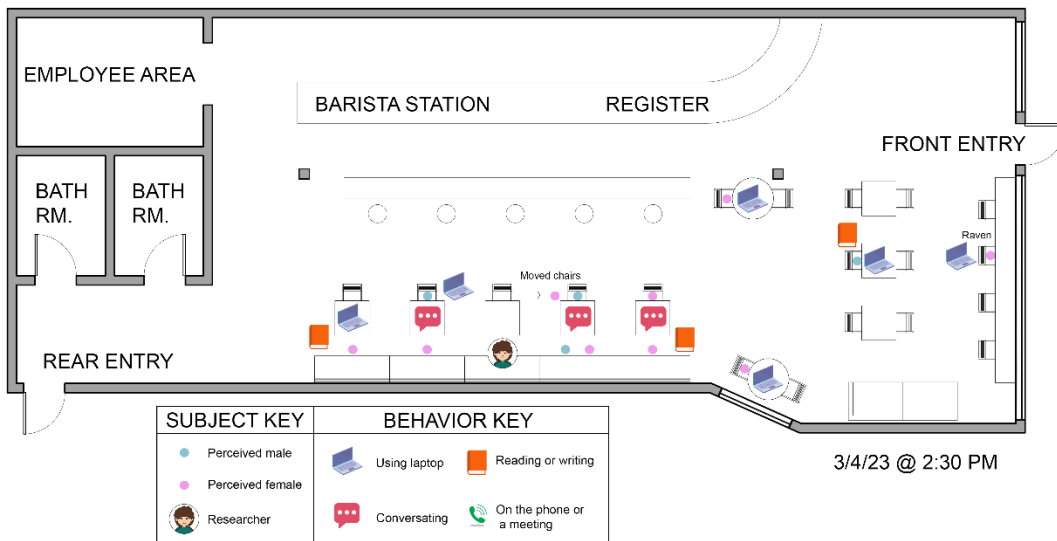
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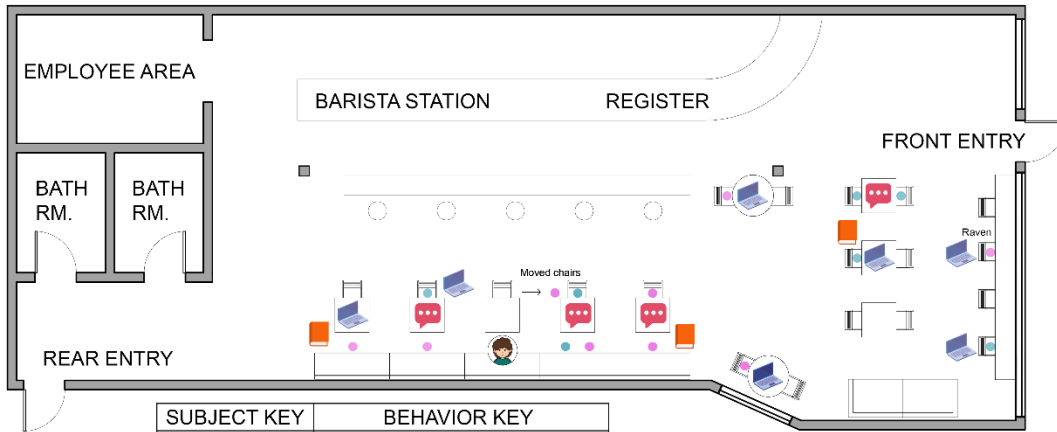
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SUBJECT KEY	BEHAVIOR KEY	
<span style="color: blue;">●</span> Perceived male	Using laptop	Reading or writing
<span style="color: pink;">●</span> Perceived female	Conversating	On the phone or a meeting
Researcher		

3/4/23 @ 3:00 PM