

SECONDARY SCHOOL STAFFROOMS  
AS PERCEIVED, CONCEIVED, AND LIVED SPACES:  
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THEIR IMPORTANCE, DECLINE, AND SUBLATION

by

Deborah Catherine Smith

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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Graduate Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Social Justice Education  
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

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Deborah Catherine Smith  
Department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Social Justice Education  
University of Toronto**

## **Abstract**

Secondary school staffrooms serve a genuine need for teachers not easily replaced by subject department workrooms, yet staffroom use in many schools has declined. As a result, some staffrooms are being turned into classrooms or even abolished altogether from secondary school designs. This dissertation investigates the causes and effects of the decline of secondary school staffroom use in a large Canadian school board. Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad is applied to situate the investigation into spaces that are *perceived*, *conceived*, and *lived*. Staffrooms are analyzed as *perceived* spaces in the context of the production and reproduction of teachers' labour, and the sub-communities of teaching found in workrooms. Staffrooms are viewed as *conceived* spaces by investigating their physical design and placement, as well as the role of secondary-level administrators in supporting or repurposing staffroom space. Staffrooms are understood as *lived* spaces by exploring how time, history, metaphor, and habit – especially habits formed in the early years of teaching – influence meaning for the users. Quantitative data drawn from a 23-question survey (256 responses) confirmed that although staffroom use had declined for the majority of respondents, secondary school staffrooms were still overwhelmingly considered to be necessary components of secondary schools even among non-users. The data analysis revealed that this decline was influenced by factors such as the isolated location of a staffroom, long distances from workrooms and classrooms to staffrooms, increased workloads, and habit. The findings of are supported by qualitative data in the form of 717 optional

comments provided by survey participants, field notes from observing two secondary staffrooms: one inactive and the other frequently used, and through 26 semi-structured interviews held in five different staffrooms. It is my contention that staffrooms remain important to secondary school teachers as potential places for increasing perceptions of staff collegiality, providing opportunities for informal professional learning, developing cross-curricular connections, and managing teacher health and retention. The conclusion suggests how secondary school staffrooms might be reconfigured to better suit the needs of those who wish to use them.

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For Jim

*gradibus ascendimus*

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

The best teaching advice that I ever received came 30 years ago from my associate teacher, who guided me during my experience as a student teacher. She was a brilliant music teacher who ran music ensembles every day both before and after school. “Deb,” she said, “eat lunch in the staffroom. It is too easy in our profession to become isolated in the band room. If you don’t make an effort to get out of the music room, you will never meet other people on staff.” This advice has served me well throughout my career. The staffroom has been a refuge from the stress and confusion of the classroom and sometimes even from the occasional tensions created by being in close quarters with the other members of my department in a subject workroom. Moreover, my encounters in the staffroom have also enriched my pedagogy with new ideas, provided different perspectives on students, and led to exciting and effective cross-curricular collaborations that would not have been possible had my interactions been restricted to those in my department. However, as my career I progressed, I noticed that fewer and fewer teachers were using the staffroom. Thus, as I began this research, I sought to determine if the decline I had observed in staffroom use was larger than my personal experience. I wanted to know if the decline of staffroom use had any effect upon valuable opportunities for broad-based professional development, including informal learning, social networks, and collegiality. I wanted to know if and how, through the use of staffrooms, teachers meet other teachers, exchange ideas, de-stress, receive reassurance, sometimes cry, more often laugh, and brainstorm ideas that would benefit all of the stakeholders in our educational communities.

When I was a young middle-school student many years ago, staffrooms were considered forbidden spaces. It was a rare and awe-filled occasion when you were sent down to deliver a message to a teacher who was ensconced in there. After knocking timidly at the door, you waited

fearfully until a figure would open the door, barely visible through a thick cloud of smoke. You apologized for the intrusion, rapidly explained that you were sent there by an appropriate authority figure, delivered your message, and then scurried away as quickly and silently as possible for fear of the imaginary, but still vivid, repercussions for potentially seeing into the depths of the secret space of teachers.

Although the clouds of smoke had dissipated with non-smoking bylaws, staffrooms were still well used when I started teaching. In my first school, a middle school which had a common lunch period, the staffroom was always full, as were those of the next two middle schools in which I taught. When I transferred to the secondary panel, I noticed several differences between elementary schools and high schools in teacher spaces used during break times. Teachers in middle schools often worked in their own classroom, if it was not being used, or in the staffroom. Teachers in the secondary panel, though, did not have the luxury of their own classroom. Instead, in addition to a staffroom, secondary schools had many workrooms segregated by subject department. The subject department workroom was where a teacher's limited desk space was located. It was the place to store your coat and a space to access resource material, consult with colleagues who taught in your department, phone parents, and complete your lesson preparation and marking. The staffroom was often located in an area of the school other than that of the subject department workroom. Workrooms might be located as far away as the third floor of a building, but staffrooms were usually located on the first floor near the office. The staffroom was typically used as a place to eat lunch and meet with colleagues who were not in the same department. In fact, the first high school where I taught had a former principal who encouraged social interaction among staff and would not allow coffee makers in workrooms. This was in

order for staff to go and meet each other in the staffroom. This was a policy that remained in effect when I arrived. It was also one of the liveliest and most cohesive staffs of my career.

As I continued teaching at secondary school level, I noticed that staffrooms were being used less frequently. This observation reached an apex when I transferred to a five-year-old school that had eliminated its staffroom altogether by converting it from what was designated as staffroom on the building plans to a classroom. This was done without consulting the staff, and in spite of what the principal expected, the action was met with much resentment, rather than approval. This appropriation provided an additional impetus for the research presented in this paper. I speculated that the maintenance of staff health and well-being might be negatively affected. Secondary teachers are already isolated from other staff members by the dispersal of classrooms and workrooms throughout a large building, often having little chance for interaction or connection with members from another department. The odds of finding a like-minded kindred spirit with whom to bond or learn from in a constructive collegial manner might be substantially reduced when a teacher from one department does not interact with members from another.

This chapter provides an introduction to this dissertation. It introduces the reasons why researching the decline of secondary staffrooms is important and provides an overview of why staffrooms remain essential spaces. The chapter states the primary and secondary research questions and ends with an overview of the remaining chapters of the dissertation.

## **1.1 Reasons for research**

Schools are often forgotten as places of employment, yet, concurrent with their critical work in the classroom, teachers are also employees, and a school is also a work site. Although there has been much research about schools, teachers, classrooms, and pedagogy, teaching as an

occupation has still too often been, as Andy Hargreaves (1980) noted three decades ago, “a surprisingly neglected topic in the sociology of education” (p. 125). Unfortunately, the study of teaching as a job in the context of a workplace still remains comparatively under-researched. As much as secondary schools are about the students, they are also workplaces. They are the work site for teachers and other staff. “We need to recognize that communities of teachers in schools are adult working groups. We are so obsessed with schools as places for children that we forget that they are workplaces for adults” (Acker, 1999, p. 197). It is in this context that this study of teachers’ work – and more specifically, this study of the spaces of teachers’ work with special attention to the role of staffrooms – may have an important place in the literature.

A teacher, as an employee, may feel that a place to eat one’s lunch is part of any decent work environment, as is a place to get away from the emotional demands of the classroom and reconnect with other adult co-workers just makes sense in a school; but increasingly, governments, administrators, and taxpayers feel quite differently. Often it is thought any allocation of resources to teacher working conditions, such as comfortable staffrooms, is a gross misuse of the monies entrusted to student education. Therefore, as class sizes and school populations have increased, and educational budgets decreased, access to a space devoted exclusively to a teacher’s professional and personal need have decreased accordingly. The research reported in this dissertation indicates that staffroom use had declined in part because of increased workload, creating lack of time for teachers to meet collegially, and the opportunity for administrative appropriation of space. All of these reasons speak to a deterioration of teacher’s working conditions. This is a serious issue worth investigating in its own right, but it also has implications, as we will see, for such things as work performance, professional development, and

overall staff cohesiveness which directly impact education's most important stakeholders - the students.

In this thesis, the main issue of concern regarding staffrooms centers on their lack of use and potential disappearance. As Steven Hasting (2004) notes, "the staffroom can be the least used room in the school" (p.2). If they were disappearing because staff no longer wanted or needed them, then it might be more difficult, though perhaps not impossible, to claim that their decline is of consequence, but my research shows otherwise. Staffrooms are being turned into student spaces in the form of classrooms, or removed before they are even created as secondary schools are increasingly being designed without them.

One of the basic premises of the study is that professional community space has value. Following this, we could therefore assume that if there were an alternate community space for staff incorporated into a building, then the disappearance of staffrooms would not be a concern, but alternate spaces are rarely, if ever, provided. In this age of crowded classrooms, why have a dead space - especially one that is not considered as part of the funding formula of a school? Wouldn't it make sense to reconfigure the staffroom into a classroom? If the space is not used, get rid of it. This has been the alarming response of a number of schools and administrators.

There are several reasons why this is an erroneous and ultimately expensive way of thinking. As I will demonstrate, a staffroom serves a genuine need of the profession, one that is possibly unique to teaching (Kainan, 1994), and one that is not easily replaced by subject department workrooms. To begin with, staffrooms can "rejuvenate even the most bedraggled teacher" (Frankel, 2011, p. 2), and I would argue that this rejuvenation is frequently a necessary part of teacher well being and teacher retention. Sometimes a staffroom is the only place where teachers can meet with other teachers in the context of professional privacy during the workday



(Kainan, 1994). There is a symbiotic relationship between teaching conditions and learning opportunities for students (Bascia & Rottman, 2011). There is also a strong connection between working conditions and productivity and retention of teachers (Bascia & Rottman, 2011; Weakliem & Frenkel, 2006). Employees who must take stress leave cost school boards money through the cost of a supply teacher, an Employee Assistance Program, or Long Term Disability payments. Teachers who are unmotivated and disengaged about their workplace ultimately, in spite of best intentions, affect students negatively. In this research I shall explore in greater depth the implications of staffroom decline, but even applying the most basic rationale, supporting a secondary staffroom makes sense as it is a potentially small investment when compared to a potentially much larger fiscal and academic gain.

## **1.2 Research questions**

Instinct is valuable, and instinct shaped by a sustained engagement with other professionals over a lengthy professional career is more so. I have learned to trust it throughout my many years of teaching, but instinct alone could not provide the foundation for the strong sustainable claims about staffroom decline in this research. It was important to find out if my feelings about the importance of secondary school staffroom use were unique to me or if they reflected a more widely held opinion. In other words, did staffroom use matter to anyone else but me, and if so how? Did the majority of teachers, especially those who did not use the staffroom, care if a secondary school staffroom was maintained? And, do current views and practices have more significant implications? The overarching research question then, was do secondary school teachers still find staffrooms to be purposeful? This was the question that always informed my consideration in each arm of Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad of perceived, conceived, and lived.

To answer this overarching question, this dissertation, therefore, sought to answer the following questions about secondary school staffrooms:

Primary Questions:

1. Has secondary staffroom use in one major southern Ontario school board changed?
2. What are the factors and dynamics associated with change or lack of change in staffroom use in secondary schools?
3. Does staffroom use relate to low staff engagement, absenteeism, burnout, and retention rates?
4. Are staffrooms still considered by teachers to be a necessary component of their professional workplace spaces, lives, and professional development?

Secondary Questions:

1. What is the percentage of staff members who use secondary staffrooms?
2. For what purpose do teachers use staffrooms?
3. Where do teachers spend their non-classroom time?
4. What are the characteristics of an active staffroom?
5. Is an active staffroom an indication of a collegial and supportive work environment? Can such an environment exist in a school with low staffroom use?
6. Can a profile be created of staffroom users and non-users?

### **1.3 Overview of dissertation**

The remaining chapters of this dissertation will consider secondary school staffrooms as being part of the workplace of teachers by situating them in the context of the interactions of and reactions to the spaces, time, and power to be found in secondary schools.

*Chapter 2* justifies the choice of spatial theory in general, and Henri Lefebvre's theory of spatial reproduction in particular, as the overarching theoretical framework to be applied to teaching spaces in this dissertation. The application of this spatial theory will remain sensitive to the fact that it is meant to be integrated. "The places of social space are very different from those of natural space in that they are not simply juxtaposed: they may be intercalated, combined, superimposed – they may even sometimes collide" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 88). Social space is not confined within neatly defined borders and, therefore, much overlap in Lefebvre's terms of reference is not only expected, but appropriate. *Chapter 2* also reviews the relative paucity of literature regarding staffrooms, and applies the work of previous researchers in the areas of secondary staffroom and subject departments to Henri Lefebvre's triumvirate of perceived, conceived, and lived spaces.

*Chapter 3* outlines the specific methodology used in the research and the analysis component of this dissertation.

*Chapter 4* presents and analyses the results of the staffroom use survey. Significant results, as determined by Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, are identified and briefly discussed. A more in depth analysis of these results is provided throughout the appropriate discussions about perceived, conceived, and lived space located in chapters 5 to 8.

*Chapter 5* is the first of three chapters which place staffrooms within the context of Lefebvre's definition of perceived, conceived, and lived spaces. These chapters investigate the causes and context of the decline of secondary school staffroom use. Chapter 5 relates secondary school staffrooms to Lefebvre's definition of *perceived* spaces. This chapter discusses the prevalent use of subject departmental workrooms and why these may not always provide the optimal site for fulfilling school-wide initiatives or encouraging formal and informal learning. It

evaluates the importance of the accessibility to food for the use of a secondary staffroom.

Chapter 5 concludes with how issues of secondary school staffroom spaces have been influenced by the production and reproduction of teachers' labour.

*Chapter 6* places secondary school staffrooms within the context of Lefebvre's definition of *conceived* spaces. Conceived spaces include the location, physical aspects, amenities, and ambiance of secondary school staffrooms. Examining staffrooms as conceived spaces also means investigating the intended uses of teachers' labour spaces and the manifestation of power necessary to enforce these uses. This chapter identifies issues of power and control that influence the development and support of an active secondary school staffroom, including the direct authority exerted by secondary school administrators.

*Chapter 7* considers the third arm of Lefebvre's triad, the actual *lived* use of teacher work spaces, through metaphor, time, and history. It introduces and describes the staffrooms of East Central Secondary and Heritage Hills Secondary, the two schools chosen for observation. Metaphor provides the discourse that sustains predominant practice. Lack of time is the main reason that teachers avoid the staffroom. The passage of time also creates history and habit, and habit contributes to the decline of staffroom use, especially as young members of a department observe these habits in others and reproduce them.

*Chapter 8* summarizes and offers some synthesis regarding the final answers to the initial primary and secondary research questions that have been identified and addressed in the previous chapters. It discusses the overall results of the data produced by the research and gives suggestions of how secondary school staffrooms might be reconfigured to better suit the needs of those who wish to use them.

## **Chapter 2 Conceptual framework and literature review**

This chapter introduces and attempts to define space and spatial theory. The word “attempt” is appropriate because these definitions are confounded by the complexities of social space and as well as by the agendas of various researchers, including myself. An introduction to Henri Lefebvre and his *Production of Space* (1991) is provided to explain the choice of his spatial triad to frame the research. This chapter then provides an overview of the literature as it relates to chapters five to seven of this dissertation. The literature review begins by summarizing the limited amount of research directly related to staffrooms. It then considers literature relevant to the application of Lefebvre’s triad of perceived, conceived, and lived space.

### **2.1 Introduction to space and spatial theory**

In 2003 the Hubble telescope focused its lens for 11 days on an ultra-deep field of space where there appeared to be no stars. A picture was taken. In that picture, every dot, smudge, and smear represented a galaxy – over 10,000 in total. Each galaxy had millions and millions of stars. Each star had the possibility of planets orbiting it and each planet had the possibility of civilization. As Tony Darnell (2006) observes, “This is what we see when we stare at a blank spot in the sky where nothing appears to be. This is the number of galaxies in nothing.”

Space is not *nothing*. It is *not* empty. Space is *not* a separate entity. There can be no space without something else to border it. It must always be considered in reference to its edges. Even the almost incomprehensible distances of the ultra-deep field of space are measured by their distance away from our position on Earth. Space exists, but its existence is only relevant in its relation to the things beside or within it. Even vast unlimited stretches of galactic space must be anchored at one end by our world or ourselves.

In some sense, when calculating and assessing space, we are the centre of the universe. Both physical and social spaces are bounded by what surrounds them, whether that something is a building, city, or the conventions of a social group. Henri Lefebvre (1991) writes that “space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things” (p. 83). Space is a social construct (Dale & Burrell, 2008; Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 1985). It exists because humans have defined it. Yet because humans have constructed it, space brings with it a myriad of definitions and confusions. “Space” is a term that is so commonly used that most people think they can clearly define it. It is a term that is both thoroughly familiar and apparently unproblematic, and yet it remains mysterious. Nonetheless an attempt at a working definition must be made: “Explications of the term are necessary to distinguish legitimate from confused uses, but they will inevitably produce a possibly infuriating mixture of insights and leaden banalities” (Sayer, 1985, p. 51).

What is space? According to architects and the ancient Greeks space is the exterior. According to the ancient Romans and interior decorators, space is the interior. According to sociologists, space is constituted by the relations formed among people. According to geographers, space is the land. According to politicians, space is boundaries. According to postmodernists, space is whatever *isn't* there. According to psychologists, space is mental. According to philosophers, space is insignificant; it is what space contains or what borders space that is significant. As for teachers, space is something that always seems to be lacking and almost always seems to be out of their control. It certainly became apparent during the investigation of secondary school staffrooms that their use was an issue of space and its control.

Many academic fields of study have tried to own some of the vast territory of spatial theory. Mathematics claims to have initiated spatial theory through Euclidean geometry. Physical sciences subdivide spatial studies into such fields as astronomy and absolute space in

physics and territoriality in biology. Spatial studies in geography range from the study of land masses to human geography. Architectural design utilizes spatial theory in building design and urban planning. Psychology examines the internal space of our mental being and social interactions. Political divisions create borders, maps that are inevitable consequences of dominance and conquest. Management and labour theory considers time management and its relation to productivity, and the effect of distance on cost. As Lefebvre (1991) notes, the tendency is for each discipline to carve out its own corner of spatial theory:

The dominant tendency fragments space and cuts it up into pieces. It enumerates the things, the various objects that space contains. Specializations divide space among them and act upon its truncated parts, setting up mental barriers and practio-social frontiers. Thus architects are assigned architecture space as their (private) property, economists come into possession of economic space, geographers get their own “place in the sun” and so on. (p. 89)

However, as much as individual disciplines try to carve out their own space, the borders of spatial theory overlap. Political borders cannot be considered without their physical and social influences. Social interactions cannot be legitimately examined without examining the spaces in which these interactions occur. Architecture depends upon both the social and the physical. The spatial overlaps are as infinite as the combinations of spaces and people involved. As Lefebvre (1991) points out, “We are confronted not by one social space but by many – indeed, by an unlimited multiplicity or unaccountable set of social spaces which we refer to as ‘social space’” (p. 86). A highly effective metaphor for space is provided by Karen Dale and Gibson Burrell (2008) who compare space to a river and its banks. A river cannot travel without shaping the contours of the riverbank. Likewise, a riverbank affects the shape, speed, and direction of the

river. If we consider social interaction to be the river and the riverbank to be the space in which it functions, whether physical, imaginary, or socially constructed, then the parallel becomes evident. As Dale and Burrell (2008) explain, “The spaces and places around us construct us as we construct them” (p. 1). Space influences the movements and actions of people and is reconfigured, reappropriated, and reassigned by these same movements. All space, including that of work, is therefore a social construct that is never empty and inert, but is crowded with meaning and conflict.

If space is difficult to define, then how does one define the study of it – spatial theory? “What is a geography of nowhere?” (Benko, 1997, p. 3) From the point of view of a sociologist, the study of space is certainly not astronomy, geography, architectural design, psychology, or politics *per se*, yet many of these things are overlaid in spatial theory. Initially, the “social” was considered quite separately from the “spatial” (Gregory & Urry, 1985). This has changed. Currently, spatial studies are neither entirely the study of the container in which power relations occur nor the power relations themselves, but rather a consideration of the intersections and interactions of both. “Spatial structure is now seen not merely as an arena in which social life unfolds, but rather as a medium through which social relations are produced and reproduced” (Gregory & Urry, 1985, p. 3).

Thus a spatial study of secondary school staffrooms is not exclusively about the physical aspects of the rooms themselves or even the schools in which they are contained. Neither is the study of secondary school staffrooms exclusively about those who use them. Rather, a spatial study of secondary school staffrooms is about the inextricable relationship between the two – how the physical aspects of these spaces influences their role as social spaces and vice versa. Spatial theory and schools is a connection that has recently begun to receive attention. For



example, recent explorations include a special edition of *Forum* (2004) devoted entirely to space and schools. Yet, once again, rarely do these studies of spatial theory connect to teachers' work, and never to staffroom location and use. But, as previously mentioned, space is not an object, nor can it be separated from its physical and social influences. Spatial structure produces and reproduces, among other things, the habits and practices of labour. Like any work, a teacher's work is contained within a space, usually the school or the classroom. But a teacher's space must also include the interactions with the other people in the space of teaching. This is one of the contradictions of spatiality. A teacher's work place lies within the space of the school, but there are many ambiguities about this space. "The relation of schooling to the capitalist order is located in part in the working class of particular orientations to time, activity, and authority" (Corrigan, Curtis, & Laning, 1987, p. 21). Who controls a teacher's space? Is it the employee or the employer? What effect does this control have on productivity? What is the "will" both of those who control the labour and those who benefit from it? To what extent are the work spaces and the working conditions allowed to deteriorate in order to impose this will? Teachers' labour encompasses a combination of space, time, and labour theory – all of which are valuable, but independent, fields of study. Nonetheless, when examining actual cases of labour, these fields cannot be studied in isolation. When approaching the study of labour from a spatial perspective, one must be prepared to include aspects of architecture, human geography, capitalist production modes, social interaction, and power, in addition to conventional labour theory. Spatial theory, with its roots in both geography and sociology, proves to be a suitably comprehensive framework to address these critical considerations. The field of spatial theory has the potential to overarch and thus connect the others, and to delineate the many possible correlations between the very broad topics of space, time, education, and labour.

## 2.2 Henri Lefebvre and his spatial triad

According to Fenwick, Edwards, and Sawchuck (2011), there are two main types of spatial theorists who might be useful when discussing teachers' work. "The first is to be found among those geographers who pursue educational topics. The second is found among educators who draw upon spatial theories" (p. 148). It is in the spirit of the latter that I draw upon the spatial theories of Henri Lefebvre. There have been other spatial theorists besides Lefebvre, particularly David Harvey, Manuel Castells, Doreen Massey, and Edward Soja, yet I argue that Henri Lefebvre (1901-1991) remains the theorist with the most useful approach for an application to both teachers and teachers' labour. His work provides a specific framework within spatial theory that is particularly applicable to the working spaces of teachers.

Space is not merely a container, but rather "is to lived experience what form itself is to the living organism, and just as intimately bound up with function and structure" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 90). The same can be said of schools. They are so much more than their walls, yet their walls influence everything that goes on inside. As Jane McGregor (2003) observes, "What we call 'the school' is more than a physical building within which relationships are enacted. It is the product of interrelations and materially-embedded practices, connected in space and time to wider flow flows of ideas, technologies and discourses in society" (p. 369). Secondly, Lefebvre (1991) recognizes that "the lived, conceived and perceived worlds should be interconnected" (p. 40), and teachers know that very few things exist in isolation. Thirdly, teachers tend to be more pragmatists than theorists, and Henri Lefebvre's theories are designed to have practical application.

The perceived-conceived-lived triad (in spatial terms: spatial practice, representations of space, representational spaces) loses all force if it is treated as an abstract 'model'. If it

cannot grasp the concrete (as distinct from the “immediate”), then its import is severely limited, amounting to no more than that of one ideological mediation among others.

(Lefebvre, 1991, p. 40)

Finally, Lefebvre makes his observations with an aim to improving working and societal conditions. The micro world of a school lends itself well to the hope for improvement in these areas, and, at the risk of waxing overly optimistic, ultimately extending this improvement to more macro educational environments.

David Harvey, Manuel Castells, Doreen Massey, and Edward Soja are all fine spatial theorists who are concerned with space both as a cause and reproducer of relations detrimental to the human condition and as a mechanism for improving the human condition. Yet it was more difficult to connect these theorists directly to education and to something as comparatively microscopic as the study of secondary school staffrooms. David Harvey’s study of urban geography (1973) focused on cities and their creative meanings, but his theories are not easily transferable from the macro world of the urban to the relatively micro world of schools. Manuel Castells (1989) also examined cities, but his work saw the city as a product of abstractly conceived instances of social formation and ignored the physical structure of the city. Castells also ignored “the contradictory mediation between everyday life and the social order” (Kiper, Goonewardena, Schmid, & Milgrom, 2008, p. 6), and teachers’ work is very much about negotiating this contradiction between the everyday obligations of their job, the spaces in which that job occurs, and the added edicts of administrations and governments. Doreen Massey (1984) aids in the understanding of the spatial divisions of labour as seen in employment, occupational, and social structures, but applies the physical only in terms of labour, distribution, and relocation. According to Kiper, Goonewardena, Schmid, & Milgrom (2008), Edward Soja’s

third space of the imagined (1989, 1996) tends to towards the absolute, whereas for Lefebvre “difference and everyday life are categories of dialectical critique, such that lived space entails a contradictory realm of alienation and liberation” (p. 9). Even Lefebvre’s concept of mental space does not claim to be absolute.

Henri Lefebvre’s triad provides a framework that is relatively easily applied to the study of staffrooms, as it provides a mechanism for dividing and organizing such a study. At the same time it is both comprehensive and fluid enough to be used to understand the inevitable overlap, intersections, and contradictions that are encountered in such a study.

Edward Soja (1989) wrote the following of Lefebvre:

I suggest that this perhaps least known and most misunderstood of the great figures in twentieth-century Marxism has been, above all else and others, the incunabulum of postmodern critical human geography, the primary source for the assault against historicism and the reassertion of space in critical social theory. His constancy led the way for a host of other attempted spatializations, from Sartre, Althusser, and Foucault to Poulantzas (1978), Giddens (1979, 1981, 1984), Harvey (1973, 1985a, 1985b), and Jameson (1984). And he remains today the original and foremost historical and geographical materialist. (p. 42)

Andy Merrifield (2006) described Lefebvre as follows:

Philosopher cum sociologist, sociologist cum literary critic, literary critic cum urbanist, urbanist cum geographer, he was too eclectic to be any one of those categories alone. Too communist to be romantic, too romantic to be a communist, his oeuvre bewilders and bedazzles, defies pigeonholing and classification. (p. xxiv)

From a purely personal perspective, I appreciate that Lefebvre writes with an understanding and use of the arts as a tool for explication. That not only appeals to the musician in me who always sees art as a metaphor for understanding humanity, but also demonstrates Lefebvre's love and hopefulness for the human use of spaces. Teaching is about both love and hope, and this study was approached from a place that loved my teaching, colleagues, and students, and hoped to improve the conditions of all three. It is Lefebvre's direct engagement and overt passion for humanity that made his theories a logical choice for framing my research. It was my desire to try to be a third wave Lefebvrian scholar and apply his theory to the real life situation of staffrooms.

Erratic, eclectic, flexible in his Marxism (Soja, 1989), Lefebvre remains above all optimistic. "His frank concern for profane human happiness all seem especially inspiring in an era when crony philistinism has supposedly rendered such a 'meta-style' old hat" (Merrifield, 2006, p. xxxii). It is this optimism, this hope that spaces that are lived and ultimately reproduced can be changed into spaces that are worth living in that makes Lefebvre a particularly enticing theorist for education. His theory of the production of space is rooted in Marxism and the realities of power and political intent, but allows for the possibility of reaction and change. Teaching, even on the most difficult of days and in the most difficult of circumstances, is, as already noted, ultimately about hope and change.

Henri Lefebvre presents a particularly salient theory of social space in *The Production of Space* (1991). Here he describes space as a triad of spatial practice (*perceived*), representations of space (*conceived*), and representational spaces (*lived*). A triad is necessary to avoid the inevitable opposition of a duality which creates what Lefebvre terms a "straight jacket philosophy" (1991, p. 39). Perceived space "embraces production and reproduction and the particular locations and spatial sets characteristic of each social formation" (Lefebvre, 1991,

p. 33). It ensures continuity of spatial use and practice. Perceived space considers physicality and distance and its effect upon the various social aspects of a particular space. Taylor and Spicer (2007) suggest that studies on physical setup, clustering firms around large pools of critical human resources, physical distance and transportation costs, the distance between resources and production, can be considered under perceived spaces since “they are held together by a common understanding of space as a pattern of distance and proximity which can be manipulated” (p.329). Considering secondary school staffrooms as perceived spaces will refer to research related to departmental subject workrooms, collegiality, and the production and reproduction of teachers’ labour.

Conceived spaces, the second side of Lefebvre’s spatial triad, are “tied to the relations of production and to the ‘order’ which those relations impose” (1991, p. 33). This arm of Lefebvre’s spatial triad includes the power relations inherently found in space and its control. “The major contribution of this thread of analysis is to move from a focus on *how* surface manifestations of organized spaces operate, to the reasons *why* [emphasis in original] spaces are configured as they are” (Taylor & Spicer, 2007, p. 323). Considering secondary schools as conceived spaces will refer to research directly related to the physical aspects of schools, such as location, proximity, amenities, and ambiance. Finally, this arm of the triad must examine the role of school administrators and aspects of educational power and control that can be applied to a teacher’s workplace and staffrooms.

Of course, how a space was designed to be used and how managers intend it to be used may have no bearing on the reality of how it is actually used by the people who inhabit the space. Lived spaces are the final part of the triad. The third arm has, according to Lefebvre, the power to decrypt, “suppressing all resistance, all obscurity in its very being” (1991, p. 40). “This is the

dominated - and hence passively experienced – space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate. It overlays physical space, making symbolic use of its objects” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). Lived spaces are less concerned with distance, proximity, and relations of power (Taylor & Spicer, 2007). Rather they are “the meaning which we give to walls” (Taylor & Spicer, 2007, p. 333). Lived spaces are how spaces are actually represented, interpreted, and used. Considering secondary school staffrooms as lived space will refer to research that can be applied to the importance of metaphors, time, and history in staffroom use.

### **2.3 Literature review**

I was a member of the teaching staff of East Central Secondary, (the names of all schools and interview participants in this document have been changed in order to maintain confidentiality), at the time of this investigation and was a frequent user of the staffroom. I was thus completely immersed in the area of research. Since I am a stakeholder in the results of the research, in addition to being the researcher, an extensive literature search was critical in order to minimize inevitable bias and to ensure that opinions and observations were well situated within existing academic references. However, literature related directly to staffroom usage is relatively sparse (Acker, 1999; Hargreaves, 1980; Woods, 1984), and some of the most prominent, applicable sources in this area might now be considered dated. Most research into schools has focussed on one or another aspect of classrooms (Hammersley, 1984), not on teacher working conditions, and certainly not on secondary staffrooms. To make matters more challenging, although Britain has had some active researchers into staffroom use such as Carrie Paechter, Jane McGregor, Steven Hastings, and Hannah Frankel, research in Canada has been limited. Even Sandra Acker, a Canadian, completed her research in Britain. It appears as if the bulk of the literature directly related to staffrooms exists prior to 1985, certainly before computers and the

Internet became an integral part of a teacher's workplace. To the best of my knowledge, there is no one who has researched the causes of staffroom decline. There is a great need to fill the gap between research done in schools with the aim of benefitting students or administrators and research done to recognize and improve teachers' working conditions.

### **2.3.1 Literature related to secondary school staffrooms**

Very little has been written about the way teachers negotiate the spaces of their daily work, especially the so-called leisure spaces such as staffrooms and workrooms. Most mention of secondary staffrooms, if they are mentioned at all, is found within the context of teachers' work and school organization. Some observations have been made about staffrooms at the elementary level. For example, Peter Woods (1979, 1984) examined the "private self" of teachers by studying staffroom conversations, particularly humour, in elementary staffrooms. Ben-Peretz, Schonmann, and Kupermintz (1999) did a thorough investigation of elementary staffrooms in Israel, but as they observe, "Teachers' lounges constitute an almost uncharted territory in the educational environment of schools" (p. 153). The study of staffrooms in secondary schools remains especially unexplored. Secondary schools differ from elementary schools, as previously mentioned, because of the lack of a common lunch period and the addition of departmental workrooms, which makes research about elementary staffrooms only minimally applicable.

While whole school identity is achievable in some (smaller) elementary schools, in larger, more complex high schools it is more difficult, if not impossible to achieve it. Size militates against it. So too do the complex and diverse constituencies that most secondary schools employ. And the historical and political strength of academic subjects as sources of personal identity, career aspiration, and public accountability means that most secondary schools continue to operate as micropolitical worlds, with conflict and



competition between their departments an endemic feature of their existence. (Hargreaves & MacMillan, 1995, p. 166)

There are, however, a few notable exceptions to the relative paucity of research regarding secondary school staffroom use. One such exception is the work of Anat Kainan (2002) who spent two years investigating the types of relationships and conversations held in a secondary staffroom in Israel:

What do teachers actually do in the staffroom? Common activities include: drinking tea, smoking, or occasionally eating quick foods brought from home, such as sandwiches; however, most of the time is spent in the single most important activity; i.e. – verbal communication with other teachers who are sitting there during the break talking. In fact, this phenomenon is so common, so familiar and obvious, that we do not notice it.

(Kainan, 2002, p. viii)

Kainan noted the collective grumblings of one teaching staff about hard work, classes, and the establishment, and how these grumblings seemed to say that teachers were there enduring in spite of it all. Sandra Acker (1999), Andy Hargreaves (1984, 1989, 1995), Leslie Siskin and Judith Little (1995), and Peter Woods (1984) represent some of the few researchers who have gone inside schools to observe teachers in their work environment, but their work was completed over 15 years ago, most of it before the common use of the computer and its resulting increase in workload. Jane McGregor (2000, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2010) has extensively examined British secondary staffrooms and the influence of space and gender. Hannah Frankel (2011), another British researcher, has examined the positive and negative effects of staffrooms. Steven Hastings (2004), working with The Teacher Support Network in the UK has discussed the qualities of a successful staffroom. Little or no similar research has been done in Canada to my knowledge.

Almost 40 years ago, Dan Lortie (1975) recognized the need for subsequent researchers to continue his ground breaking study of teachers' work and workplace by looking at future changes. It appears that very few researchers responded. This is an area of study that requires contemporary research.

### **2.3.2 Literature related to staffrooms as perceived spaces**

Much has been written about both work and school, but usually such studies combine these factors to examine student success, all the while keeping cost effectiveness in mind (Harvie 2006; McGregor 2004). Are school boards and governments getting their money's worth out of the huge expenditure for teacher salaries? Are teachers doing what they are supposed to do for the least amount of money? Studies about teachers and space are rarely from the viewpoint of teachers (Corrigan, Curtis, & Lanning, 1987). Schools may be full of people; as McGregor (2004) noted that teachers felt that their classrooms were not classrooms without the students, but the people in schools include not only the relation of teachers and pupils, but also the relation of employer and employees and all of the labour issues that accompany such a relation.

Perceived space is about people. Perceived spaces "play a part in social and political practice" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 41). Perceived space includes social interactions, labour, and its production and reproduction.

This concept designates the material dimension of social activity and interaction. The classification spatial means focusing on the aspect of simultaneity of activities... In concrete terms, one could think of networks of interaction and communication as they arise in everyday life (e.g. daily connections of residence and workplace) or in production process (production and exchange relations). (Schmid, 2008, p. 36)

There have been many studies about the spaces in which people work and how these spaces can be most effectively used for production, perhaps the most famous and influential of all being the scientific study of the management of workflows done in the 1880s and 1890s by Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856-1915). The influence of Taylor, the self-proclaimed “father of scientific management,” continues to be felt in “every corner of business, industry, and education” (Blake & Mosley, 2010, p. 27). Taylor’s scientific management was concerned with using the most efficient worker to produce the most work in the most efficient manner to produce the most in the least amount of time. In Taylor’s words, the purpose of scientific management is “to develop each individual man to his highest state of efficiency and prosperity” (Taylor [1911] & Gilbreth [1914] 1985, p. 43). Originally designed to benefit both the employer and the worker, the principles of scientific management have become corrupted to benefit only the employer.

David Harvie (2006) notes that teachers are not considered labourers under current applications of labour theory. Since teachers do not produce anything, “educators have been considered to be unproductive labourers” (p. 1). However, as Howard Stevenson (2007) observes, “teachers may have considerable autonomy to determine their classroom practices, but they function in a context nested within the power structure of their school, their local authority, and the state” (p. 227). According to Reid (2003), “teachers are becoming more like industrial workers than professionals as their work is deskilled and intensified by contemporary education policy and practice” (p. 562). In this context, teachers become labourers, who surrender their creative control and sell their labour power to the state, as well as their potential surplus value, and are therefore no different from any other labourers.

Teachers sell their labour power to the state for salary and pension. They become surplus value when the work force is remodelled so that a cheaper LTO (Long Term Occasional) teacher

can replace a contracted teacher, and when a less experienced teacher is hired to replace a more experienced and more expensive one. Teachers can be considered to have surplus value when they can be coerced into expanding the workday by donating voluntary, extracurricular duty hours outside of the agreed upon labour contract. Students are both raw material and potential surplus value, and the state or government, from this vantage, becomes the capitalist.

There are three factors of production – the instruments of production, the raw materials, and labour power. In an education setting, the instruments of production include the educational resources that exist in any school, such as plant, equipment, and teaching resources. These are owned by the state and provided from state taxes. The raw materials are the students who are “owned” by their parents or caregivers and the knowledge or cultural capital that the educational system seeks to impart. The state also owns the labour power. (Reid, 2003, p. 565)

Students are the product of the educational factory. They are also the product by which a school or school board obtains its capital, since money is allotted per pupil. Students’ learning also produces surplus value when the schools train them for the workforce, even by teaching them something as seemingly innocuous as punctuality and manners, thus saving factories and offices the expense of training. “Formal education is a process of ‘value-adding’ to students, the products of which become citizens and potential workers” (Reid, 2004, p. 565). Labour produces a product (Lefebvre, 1991). Education produces students who are supposed to act the same way, value the same things, and have the same base of knowledge. In spite of the interconnected processes of history and politics that design and fund education, the contradictory nature of its goals have not fundamentally changed. Education speaks of students as if they were each a unique work of art, but then treats them as if they were mass produced products. Teachers are

superficially encouraged to be creative and innovative, but ultimately expected to be functioning parts of a space designed to manufacture educational outputs.

Although, as Alan Reid (2003) points out, teachers' work has been comparatively absent from labour process theory, there is a shocking parallelism between the studies of Frederick Taylor and the working conditions of teachers. According to Wayne Au (2011), standardized tests, "through the inter-related processes of commoditization, fundamentally provide the foundational basis for education to be framed as a form of factory production" (p. 26) that is central for control in what he terms the "New Taylorism." Certainly, from a cynic's point of view, teachers' labour under government directives can be in the spirit of Taylor's feeling that "the man suited to handling pig iron is too stupid to properly train himself" (Taylor & Gilbreth, 1985, p. 63). Harvie (2006) describes this proliferation of testing and attempts to establish cultures of "best practice" - or in Harvie's terms "ceaseless bettering" - , as "a shift from disciplinary society to society of control" (Harvie, 2006, p. 18). The one being controlled here, of course, is the teacher.

Teachers' work has forever been changed by the introduction of new technology, which has altered the time, place, and capacity of labour. "A technological revolution of historic proportions is transforming the fundamental dimensions of human life: time and space" (Castells, 1989, p. 1). Today, a strong Internet presence implies that the power and reach of the company extends horizontally across the globe, as well as vertically to the heavens. In fact, according to Taylor, "the enormous increase in the power of information technology is well on the way to superseding the purely industrial logic that generated the North American office" (Taylor & Gilbreth, 1985, p. 1). As Manuel Castells (1989) observed, "New scientific discoveries and industrial innovations are extending the productive capacity of working hours

while superseding spatial distance” (p. 1). Technological innovations have brought a new super highway that promises to electronically bridge the dimensions of time and space, and a significant number of people work from both the traditional workplace and home, using virtual technologies to travel between the two spaces (Halford, 2005). Certainly this is the way that technology is being framed to teachers, who are being encouraged to check their mail and input marks from home. Unfortunately, the only time that is being saved is the employer’s, as the employee is using what used to be leisure time for work.

“In the large and varied body of research on teaching, there is remarkably little attention to teaching conditions,” (Bascia & Rottman, 2011, p. 789). Many studies have confirmed the increased workload of teachers (Clarke, Hart, & Livingstone, 2000; Evers, 1999; Hargreaves, 1989; Holland, Gordon, & Lahelma, 2007; King & Peart, 1992; Lordan, 2008; Smaller, 2000). Smaller (2000) notes that a classroom teacher works more than double the hours spent in a classroom. Although the physical aspects of the workplace can contribute to job satisfaction (Lackney, 1994), ambiance has been less studied than other causes (Holland, Gordon, & Lahelma, 2007; Woods, 1984). Several scholars have written about the positive effects of collegiality upon teachers and those whom they teach (Evers, 1999; Hammersley, 1984; Hargreaves, 1989; Helsby, 1999; Holland, Gordon, & Lahelma, 2007).

Although secondary staffrooms have been rarely investigated, secondary school department workrooms have garnered slightly more attention. But even this area of a school has been mostly neglected (McLaughlin, Talbert, & Bascia, 1990; Siskin & Little, 1995, Talbert, 1995). For most secondary teachers, the department workroom is “the smaller web of interrelationships, the subset that dominates the social world of the school as they know it” Siskin, 1999, p. 30). There are problems with this type of division in a school. Several

researchers have investigated the tendency of members of subject departmental workrooms to exclusively identify with those in their department and neither share successful practice with other departments nor learn about the successful practices of others (Hargreaves, 1980; Johnson, 1990; Little, 1982; Siskin, 1995; Talbert, 1995). This “balkanization” (Hargreaves & MacMillan, 1995) can result in a tendency for subject departments to become self-serving and demand resources at the expense of other departments (Johnson, 1990). Department workrooms are not always filled with like-minded individuals and can therefore be internally divisive (Ball & Lacey, 1984; Siskin, 1995, Talbert, 1995). Departmental workrooms will be discussed in further detail In Chapter 5 (5.2.1).

### **2.3.3 Literature related to staffrooms as conceived spaces**

Conceived space is about the design, intent, and enforcement of place. “This is the dominant space in any society or mode of production” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 38). Past studies of organizational space in the workplace have emphasized the most obvious empirically observable aspects of space, such as where people sit, where businesses are located, and resource distribution (Taylor & Spicer, 2007). Recent studies, usually done through the offices of human resource departments, continue to examine space with the intent of improving efficiency. A 2008 study of workspaces at the University of Toronto is fairly typical of this kind of empirical research. Danielle Harder reports, from the perspective of Christina Sass-Kortsak, assistant vice-president of human resources, that renovations of a Toronto warehouse into university office spaces “actually occupies a smaller footprint and the staff are getting better use out of it” (Harder, 2008, p. 1). Mario Moussa is a consultant and researcher whose work suggests that closed doors create silos that impede creativity and information flow. He uses the example of the Swiss offices of Novartis AG in Basel as a model for offices that were “designed for

collaboration with common workspaces, sofas, soft lighting and cappuccino machines to encourage people to talk, share ideas, and build relationships” (Fox, 2010, p. 51). A study by Hua, Loftness, Kraut, & Powell (2010) considered the relationship between the layout of office space and workplace collaboration from the perspective of planning and design. What these studies, and others like them, have in common is that furniture and spatial arrangements, although appearing to be for the comfort of the employees, are actually designed to maximize productivity.

Schools are recognizable as schools. Their fundamental form and function have changed very little since their original design during the Victorian era.

The architecture of the school, including its physical form and its geographical location, was designed to aid in the culture of the will and the formation of character. Playgrounds, good school furniture, lighting, heating and adequate ventilation all aided in the disciplinary process, as did seating arrangements.” (Corrigan, Curtis, and Lanning, 1987, p. 29)

There are many studies that investigate the social structures that occur within schools, but they are limited by a lack of consideration of the physical space in which those social structures are embedded.

Location and space use is a relatively new area of study (Holland, Gordon, & Lahelma, 2007; McGregor, 2003). Work is about more than the job and the product. Work is about space. But work is also about *place*. Where is the work “place”? There is certainly a dichotomy between the terms *space* and *place*. “Place is seen as the private, cosy, warm side of geographical emplacement whereas space can hold within it the terror of boundless distance” (Dale & Burrell, 2008, p. 5). Place is where you are standing. Place is inside space.



In the case of teachers, the answer to the location of work ‘place’ may seem obvious. As Jane McGregor points out, students and teachers have always been situated within the “materiality of schooling” (2004, p. 348) within what Gordon, Holland & Lahelma (2000) have described as its “social, cultural and interpersonal processes of contact, cooperation, differentiation and marginalisation” (p.137). Spatial practice is more than work space. It is also the work itself, and it “embraces production and reproduction” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 33). Yet studies seem to end their spatial focus with the fact that that students and teachers interact inside a school building, if indeed they ever considered such a focus at all. Schools are treated as fixed environments, with little regard to space created by social interaction, “producing the appearance of homogeneity” (McGregor, 2004, p. 349). As a result, the spatial aspects of education are often ignored (McGregor 2004; Paechter 2004a). Certain aspects, such as the effect of furniture arrangement in classrooms, may be examined, but little work has been done connecting the social aspects of a building to its physical properties (Lackney, 1994).

Many believe that school buildings constitute no more than *passive* shells for activity – permanent walls which surround what is important – teaching and learning. School buildings are rarely perceived as *active* changing settings which contain various levels of support for teaching and learning, from the size and configuration of the room to the placement and arrangement of furniture, equipment, and the various displays within it; in short, the whole physical setting of the classroom. (Lackney, 1994, p. 71)

Doreen Massey asserts that space and spatial variations need to continue to be studied in the social sciences through the concrete analysis provided by geographical frameworks as they are “central to our understanding of the way in which social processes work out, possibly to our conceptualisation of some of those processes in the first place, and certainly to our ability to act

on them politically” (1985, p. 17). John Allen notes that “we have lost the sense to which geography makes a difference to the exercise of power” (2003, p.1). Those employed and located both physically and metaphorically on the lower level of the business, or those furthest away from the epicentre of the corporation, are often isolated, and to quote Foucault’s (1995), *partitioned* from freedom of movement.

Spatial theorists, such as Doreen Massey, have related issues of distance to production by examining the effect of worker relocation on specific workplaces. Location can provide additional status and benefits. For example, the managers and higher paid technical employees of a research-oriented electronics firm in Newbury, England, tended to live in the same area; assembly line workers lived outside of this area. “Living in Newbury or rather just outside Newbury, makes you feel better, confirms your status in society” (Massey, 1984, p. 142). In addition to better housing and status, such living arrangements also provided access to technical information and employees with particular technical expertise. Massey cites the example of a Scottish plant in the 1950s, where separation of skilled from unskilled labour was manifested by the extreme of building a brick wall through the plant. The advantages of proximity to the administrators of a secondary school are considered in Chapter 6 (6.2).

Conceived spaces are also about enforcement. For secondary school staffrooms this includes the influence of administration. “Regardless of the level of stress they encounter, teachers who view their principals as supportive are less likely to resist activities or experience burnout” (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995, p. 158). The influence of administration on staff relations and control of staff has been an ongoing investigation of many researchers (Hargreaves, 1989; Lordan, 2008; Lortie, 1975). Kathleen deMarrais and Margaret LeCompte in *The Way Schools Work* (1995) discussed the effect of administration from a sociological viewpoint.

### 2.3.4 Literature related to staffrooms as lived spaces

One would think that there would be a plethora of research about lived spaces. After all, these are how spaces are used. They represent the now and the socio-political factors that led up to the now. Yet research into secondary school staffrooms as spaces that are used or even unused has remained predominantly unexplored. To the best of my knowledge, there has been little, if any, investigation into secondary staffrooms and the cause and effects of the decline of their use. Lived space is “space as directly *lived* [emphasis in original] through its associated images and symbols” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). Lefebvre further explains:

Representational spaces need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness. Redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements, they have their source in history – in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people.

Ethnologists, anthropologists and psychoanalysts are students of such representational spaces, whether they are aware of it or not. (Lefebvre, 1991, p.41)

Carrie Paetcher (2004), working out of the UK, and whose work on staffrooms examines the intersection between these spaces and power relations, has written about the important use of dominant metaphors in school terminology in reinforcing and sustaining norms of education, but most researchers are more interested on the effect of teachers’ work life on productivity and student success than on the teachers themselves.

Lived space is the space of time, history, habit, metaphor, and change. It is a space that is lived and endured (Ronneberger, 2008), but that also offers the possibility for alternate meanings and use and, sometimes, either overt or covert resistance.

## **Chapter 3            Methodology**

As Julian Orr (1996) discovered, it is necessary to go inside the workplace to determine how space and work are interconnected:

An important point about the ethnographic study of work practice is that it must be done in the situation in which the work normally occurs, that is, work must be seen as situated practice, in which context is part of the activity. (Orr, 1996, p. 10)

There is a need to go inside schools to observe teachers work (Hargreaves, 1980; McLaughlin, Talbert, & Bascia, 1990). The research for this dissertation involved a survey, interviews with teachers at their worksite, and direct observation. This chapter reiterates the primary and secondary research questions, and explains the survey, its distribution, and its analysis procedure. It outlines the format used for interviews and describes the staffrooms of East Central Secondary School, representing an underused staffroom, and Heritage Hills Secondary School, which has a more active staffroom.

### **3.1 Preliminary research**

Observing the decline of staffroom use throughout my career was not enough to establish that decline was happening more universally than my own personal experience. Researchers such as Steven Hastings, working in the UK, acknowledge that a secondary school staffroom can be one of the least used rooms in the school (2004), and one of the teachers interviewed by Jane McGregor (2003) described it as “the most underused room in the school” (p. 362). However, although Hastings and McGregor established that the staffrooms they investigated were not being used, their research did not establish a decline - in other words, establish that these rooms were once well used and now are not. Before commencing this research, I completed a small investigation at East Central Secondary School in order to determine if staffroom use had

decreased at this particular school. Interviews that I did with teachers at East Central Secondary School confirmed the decline of staffroom use at that particular school. A series of interviews (26) was completed from which potential causes for lack of staffroom use were determined. These interviews helped to frame the questions for the research for this dissertation. Staffroom use has decreased/significantly decreased for 51.3% of the survey respondents. All categories, including new teachers, experienced teachers, regular users, and infrequent users expressed a personal decline in staffroom use. This provided enough empirical evidence to make the claim that staffroom use had declined, thus allowing me to investigate the potential causes and consequences of this.

### **3.2 Primary and secondary research questions**

#### Primary Questions

1. Has secondary staffroom use in one major southern Ontario school board changed?
2. What are the factors and dynamics associated with change or lack of change in staffroom use in secondary schools?
3. Does staffroom use relate to low staff engagement, absenteeism, burnout, and retention rates?
4. Are staffrooms still considered by teachers to be a necessary component of their professional workplace spaces, lives, and professional development?

#### Secondary Questions

1. What is the percentage of staff members who use secondary staffrooms?
2. For what purpose do teachers use staffrooms?
3. Where do teachers spend their non-classroom time?

4. What are the characteristics of an active staffroom?
5. Is an active staffroom an indication of a collegial and supportive work environment? Can such an environment exist in a school with low staffroom use?
6. Can a profile be created of staffroom users and non-users?

### **3.3 Overview of survey procedure and analysis tools**

Research for this investigation was done using a combination of quantitative (survey analysis) and qualitative (optional survey comments, interview, and observation) methods. Qualitative data was used to inform, expand, and explain the data revealed by the quantitative data. In Lefebvrian terms, it allowed me to show how the numbers were lived. Qualitative data was used from a series of preliminary interviews performed at East Central to determine if staffroom use at that particular school had declined. After establishing that there was indeed a decline, these interviews were coded to determine the predominant factors affecting the decline. These factors were used to help formulate the survey questions.

The survey then provided significant quantitative data. Qualitative data provided by optional comments on the survey and interviews allowed me to provide voices behind the numbers. After the data was collected, I divided it into factors that related to perceived, conceived, and lived. Comments from the survey and transcribed interviews were then manually coded according to these factors. Comments were then separated into positive and negative within the factors. Although the school board where I did my investigation only allowed me to observe two staffrooms, the respondents and people interviewed represented experience from many more staffrooms than those two. The first step in coding comments and observations was determining which factors belonged primarily in which arm of Lefebvre's spatial triad. Comments were then manually sorted according and then further sub-sorted into positive and

negative. Take for example the issue of administrators eating lunch in the staffroom, a factor that I felt belonged in Lefebvre's conceived spaces because it was about enforcement and control. All the related comments about administration eating in the staffroom were gathered together. These were divided into comments that favoured admin in the staffroom and those that didn't. These comments were then further manually subdivided into the various reasons. I was not only looking for the reasons, but I was also looking for the frequency of the reasons. To summarize then, in terms of the interview process, I decided on themes to be explored, designed the questions, interviewed, transcribed the interviews, analyzed and collated the responses, and in doing so cross checked one person's observations against those of others interviewed.

Permission to proceed with interviews and a request for survey participation was received from the External Research Screening Committee of the urban school board in Southern Ontario to be studied. Twenty-six people were interviewed, representing both staffroom users and non-users, who shared their personal stories about staffroom use, its control, and their feelings about its use and importance. Two staffrooms were observed and their principals interviewed: East Central, a little-used staffroom, and Heritage Hills, an active staffroom. The quantitative research was especially important to provide concrete numbers and to eliminate personal bias in data interpretation.

I am a teacher with the board used for this study. This was beneficial because it gave me access to internal board email and provided me with a certain amount of credibility and shared history and experiences when conducting interviews. However, extreme care had to be taken not to presume that I knew the answers before they were given, and that my own strong feelings about the importance of secondary staffrooms did not prevent me from hearing and understanding the opinions of those who felt otherwise. Being a teacher with the board also

meant that I had to be conscious of the fact that an impending transfer might place me at a school where I had interviewed the principal, so there was the potential underlying dichotomy of teacher/principal when interviewing administration. To my surprise, however, this was less than expected. Most principals interpreted the dynamics of the interviews as researcher/interviewee. Even my own principal recognized the difference in dynamics between being interviewed for this research and other work-related conversations.

The survey was created using the online survey software and questionnaire tool SurveyMonkey, chosen because of its ease of implementation, user friendliness, and ability to provide cross tabular analysis. The 23-question survey (Appendix 1) was created to establish if the respondents had decreased their use of secondary school staffrooms. The survey was distributed to all secondary school principals in the board, who then had the option of forwarding this survey to their staff. As the survey was completed anonymously, I have no way of determining how many principals did forward the survey. Some respondents mentioned their school by name or provided school-specific indicators in the comments which identified a particular location. Other respondents volunteered to be interviewed, thus confirming that the survey had been distributed at their school. Confirmation by principals, interview volunteers, and self-identifying comments on the survey established that at least 13 out of 22 schools received the survey (258). An opportunity for additional comments generated 717 responses.

Some principals emailed to say that they had forwarded the survey as requested. Most principals did not respond with reasons for non-participation, but one of the principals stated, in a demonstration of administrative control, that she felt that her staff had “*participated in enough surveys this year.*” The current principal of the school with the appropriated staffroom felt that the survey had no relevance to her staff, as they liked the arrangement, had no need of a



staffroom, and that a survey about staffroom use would therefore have no relevance to them. She was eventually encouraged to have her staff participate in the survey by explaining that all perspectives on staffroom use were informative, including those who felt that one was not necessary. Interestingly, not one of the comments received on the survey spoke positively about the loss of the staffroom, and several were quite vehement in their resentment.

The survey was designed to obtain answers for the primary and secondary research questions for this investigation. As I was a teacher with this particular board, permission was received to use the internal mail system for correspondence. However, permission was not received to distribute the survey directly to teachers; therefore, each principal was contacted with a personalized email request to forward the survey participation request to their staff. The direct link to the survey was included in the participation request, as was a request for interview participants and a direct link to my own school board email if participants had questions. All the principal had to do was forward the email on to staff. Reminders were sent to the principals after ten days to ask them to forward the survey if they had not already done so. Thank-you emails were sent to all principals to recognize their help, and an offer was made to share results with any principal who was interested. Frequency distributions and cross-tabulation distributions were extracted from the survey results in SurveyMonkey, and Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence was performed in The R Project for Statistical Computing to test significance of survey results.

### **3.4 Overview of interview procedure**

A request for interview participants was given on the survey participant letter. Some participants were personally invited, particularly those representing East Central Secondary School. Some participants joined the interview process when they saw that interviews were

taking place. Interviews averaged about 40 minutes in length. A total of 26 interviews were conducted in five different staffrooms, including one group interview of three participants, resulting in a total of 28 interview participants. Although the investigated school board only allowed me to observe two staffrooms, the respondents and people interviewed represented experience from many more staffrooms than those two and as they spoke they recalled information about many more staffrooms than those officially observed

**Figure 3.1. Profile of Interview Participants**

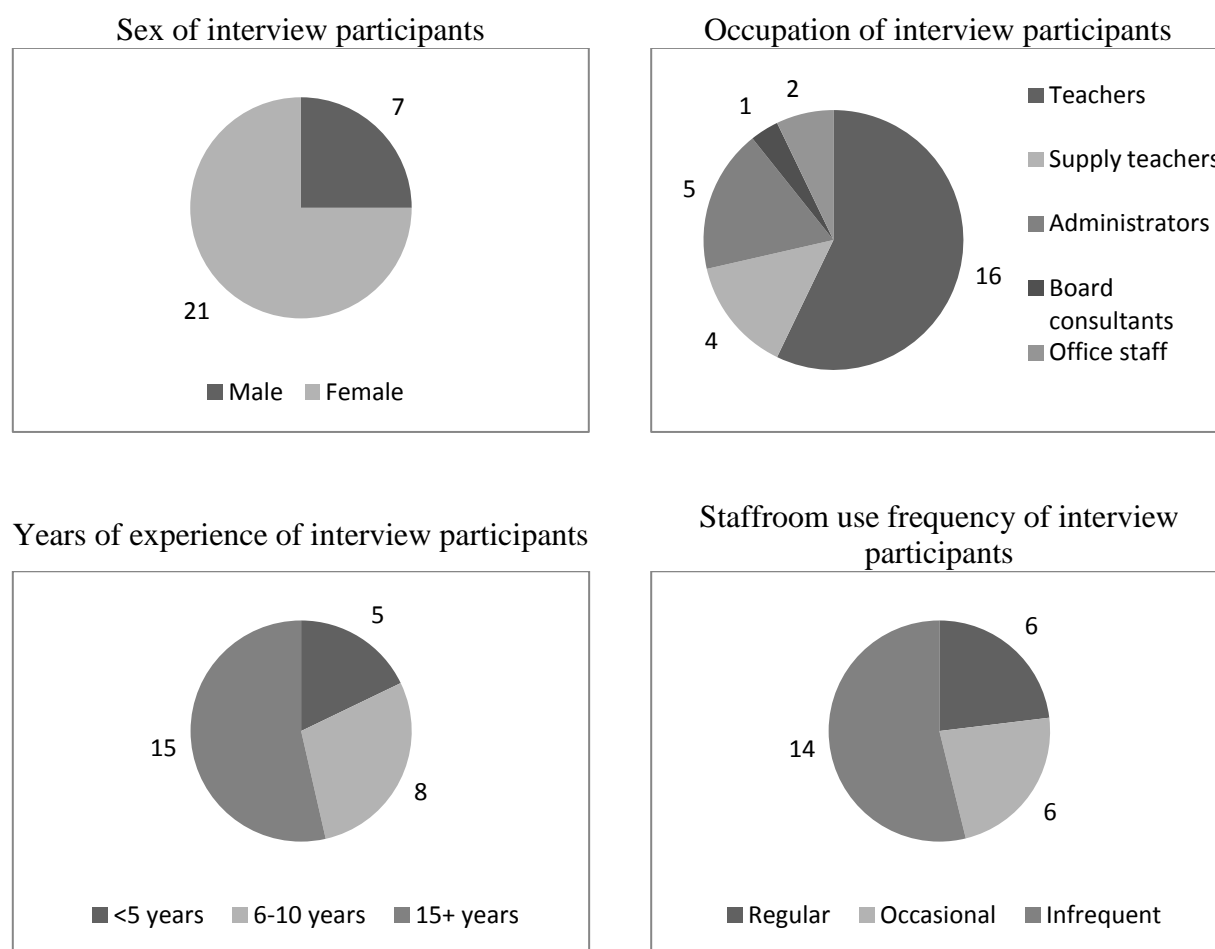


Figure 3.2 shows that the average interview participant was a female teacher with between six to ten years of experience who used the staffroom infrequently. Interviews were semi-structured. Interview participants were given a set of questions (Appendix 2) to examine and asked if there

were any questions that they would prefer not to answer. Supply teachers/long term occasional teachers (Appendix 3) and principals (Appendix 4) received a different set of questions. The interviews averaged approximately 40 minutes in length and elicited opinions regarding personal use and change of use, staffroom definition, workroom definition, the importance of staffrooms, and the characteristics of ideal staffrooms. All participants agreed to answer all questions. Often during an interview, participants would speak about and describe staffroom-related issues not on the question list. When this happened, I encouraged and pursued these topics. Interviews were recorded on an iPhone 4, using the Voice Memos application. Interviews were then manually transcribed, and comments were coded and sorted. Comments from the interviews have been used throughout chapters 5-8 to provide voice and deeper understanding to the detailed analysis to be found in these chapters.

### **3.5 Observation schools**

Two secondary school staffrooms were studied as part of the consideration of staffrooms as lived spaces: East Central, which has had a decline in its use and is now used only infrequently, and Heritage Hills, one of the few active staffrooms remaining in this school board. When I started this investigation, I thought that it might be difficult to locate rarely-used staffrooms that could be examined. I was worried that principals would not be willing to come forward to discuss their staffrooms. Both proved to be untrue. I was a teacher at East Central Secondary at the time of this research; this staffroom was chosen not only as a matter of convenience and easy confirmation of lack of use, but also because of a good working relationship with colleagues who had taught at the school for many years and were willing to speak about the changes, and a principal who was willing to talk honestly about the role of administration in staffroom spaces. It was actually much more difficult to find an example of a

well-used staffroom. During my interviews with teachers and administration, Heritage Hills Secondary School was repeatedly mentioned as both having an active staffroom and being a great place to teach. The principal of Heritage Hills Secondary School graciously consented to have the staffroom in his school become part of the observational process for this research. The observations from these two schools are examined in detail in Chapter 7 (7.3).

## **Chapter 4      Presentation of results**

This chapter presents the quantitative results of the survey (Appendix 1) conducted with secondary school staffs in the investigated school board. The first section presents a summary of the quantitative data obtained from the 23 question survey distributed to secondary staff of the investigated board. The initial questions (Q1-4) on the survey provided general information about the survey respondents and their personal staffroom use. Other questions were designed to obtain information about the location (Q5), ambiance (Q18), amenities (Q14-15), and alternative uses (Q11, Q19, Q20) for staffrooms. One question (Q22) was given to determine the impression of staff collegiality and a pair of questions (Q13, Q23) was given to determine the overall importance that staffrooms held for the respondent. Survey results are organized into five sections which use charts to provide descriptive statistical analysis:

- 4.1.1 Participant information and pattern of staffroom usage
- 4.1.2 Staffroom use of survey respondents
- 4.1.3 Staffroom ambiance and amenities
- 4.1.4 Perception of collegiality
- 4.1.5. Presentation of importance of staffrooms

The second section of this chapter presents the results of five series of cross tabulations that were performed in order to determine statistical significance according to the Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence of the survey results.

- 4.2.1 Frequency of passing by a staffroom compared to frequency of use, change of use, perceptions of importance, busyness, ambiance, and collegiality
- 4.2.2 Frequency of use compared to perceptions of importance, busyness, and collegiality

- 4.2.3 Years of teaching experience compared to change in staffroom use, perceptions of importance, collegiality, and busyness
- 4.2.4 Perception of ambiance compared to perceptions of busyness and collegiality
- 4.3.5 Use of staffrooms by administrators compared to perceptions of collegiality, ambiance, and busyness

Twelve questions provided an opportunity for respondents to make additional comments. Many of the comments (717) generated by survey respondents, and their analysis, can be found in the applicable sections of the following three chapters, in order to provide additional qualitative description, depth, and analysis to the chapter discussions.

## **4.1 Presentation of survey results**

This first section of the survey results presents the distribution data in graphs and charts as generated by the answers to specific survey questions. This descriptive data was used to formulate the cross tabulations which are interpreted in the second section of the chapter.

### **4.1.1 Participant information and pattern of staffroom usage**

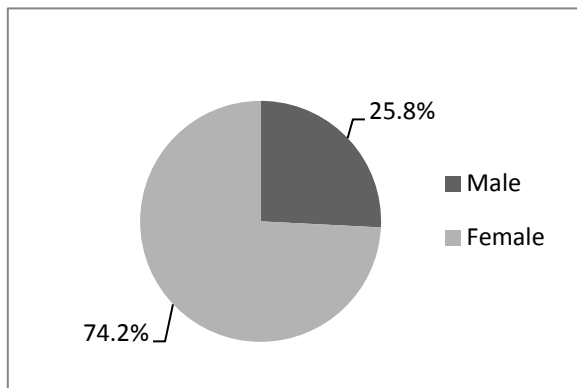
The first four questions of the survey asked for basic information about the respondent:

- Q1. How long have you been teaching?
- Q2. How long have you been at your current school?
- Q3. What is your sex?
- Q4. What is your primary department this semester?

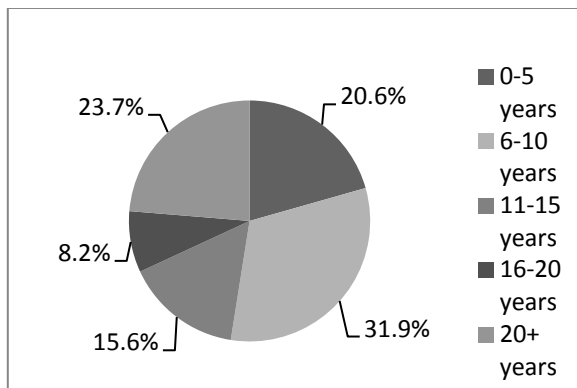
These questions were asked to assess the degree to which the survey respondents represented sexes, a variety of departments, and a wide range of years of teaching experience.

**Figure 4.1.** Profile of Survey Participants

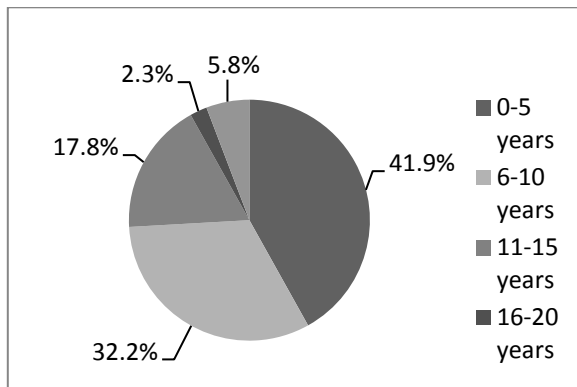
Sex



Years of teaching experience



Years at current school



As Figure 4.1 shows, the survey represented teachers from all stages of their teaching career.

Teachers who had taught less than ten years represented 52.8% of the respondents.

Teachers with ten years or more represented 47.5% of the survey respondents. More females (74.2%) than males (25.8%) answered the survey. This could be because more females than males use the staffroom, or there might be more females than males teaching secondary school. Respondents were asked their primary department at the time of the survey. Members of all subjects were represented. Fewer respondents in subjects such as technology or business simply reflect a lower overall number of teachers in that subject in a secondary school. For example, there are more English teachers than Moderns (French and language) teachers in a school, so it is logical that there would be more English teachers than Moderns represented on the survey. Subjects that inadvertently got left off the list, but were mentioned in the comments included library, co-op, and family studies. The survey also did not provide an option for administration to identify themselves as an administrator, although some chose to do so through the comments.

#### **4.1.2 Staffroom use by survey respondents**

The following survey questions were given to determine the respondent's pattern of staffroom use:

- Q6. How often do you use the staffroom?
- Q7. Has your staffroom use changed since the beginning of your teaching career?
- Q8. What are your reasons for visiting the staffroom?
- Q9. If you do not use the staffroom, what reasons dissuade you from using it?
- Q10. Where do you usually eat your lunch?
- Q12. How many of the 40 minutes allotted for lunch do you usually use to eat?
- Q16. What activities do you do during your lunch time?



**Figure 4.2.** Frequency of Staffroom Use

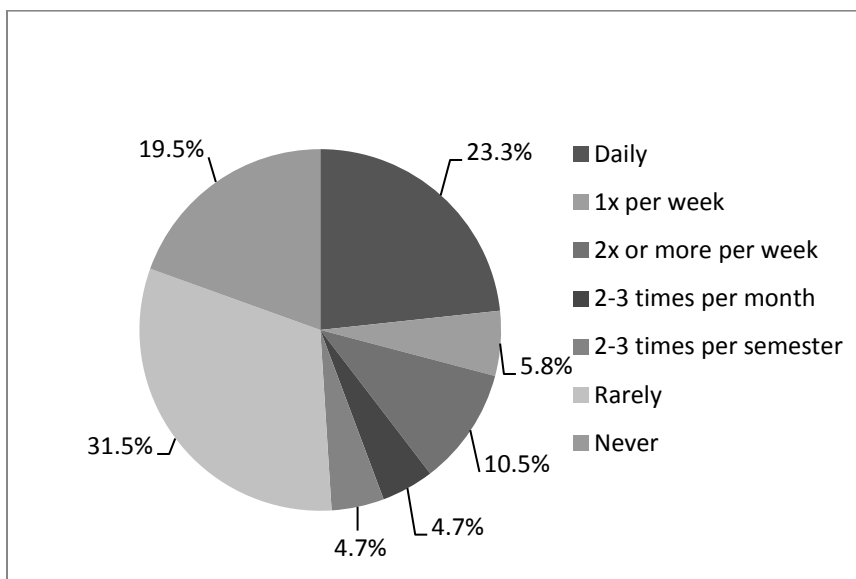


Figure 4.2 clearly shows that staffrooms are not used by the majority of staff members. Only 39.6% of respondents use the staffroom at least “once a week” and 51% of respondents use the staffroom “rarely” or “never at all”. This number may be lower than indicated as the question did not ask the reasons for using the staffroom. Some staffrooms have staff mailboxes and are the location of washrooms so a teacher’s “use” of the staffroom may simply be to pick up mail rather than eating lunch or visiting. As seen in Figure 4.6, the majority of teachers use their departmental workrooms to eat their lunch rather than the staffroom. As previously mentioned, lived space is strongly dependent upon history and habit. When teachers do not use a staffroom or it is perceived as empty, then it is unlikely that they will start to use it. Further discussion of the influence of habit and metaphor will be found in Chapter 7 (7.5).

**Figure 4.3.** Change of Staffroom Use During Career

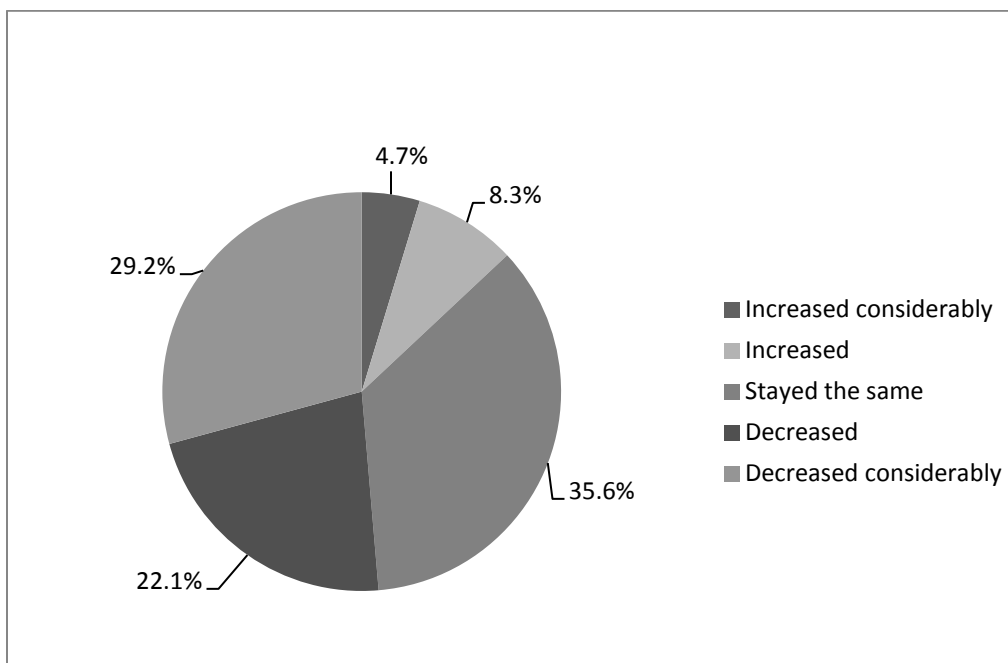


Figure 4.3 establishes that staffroom use has declined. Only 13% of survey respondents experienced an increase in staffroom use. On the other hand, 51.3% of the survey respondents, more than half, indicated that their staffroom use has “decreased” or “decreased considerably”. The 35.6% of survey respondents who indicated their staffroom use had not changed may not have used it in the first place. Even if one were to assume that these respondents whose staffroom use had not changed throughout their lived history of the space had always used the staffroom - a highly unlikely scenario - when they are combined with respondents who indicated “increased” and “increased considerably” the number of survey respondents whose use has “stayed the same” or “increased” (48.6%) is still less than half.

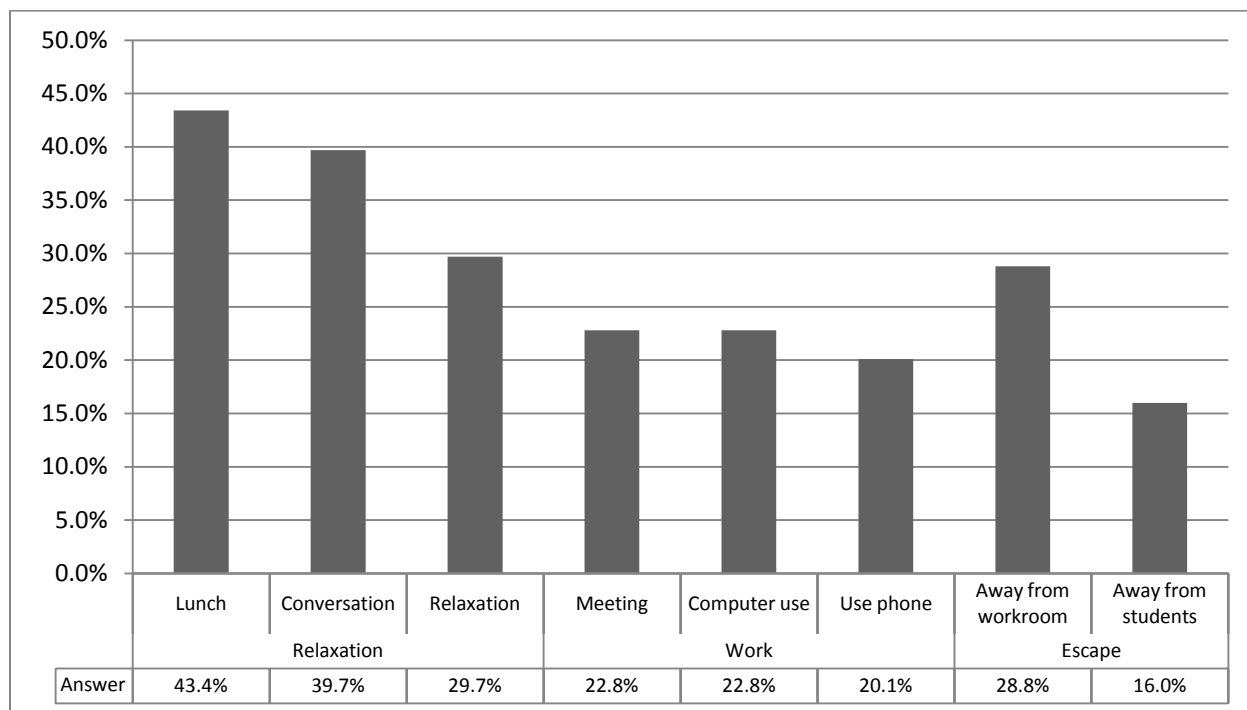
**Figure 4.4.** Reasons for Visiting the Staffroom

Figure 4.4 shows that although lunch (43.4%) is the primary reason for using the staffroom less than half of the respondents identified it as a reason for visiting. Conversation (39.7%) was identified as the second most frequent reason for using a staffroom. Optional comments indicated, however, that conversations were often work-related. A discussion of this type of informal learning can be found in Chapter 5 (5.3.1). More teachers use the staffroom for non-work-related activities than work related ones. A deeper discussion of staffrooms as perceived spaces which reproduce labour practices will be found in Chapter 5 (5.4). Figure 4.4 also shows that more teachers feel the need to get away from colleagues than students. This correlates with the comments that were made by both interview and survey respondents about some of the difficulties of department workrooms as will be found in Chapter 5 (5.3.1).

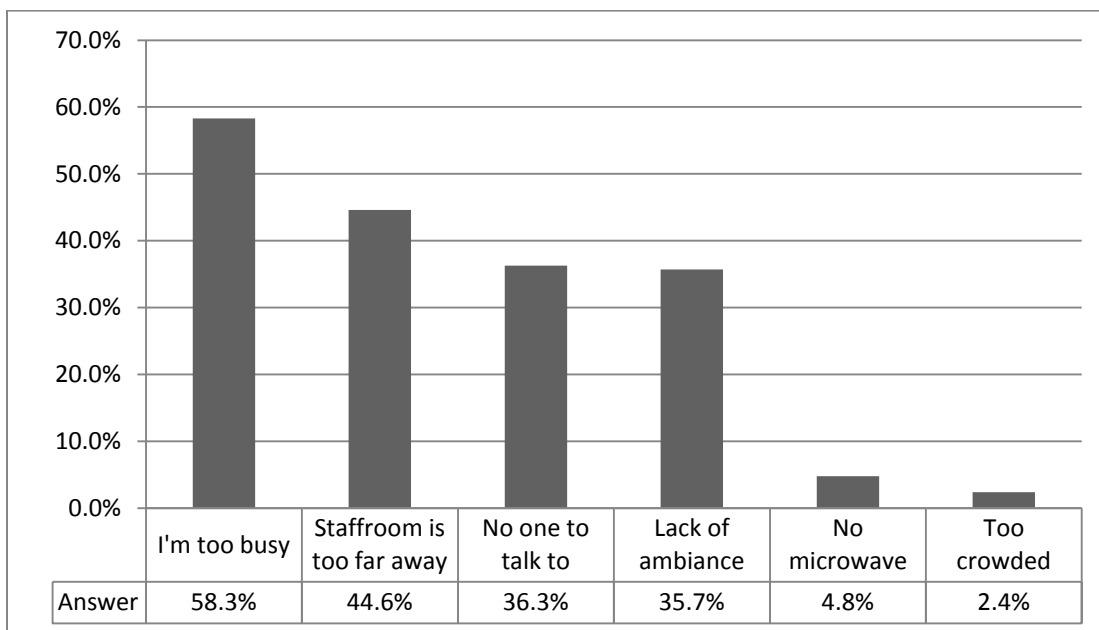
**Figure 4.5.** Reasons for *Not* Visiting the Staffroom

Figure 4.5 shows the top reasons respondents indicated for not visiting the staffroom. These reasons are reflective of all three of Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad. The top reason for not using the staffroom is that teachers are "too busy" and, therefore, there is not enough time (58.3%). Staffrooms as perceived spaces are affected by labour practices and as later shown in Chapter 5 (5.4) the reproduction of increased labour for secondary school teachers means a decreased time available to use the staffroom. The second most frequent reason is that the "staffroom is too far away" (44.6%). As previously mentioned and as will be discussed further, the conceived space of a staffroom, in other words its location in a school, seriously affects its use patterns. The third most frequent reason is that there is "no one to talk to" (36.3%). Teachers work in isolation in their classrooms and often seek necessary adult conversation when not teaching. An empty staffroom creates an uninviting atmosphere therefore renders this space unlikely to be part of the lived space of a teacher's work day. Some teachers expressed a profound disappointment at what they perceived to be a loss of collegiality among their secondary school peers. The importance of

connecting to teachers outside of one's departmental workroom is an underlying observation throughout this dissertation. Specifically it is discussed as a part of perceived spaces in Chapter 5 (5.3). The fourth most frequent reason for not using the staffroom is a lack of ambiance (35.7%). Figures 4.10, 4.11, 4.12, and 4.15 provide additional quantitative data about the importance of ambiance in a staffroom. Chapter 5 (5.3.2) and Chapter 6 (6.3) will provide additional qualitative data related to this issue. Staffrooms are often used as a dumping ground for storing infrequently or no longer used items. Some respondents described their staffrooms as having dirty uncomfortable furniture and no windows. If a departmental workroom has people with whom to eat and facilities with which to store and prepare lunch, and staffrooms lack these amenities, then it is no wonder that staffrooms have become neglected, and in some instances, even forgotten spaces.

**Figure 4.6.** Where Lunch is Eaten

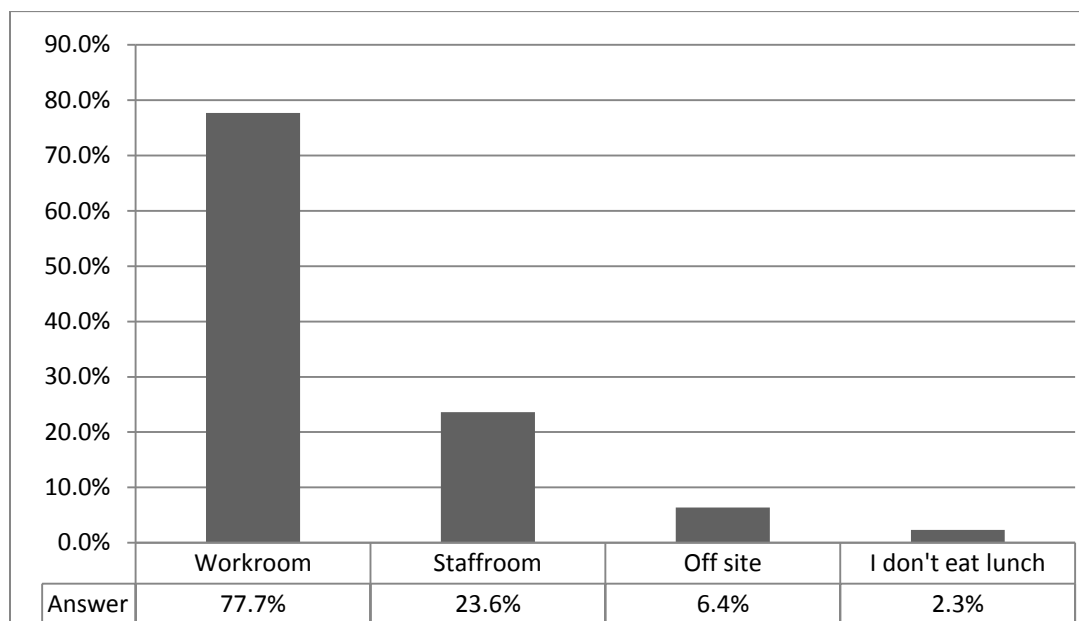


Figure 4.6 establishes, as previously mentioned, that more than three times the number of respondents (77.7%) ate their lunch in their subject department workroom (23.6%), often

combining lunch with work activities. This is a result of a combination of spatial factors such as the conceived space of location, and lived spaces of time and history. Further in-depth discussion of this will be found in Chapter 5 (5.3.1, 5.3.2, 5.4), which situates staffrooms as perceived spaces by considering the impact of workrooms, food and community, and the production and reproduction of teachers' labour, and in Chapter 7 (7.5), which considers the impact of time and history.

**Figure 4.7.** Minutes Used for Eating Lunch

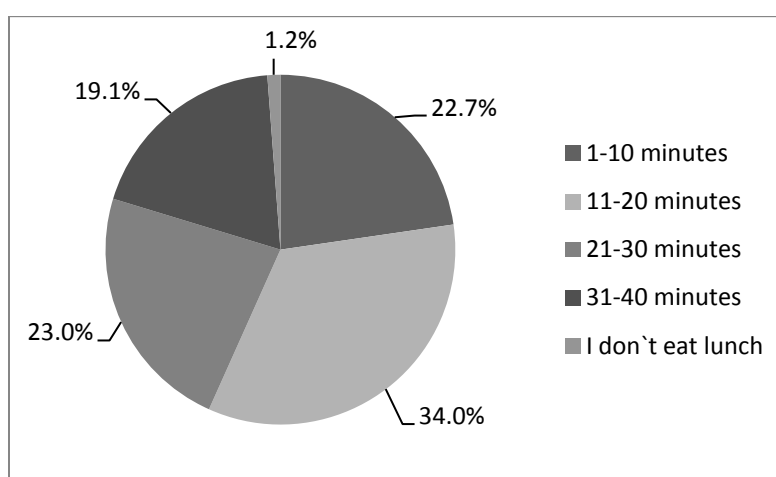
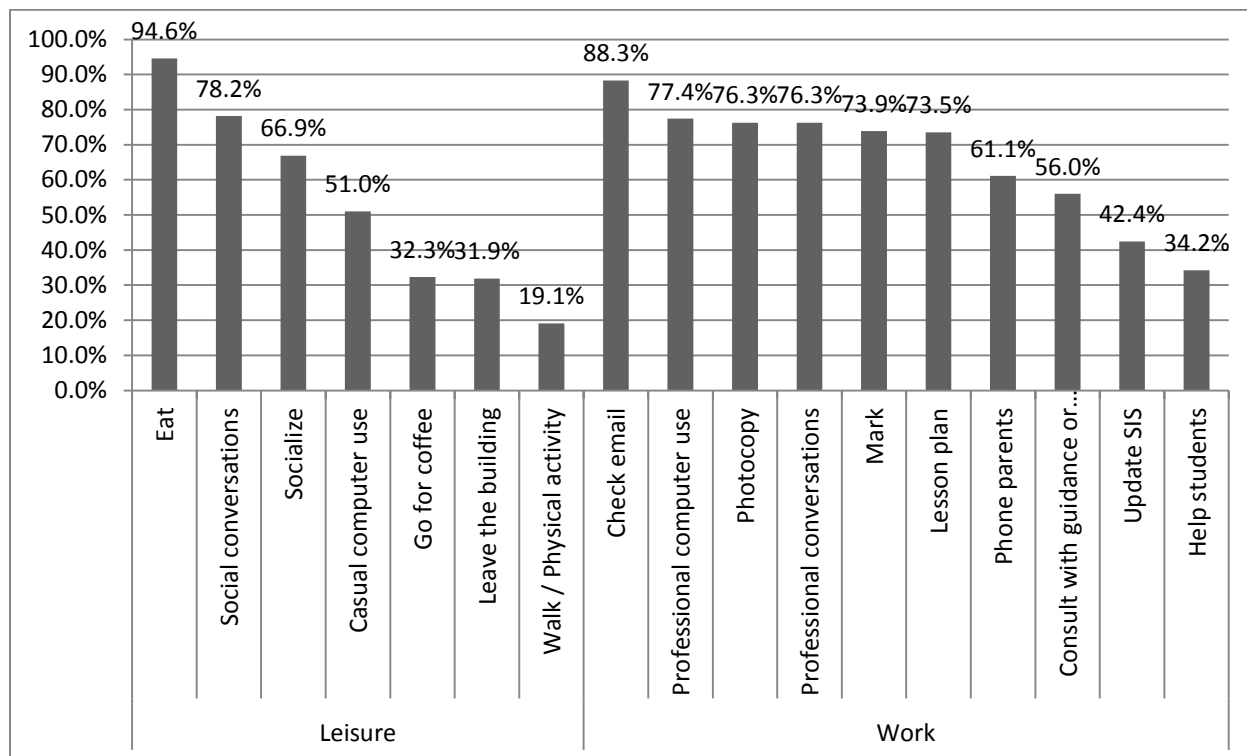


Figure 4.7 indicates that although teachers at this school board were granted a 40-minute uninterrupted lunch under their contract of employment, the majority of respondents (56.7%) took 20 minutes or less for lunch. Once again, as in Figure 4.5, the reasons for a taking less than 20 minutes to eat lunch was a perception of increased workload. Figure 4.13 indicates the type of work that is done by teachers during their allotted lunch time. Respondent comments indicated that teachers were reluctant to take time away from student contact or work. This is compounded by the perception that an idle teacher is a bad teacher. Other respondent comments mentioned the desire to minimize the intrusion of work demands into the demands of personal life outside of the

work space. This reproduction of labour and attitudes towards teachers' work will be further discussed in Chapter 5 (5.4) as I consider secondary school staffrooms as perceived spaces.

**Figure 4.8.** Activities Done by Teachers During Lunch Time



Teachers accomplish a lot of additional labour during their allotted lunch time. Although eating is still the primary activity, teachers spend far more time on work-related activities than leisure activities. Figure 4.8 shows that more teachers spend time checking email (88.3%) than engaging in social conversations (78.2%). More teachers spend time photocopying (76.3%), marking (73.9%), having professional conversations (76.3%), and lesson planning (73.5%) than socializing (66.9%) during lunch period. Teacher's labour, particularly labour that occurs in staffrooms, is considered as perceived space in Chapter 5 (5.4).

### 4.1.3 Staffroom ambiance and amenities

This set of questions asked for specific information about the respondent's staffroom such as its location, amenities, and use by students and administrators:

- Q5. How often do you pass by the staffroom during your daily routine?
- Q11. To the best of your knowledge has the staffroom in your current school ever been used for a purpose other than its originally intended function (e.g. classroom, professional development)?
- Q14. Which of the following should be included in a staffroom?
- Q15. Which of the following is included in your current staffroom?
- Q18. Rate the ambiance of the staffroom in your school.
- Q19. How often is the staffroom accessed by students?
- Q20. For what purpose do students access the staffroom?
- Q21. How often do members of the administration eat lunch in the staffroom?

**Figure 4.9.** Frequency with which the Staffroom is Passed in a Day

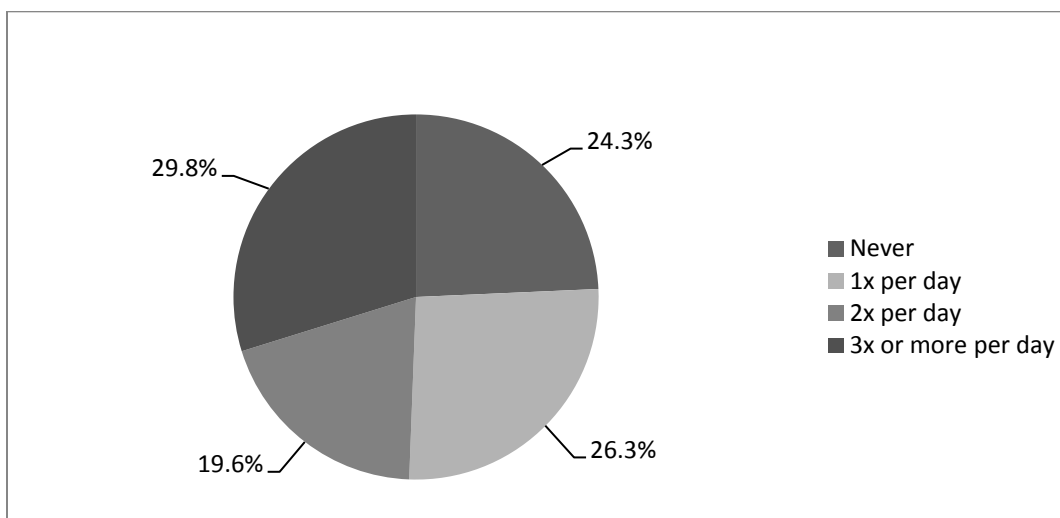




Figure 4.9 shows that although most survey respondents (70.2%) indicated that they passed the staffroom at least once a day, 29.8% indicated that they never pass the staffroom in their daily routine. As we will see in Figure 4.5 and Chapter 6 (6.2) the location of the staffroom and its proximity to a teacher's daily path has a very significant bearing on its use. If the conceived space of a school's plans locates the staffroom far away from a teacher's classrooms and workroom then it is highly unlikely to be used. Once this habit of disuse begins, the pattern becomes part of the continued lived experience of teachers no matter where their next set of classrooms may be located. Lived space will override that of conceived.

**Figure 4.10.** Perception of Busyness of Staffroom

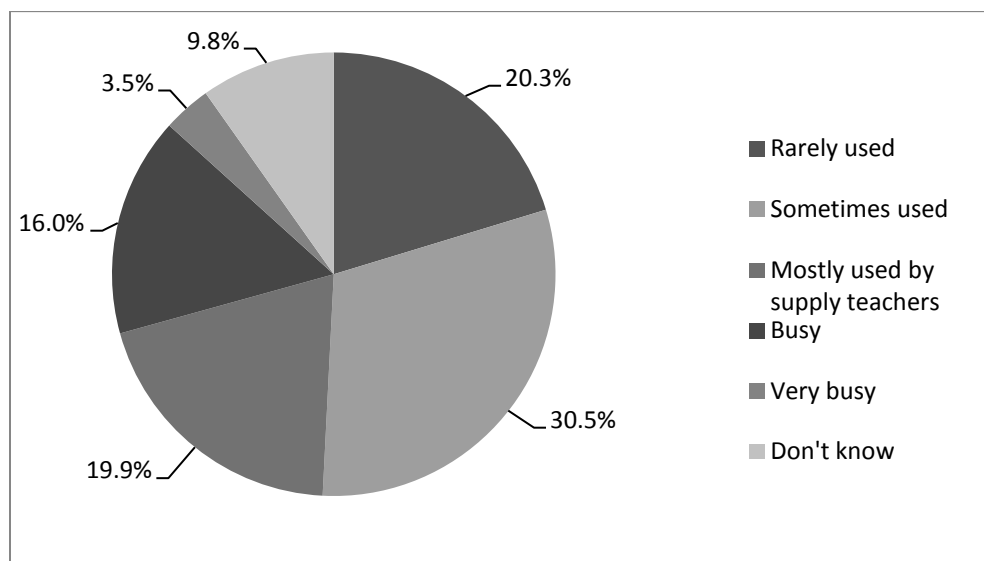


Figure 4.10 establishes that staffrooms are not perceived as busy places. Only 19.5% of respondents felt that staffrooms were busy or very busy. A greater number, 50.8%, felt that staffrooms were rarely or only sometimes used. As discussed in Chapter 6 (6.3) and Figure 4.30, the perception of the busyness of a staffroom connects with the perception of ambiance.

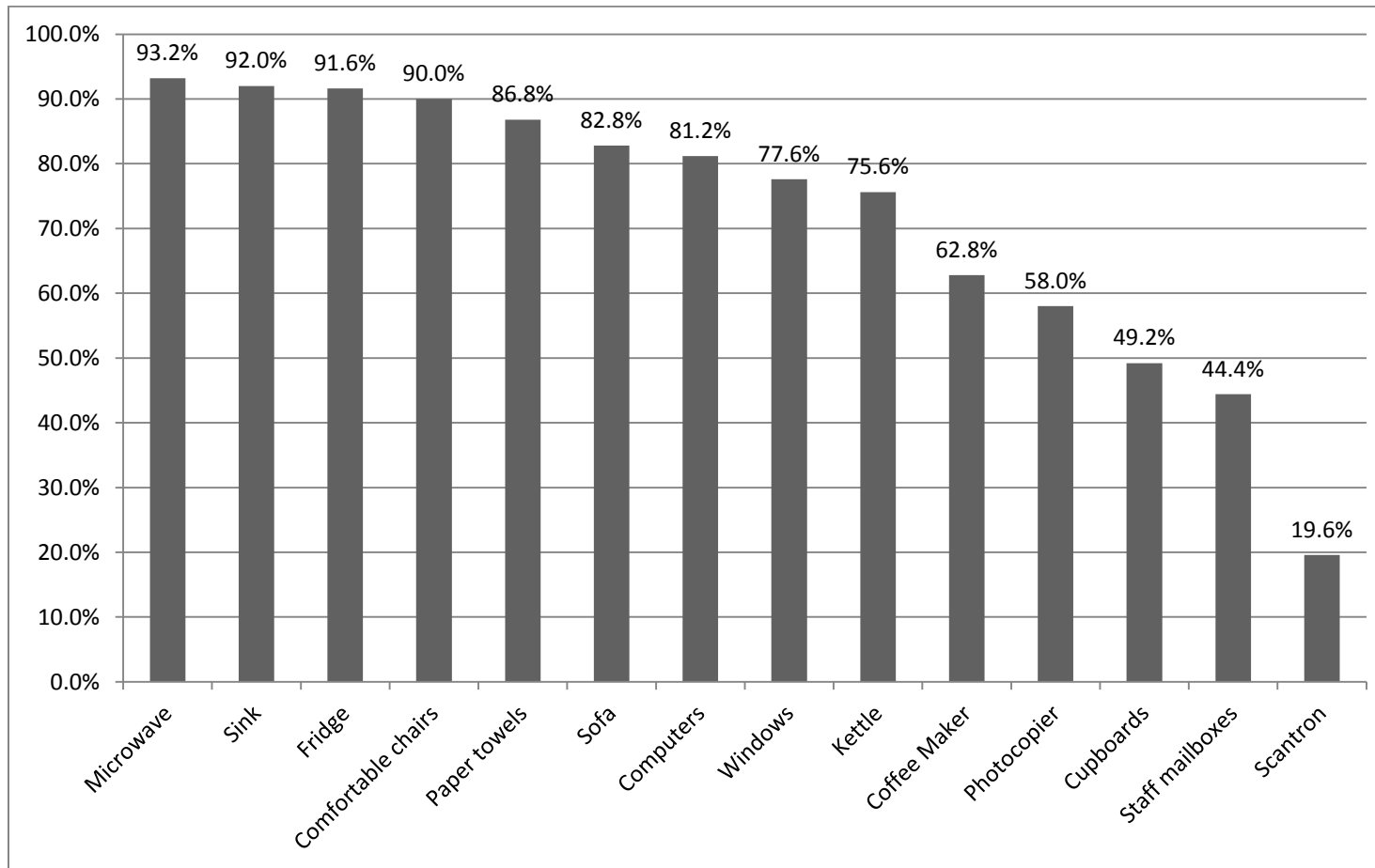
**Figure 4.11.** Items that *Should* be Included in the Staffroom

Figure 4.11 lists the items that survey respondents felt should be included in the lived space of a secondary staffroom. Most of the items that respondents felt should be included in a staffroom were related to simple food preparation such as a microwave, sink, paper towels, and a kettle.

Optional comments generated the additional suggestions for staffroom inclusions:

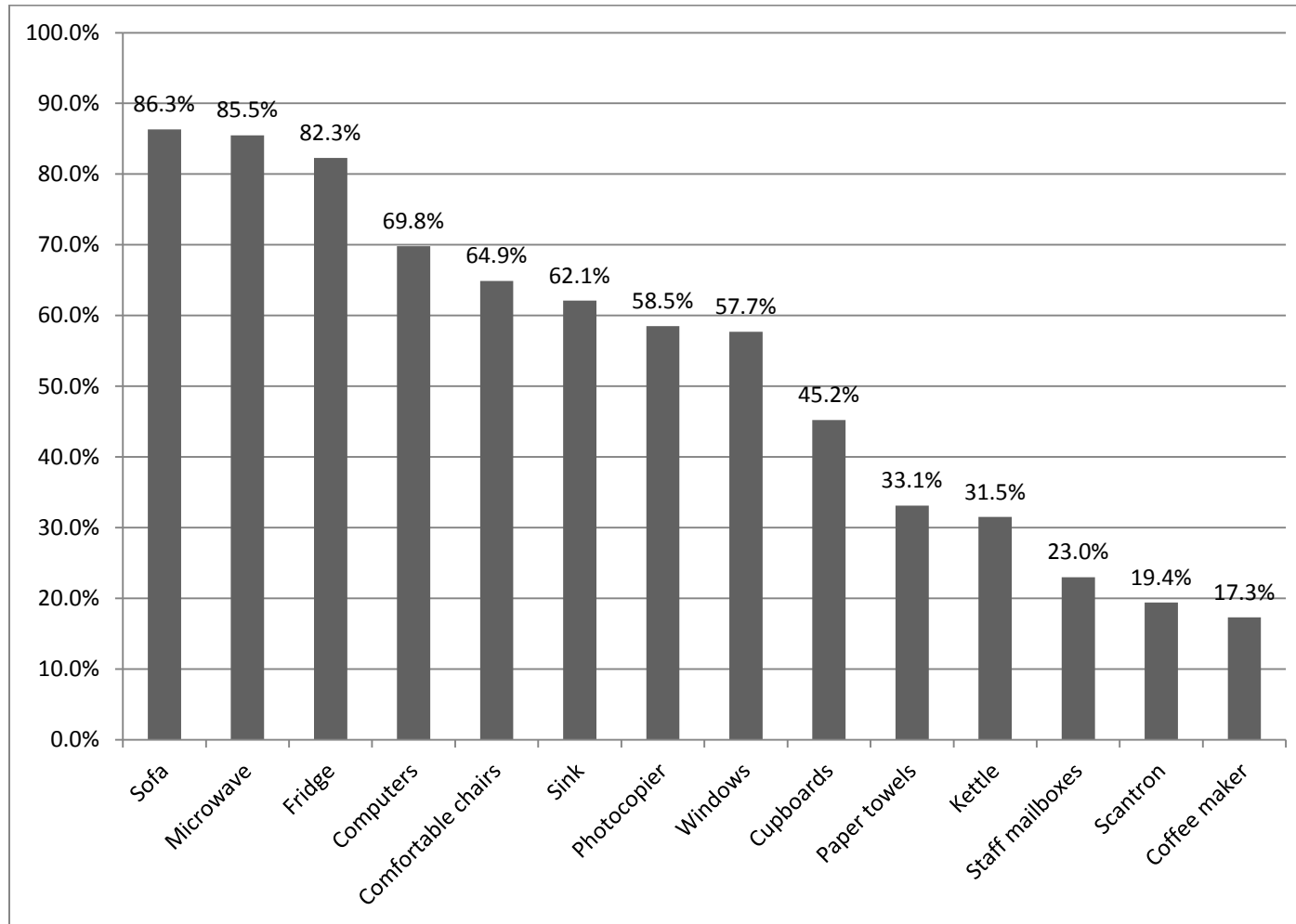
**Table 4.11.1** Additional Suggestions for Staffroom Inclusions

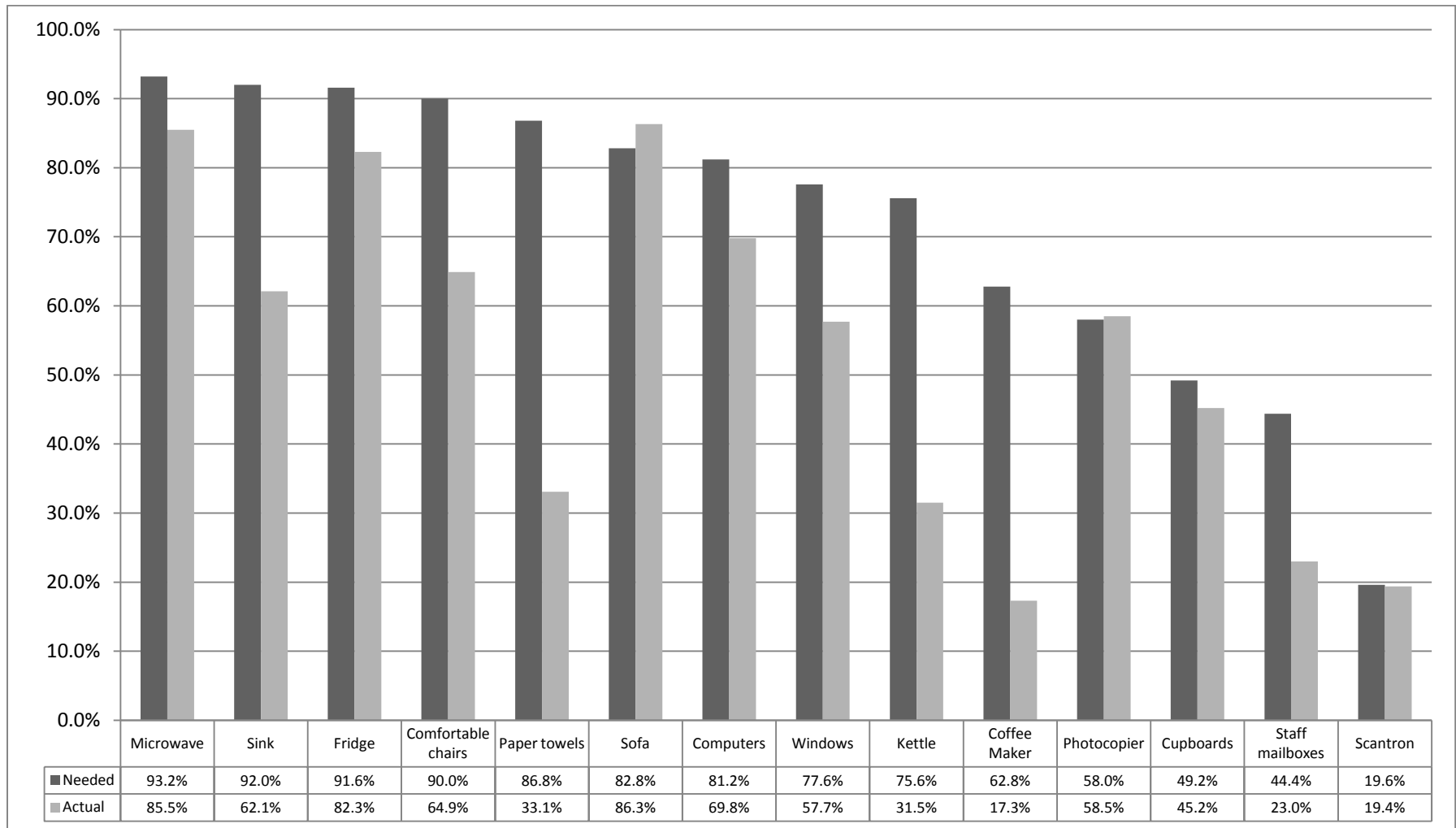
<u>Comments</u>	<u>Frequency</u>
tables and chairs for eating	9
working windows/decent light	4
ping pong, card, or other games table	5
television	3
reading material	3
plants	3
music player (CD player, iPod dock)	2
private staff sides to cafeteria	2
stove	2
washroom	2
water cooler/filter	2
room for taking a 10-minute nap	2
coffee bar	1
hand soap	1
dish soap	1
tea towels	1
contemporary decor	1
electric fireplace with a floating floor	1
clean chairs and sofa	1
wifi	1
fridge	1
stove	1
place to keep mugs	1
paper towels	1

Most of the respondents who suggested items for inclusion in a staffroom suggested items that were directly related to food preparation or relaxation. With the exception of the perhaps wistful suggestion of a fireplace with a floating floor, most of the suggestions could be easily and inexpensively added. Beyond the items mentioned in table 4.11.1, there were a series of numbers that were directly work-related. (Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of similar

comments made): Bulletin boards (6), telephone (6), photocopier (3), mailboxes (3), laminator (1), printer (1), work carrels (1), resources (1). Very few of the respondents saw additional work-related inclusions as necessary. Additional “neutral” items included the following: Recycling facilities (1), hangers/closet (1), and first aid kit (1). Once again, these neutral additions are of a practical nature. A closet and hangers to provide a place to hang a coat is especially important to a daily supply teacher who may not have access to another space in the day.

Figure 4.12 shows items that are found in secondary school staffrooms, and Figure 4.13 shows a consistent disparity between what teachers feel should be in a staffroom and what is actually there. Teachers feel that staffrooms are equipped with enough work-related items even though this appears to be where administrations often invest funds. The answer to questions 14 and 15 on the survey (Figure 4.11 and Figure 4.12) listed specific items that were needed or wanted in a staffroom, but many of the respondents took time in the comment section to make more detailed descriptions. The results of these comments can be found in Chapter 8 (8.2) which describes the ideal staffroom.

**Figure 4.12.** Items that *Are* Included in a Staffroom

**Figure 4.13.** Comparison of what *Should* be in a Staffroom with what *Is* in a Staffroom

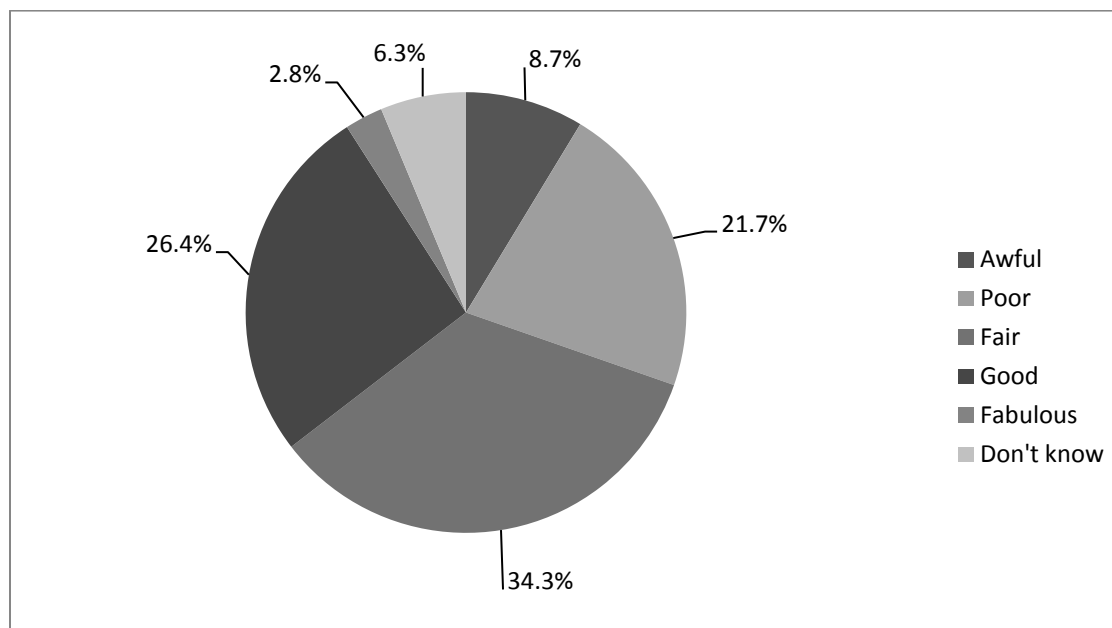
**Figure 4.14.** Perception of Staffroom Ambiance

Figure 4.14 shows that the majority of respondents (34.3%) felt that the ambiance of their staffroom could be rated as only “fair”. However, almost twice as many respondents felt that their staffroom was “poor” or “awful” (30.4%). A minority (11.9%) felt that their staffroom was “good” or “fabulous”. Additional comments determined that ambiance included such considerations as lighting, furniture, wall colour, and people. A detailed discussion of the importance of amenities and ambiance of secondary school staffrooms will be found in Chapter 6 (6.3).

**Figure 4.15.** Staffroom Used for Other Purposes

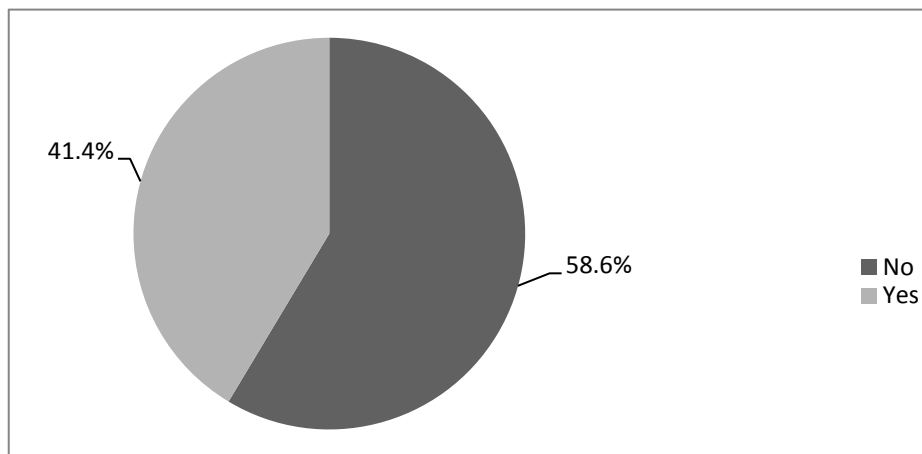


Figure 4.15 shows that staffrooms are identified as having been appropriated for use other than by or for staff by 41.6% of the survey respondents. Since non-users may not be aware of how a staffroom is used, this percentage could actually be higher. The most frequent alternate use cited was classroom. Figure 4.17 lists some of the reasons that students may appropriate a staffroom for their use. Changing a staffroom's purpose and allowing access to the staffroom by students is generally an administrative decision and speaks to the importance of an administrator's view of the staffroom as a conceived space. Further discussion and analysis of alternate staffroom use and the role of administrators in staffroom supporting staffroom space will be found in Chapter 6 (6.5).



**Figure 4.16.** Perception of Staffroom use by Students

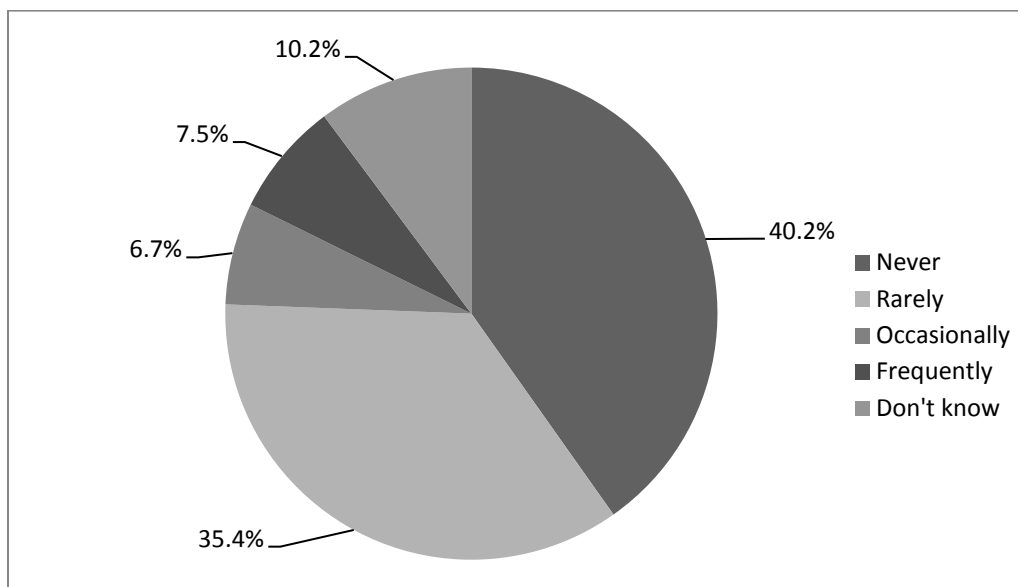
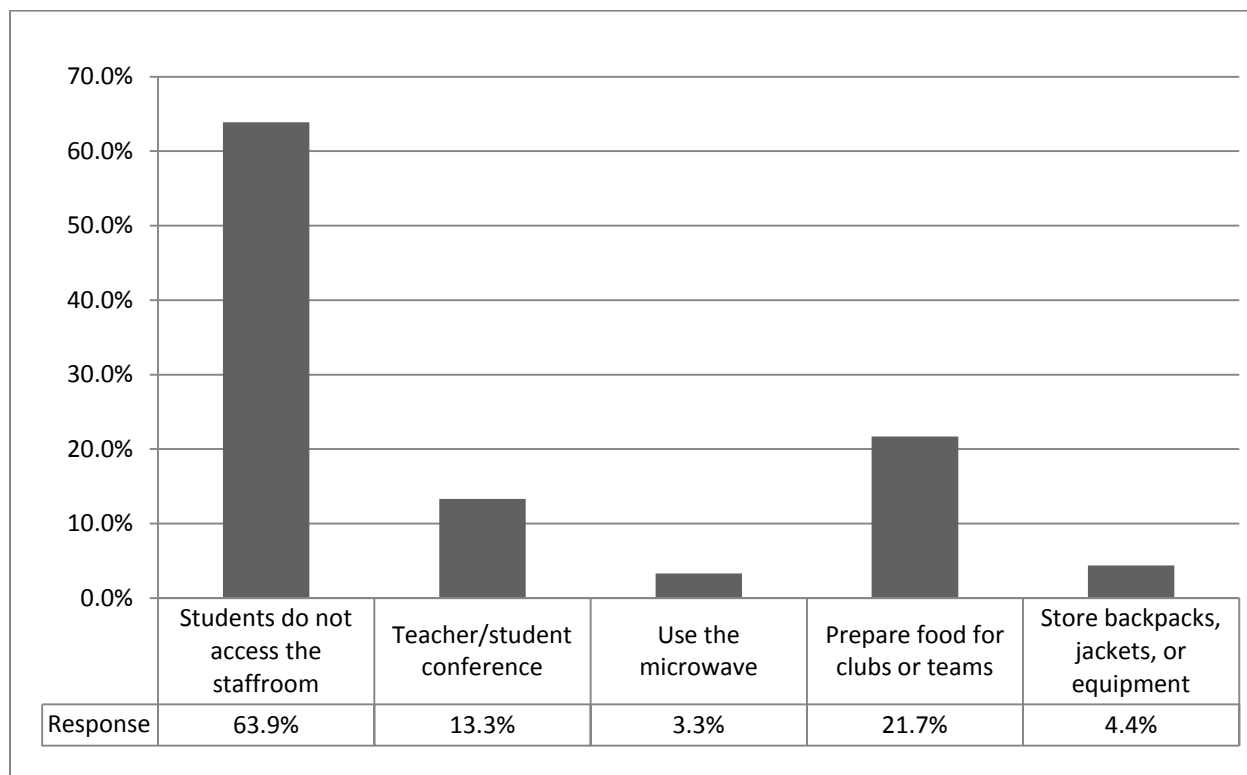


Figure 4.16 demonstrates that more people (59.8%) responded that the staffroom was accessed by students than not (40.2%). The term *accessed* was not defined in this question and so was open to interpretations of duration and purpose. Thus, one respondent might consider a knock at the door access, but another may not. One respondent may consider entry into the actual space access whereas another might consider any student interruption, such as asking to put club items in the fridge, or seeking a teacher, access. Many respondents commented on the need for staff to have an adult space. Allowing students access to the staffroom prevents the space being exclusively for adults.

**Figure 4.17.** Reasons for Staffroom Use by Students

As shown in Figure 4.17, most respondents (63.9%) to this question felt that students do not access the staffroom, which was different from question #19, where 40.2% of respondents felt that students never accessed the staffroom. The difference may be in the interpretation of the term *access* which was more clearly defined in question #20. Respondents felt that students entered the space at least occasionally for the following reasons: looking for a teacher, keeping food in the staff fridge for school events, holding student/teacher conferences, picking up recycling, photocopying, holding club meetings, holding in-school field trips, or dropping off assignments. Spaces have a way of being claimed for other purposes, and as these purposes become more prevalent, the original purpose may become minimized. Thus if students are using the staffroom for club meetings and the space is seen as serving students, it is not a large leap for the space to be designated a predominantly student space by turning it into a classroom. Students

are always the priority in a school, so it is very difficult to counter the logic that their need for space should take precedence over that of the staff.

**Figure 4.18.** Frequency of Administrative Use of Staffroom to Eat Lunch

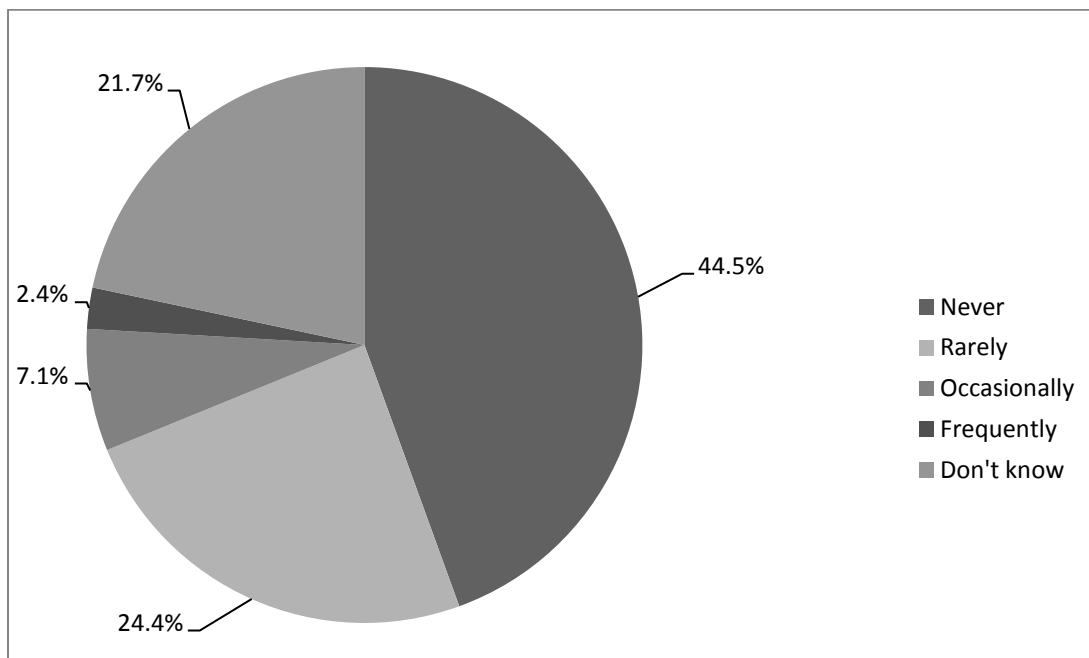


Figure 4.18 indicates that most respondents felt that the administration at their school “rarely” or “never” ate (68.9%) lunch in the staffroom and only entered during social occasions, when food was provided. Four people noted that administration had their own room, which was equipped with kitchen amenities. A more detailed analysis of the role of administrators in the control and support of a staffroom is found in Chapter 6 (6.5).

#### 4.1.4 Perception of collegiality

One question was asked in order to evaluate the respondent’s perception of collegiality of their staff. This was given so that cross tabulations (Figures 4.27, 4.30, 4.33, 4.37) could later be made to see if there was a significant relation between staffroom location, use, and perceptions of collegiality. A further discussion of collegiality, particularly as it pertains to departmental workrooms, will be found in Chapter 5 (5.3).

Q22. Rate the overall collegiality of your current staff.

**Figure 4.19.** Perception of Collegiality of Staff

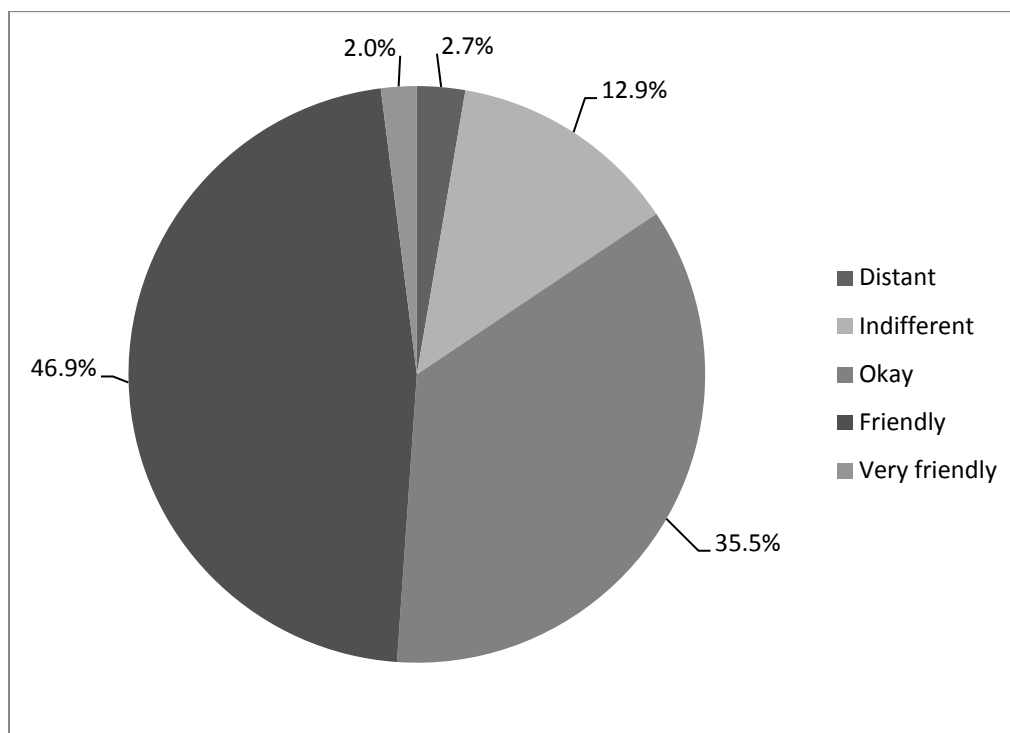


Figure 4.19 shows that more than half of survey respondents (51.1%) ranked the overall collegiality of their staff as only okay or worse. Only 2% felt that their staff was very friendly. Some respondents mentioned that although staff members were cordial and professional, many did not know the names of everyone with whom they worked. There was a sense of disappointment expressed in this, along with a feeling of sadness that this loss of collegiality is a change in the working environment of some teachers.

#### **4.1.5 Perception of the importance of staffrooms**

Two questions were asked relating to the respondent's perception of the importance of staffrooms. The first evaluated the respondent's opinion of the current importance of staffrooms and the second to determine if staffrooms were still considered purposeful.

Q13. How important is it for a secondary school to maintain a staffroom?

Q23. Have staffrooms outlived their purpose?

**Figure 4.20.** Importance of Maintaining a Secondary School Staffroom

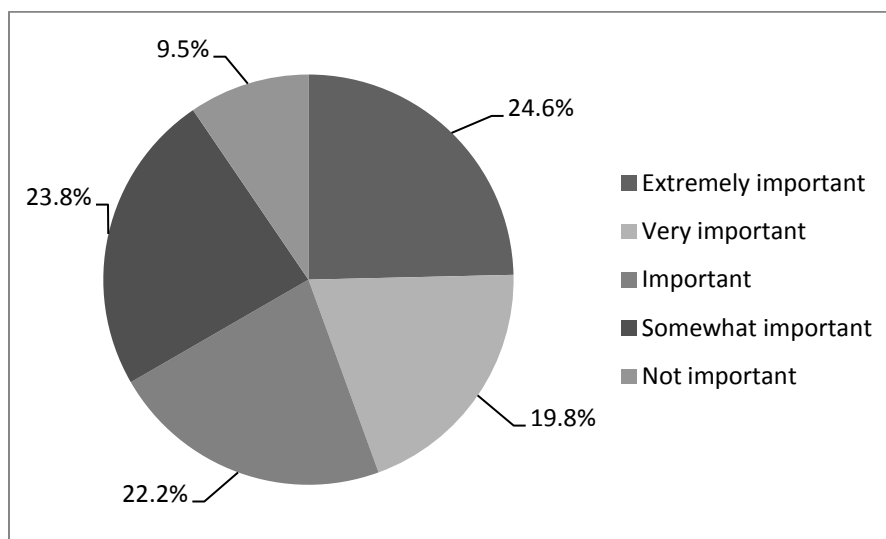


Figure 4.20 strongly indicates that in spite of a decrease in use, secondary school staffrooms are currently viewed as extremely important by most survey respondents. The majority of respondents (66.6%) felt that secondary school staffrooms were an “important”, “very important”, or “extremely important” part of school spaces. This agrees with Figure 4.21, which shows that secondary school staffrooms are overwhelmingly considered to be still purposeful. Survey comments and interviews revealed the perception that an increase in workload has resulted in decreases time to meet with colleagues outside of those in a teacher’s subject department workroom. Comments repeatedly indicated a sense of loss of staff morale, and a hope that increased staffroom use would help to alleviate this loss. The importance of maintaining a staffroom is interwoven throughout the consideration of secondary school staffrooms as perceived, conceived, and lived spaces, but is especially examined in the context of

the placement of staffrooms within lived spaces in Chapter 7, particularly in the observation of the staffrooms of East Central and Heritage Hills Secondary Schools.

**Figure 4.21.** Perception of Staffrooms as Still Purposeful

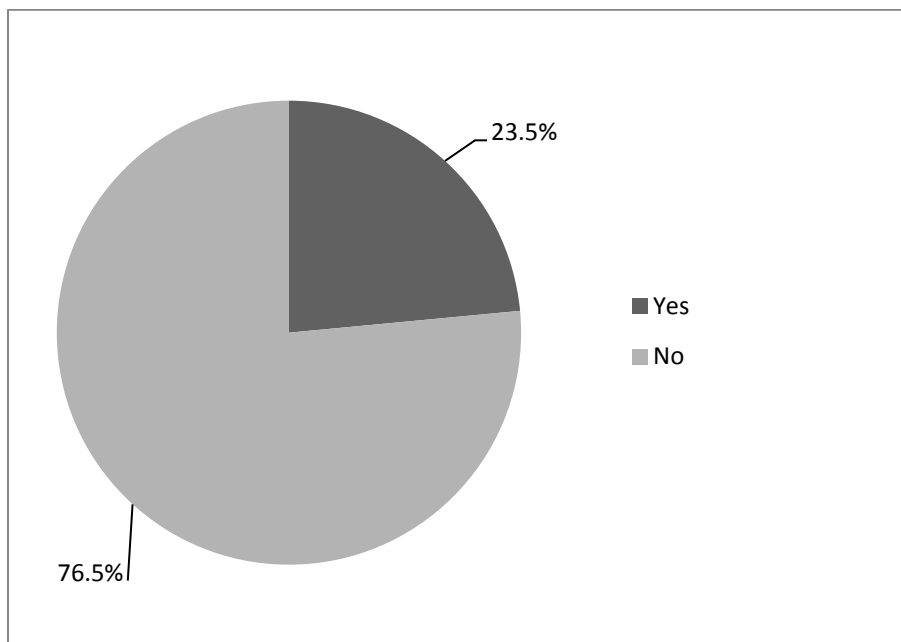


Figure 4.21 shows that staffrooms were overwhelmingly considered to be purposeful, even among non-users.

#### **4.1.6 Reasons why staffrooms were still considered to be important**

Most people who provided comments as to why staffrooms are still considered important expressed a variation of the following four reasons:

- Staffrooms are a good place for people to put names to faces
- Staffrooms are considered a good place to meet teachers from other departments
- Staffrooms provide a place for supply teachers to go
- Staffrooms provide a place to get away and relax

#### **4.1.7 Reasons why staffrooms may have outlived their purpose**

Most people who provided comments as to why staffrooms have outlived their purpose expressed one of two reasons:

- Workrooms have replaced staffrooms
- Lack of ambiance/amenities

The causes of staffroom decline are discussed in further detail in later chapters of this dissertation. In particular, Chapter 5 (5.3) examines the role of workrooms and why they do not always function as positive work environments. Chapter 6 (6.3.2) considers the role of ambiance and amenities in encouraging staffroom use.

### **4.2 Summary of significant survey results**

Once the descriptive data was collected from the survey, the next step was to determine if any reasonable co-relations could be made between staffroom use and the following variables: frequency of passing by the staffroom, frequency of use, number of years of teaching, perception of ambiance, and use by administrators. This section reports results that were considered significant, very significant, or highly significant, according to the Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence.

#### **4.2.1 Frequency of passing by staffroom Pearson's Chi-squared tests**

The first series of tests considered the effect of location and the frequency with which a staff member passes by the staffroom as part of their daily routine on the use, change of use, and perceptions of staffroom importance, busyness, ambiance, and of collegiality. It was found that the location of a staffroom and the frequency with which a staff member passes by significantly influence not only use, but perceptions. The more frequently teachers pass by the staffroom as

part of their daily routine, the more likely they are to perceive the staffroom as being important, busy, having a good ambiance, and belonging to a collegial staff.

**Figure 4.22.** Frequency of Passing by Staffroom Compared to Frequency of Use

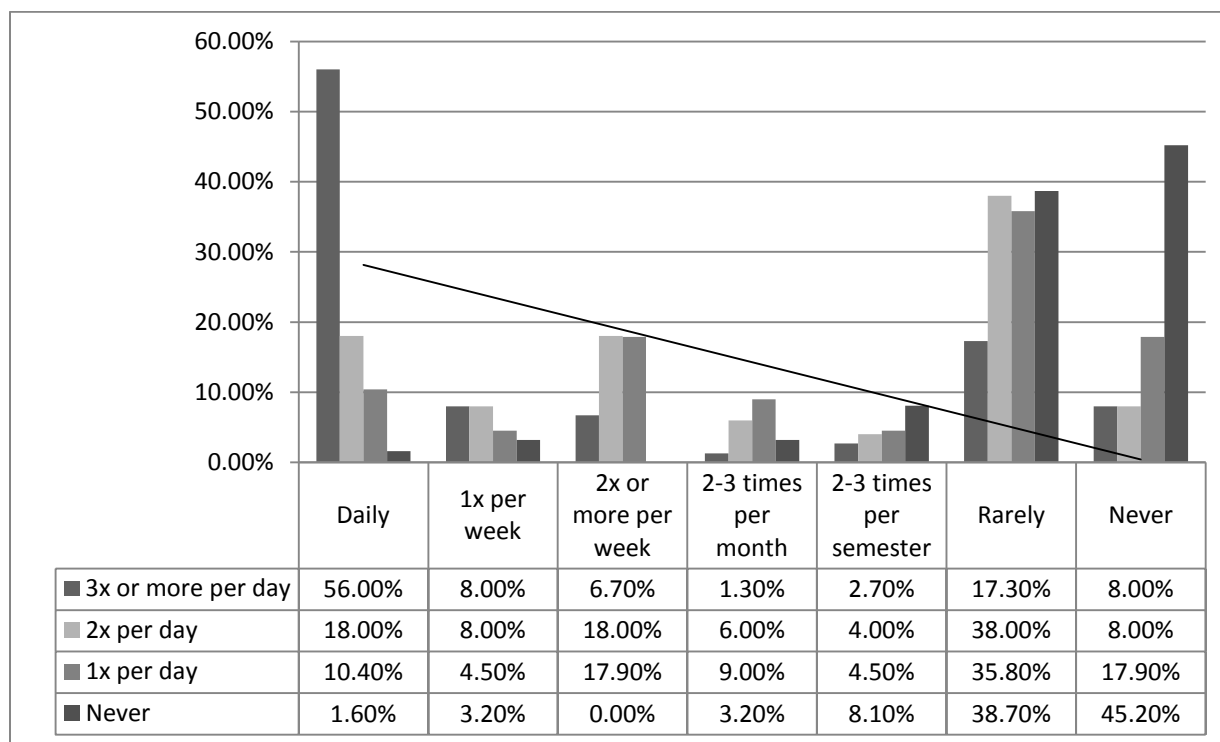


Figure 4.22 confirms that staffroom location affects use. Teachers who say they pass by the staffroom one or more times per day are the most frequent (daily) users of the staffroom and teachers who say they never pass by the staffroom, are more likely to “never” (45.2%) or “rarely” (38%) use the staffroom, as indicated by the linear trend line on the “3x or more per day” response. According to Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, these results are highly significant ( $\chi^2 = 112.87$ ,  $df = 18$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Teachers who had greater access to a staffroom in the day during their normal routine used it more. Teachers who find the staffroom to be far away from their classes and departmental workrooms do not go out of their way to use it.



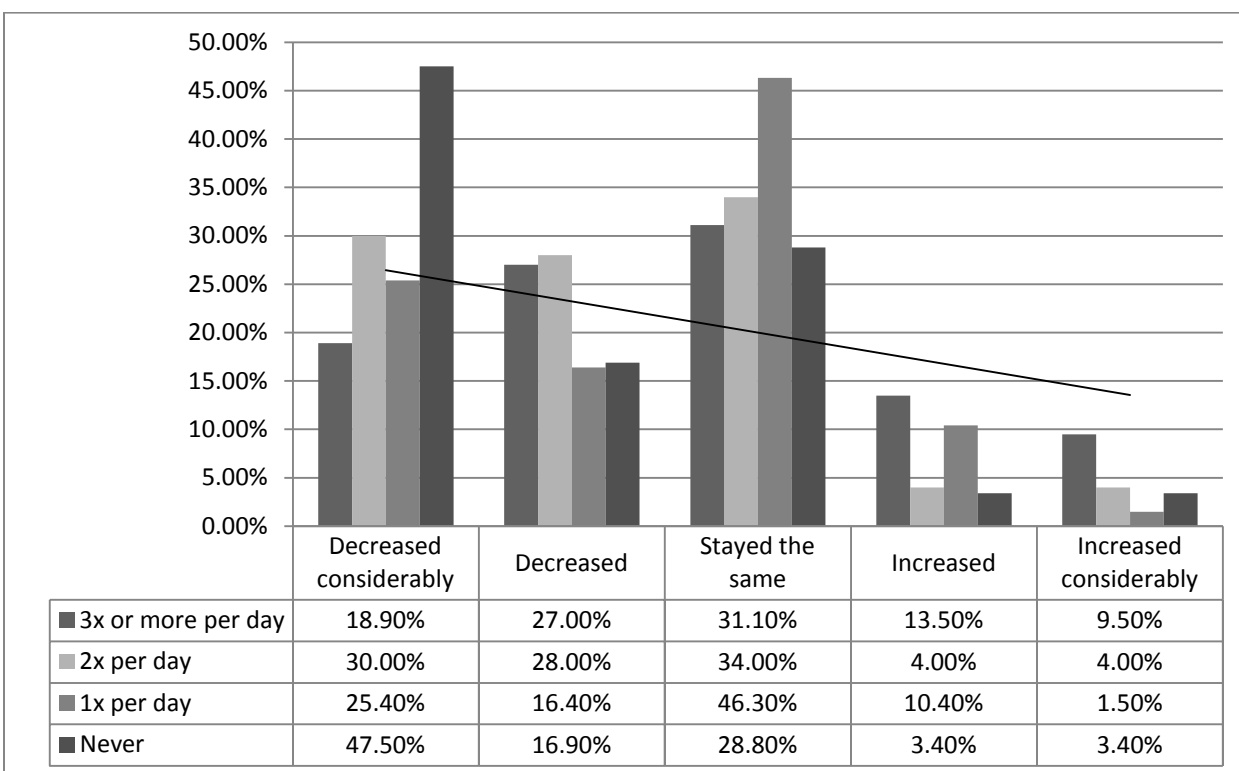
**Figure 4.23.** Frequency of Passing by Staffroom Compared to Change in Staffroom Use

Figure 4.23 shows that teachers who rarely or never go near the staffroom think their staffroom use has decreased more than people who pass by more frequently, as indicated by the linear trend line on the “3x or more per day” response. According to Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, these results are very significant ( $\chi^2 = 27.0482$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ). People seem to transfer their own experience onto that of others. If teachers do not see the staffroom in use, then they appear to assume that its use has decreased.

**Figure 4.24.** Frequency of Passing by Staffroom Compared to Perception of Importance of Staffroom

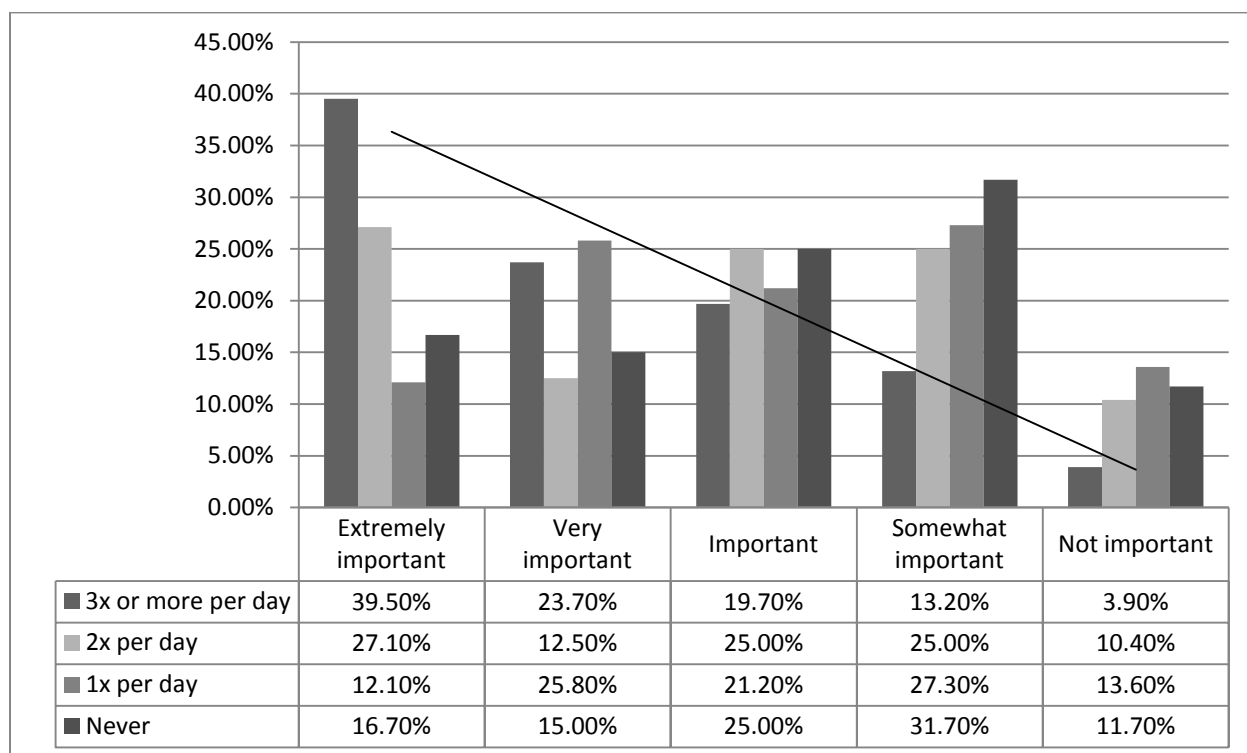


Figure 4.24 emphasizes the importance of location for not only use, but also awareness of its importance. The more frequently a teacher passes by a staffroom, the more likely that teacher feels that staffrooms are “extremely important” as indicated by the linear trend line on the “3x or more per day” response. According to Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, these results are very significant ( $\chi^2 = 27.64$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = 0.006$ ). A further discussion of the importance of location was seen in Figures 4.9 and 4.23. A further discussion of the influence location and proximity will occur in Chapter 6 (6.3).

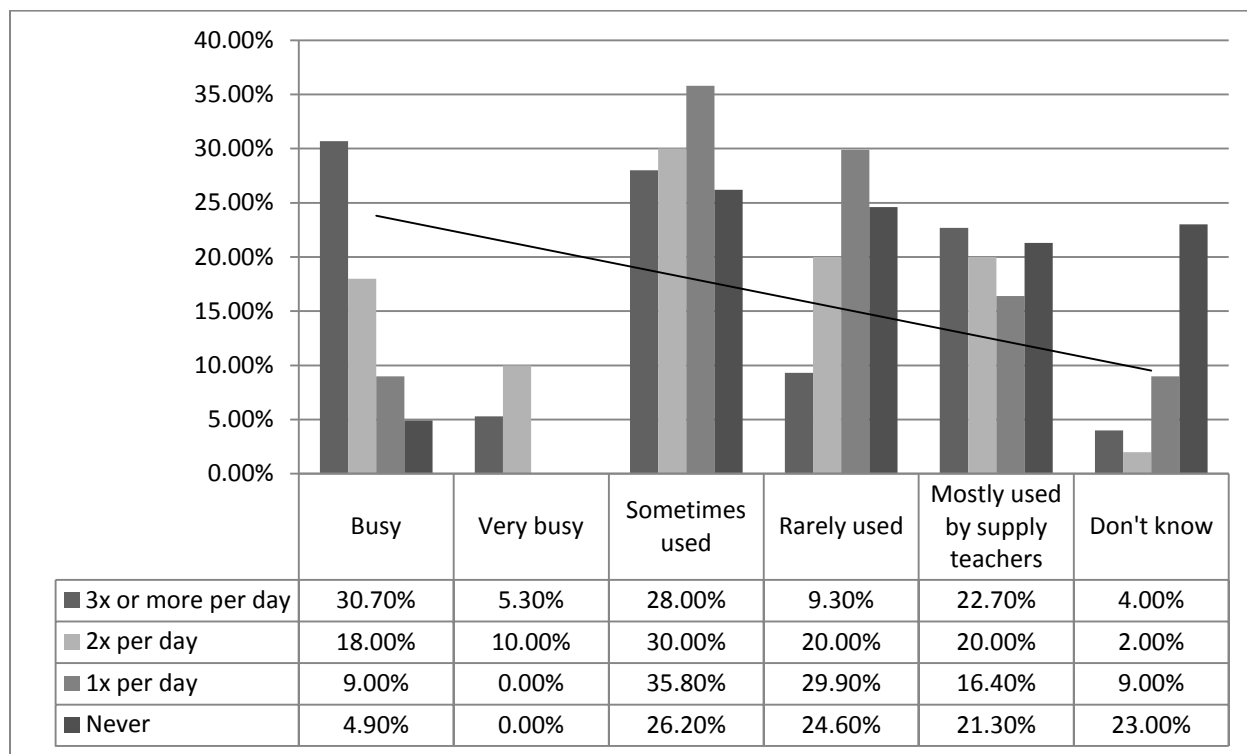
**Figure 4.25.** Frequency of Passing by Staffroom Compared to Perception of Busyness

Figure 4.25 indicates that people who pass by the staffroom on a daily basis think it is busier than those who never pass by, as indicated by the linear trend line on the “3x or more per day” response. According to Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, these results are highly significant ( $\chi^2 = 54.5978$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Surprisingly, a staffroom that is located within the daily path of teachers is perceived as not only more important, but also busier. Perhaps being seen on a daily basis allows it to also be seen as used.

**Figure 4.26.** Frequency of Passing by Staffroom Compared to Perception of Staffroom Ambiance

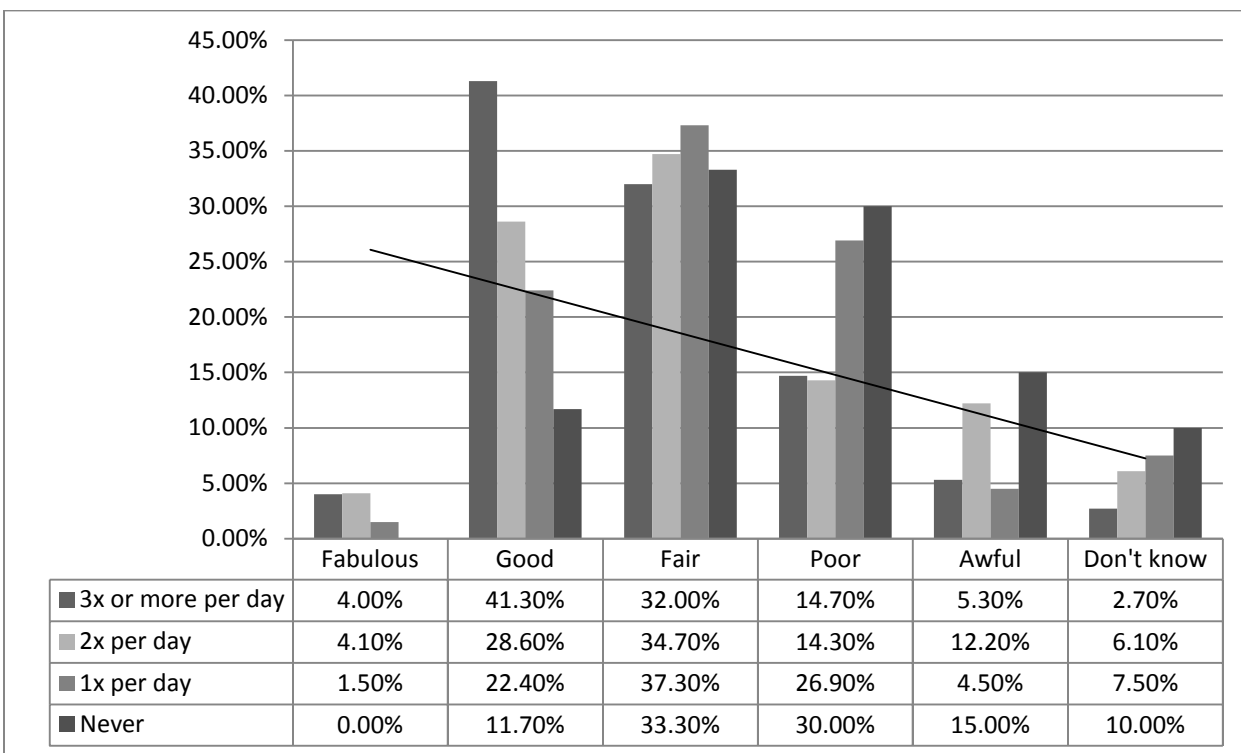


Figure 4.26 indicates that people who pass by the staffroom on a daily basis think it has a better ambiance than those who never pass by, as indicated by the linear trend line on the “3x or more per day” response. According to Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, these results are significant ( $\chi^2 = 29.4585$ ,  $df = 15$ ,  $p = 0.014$ ). Although very few respondents described their staffroom as “fabulous”, there is a greater perception of a “good” ambiance from those who pass by the staffroom as part of their daily routine than those who do not.

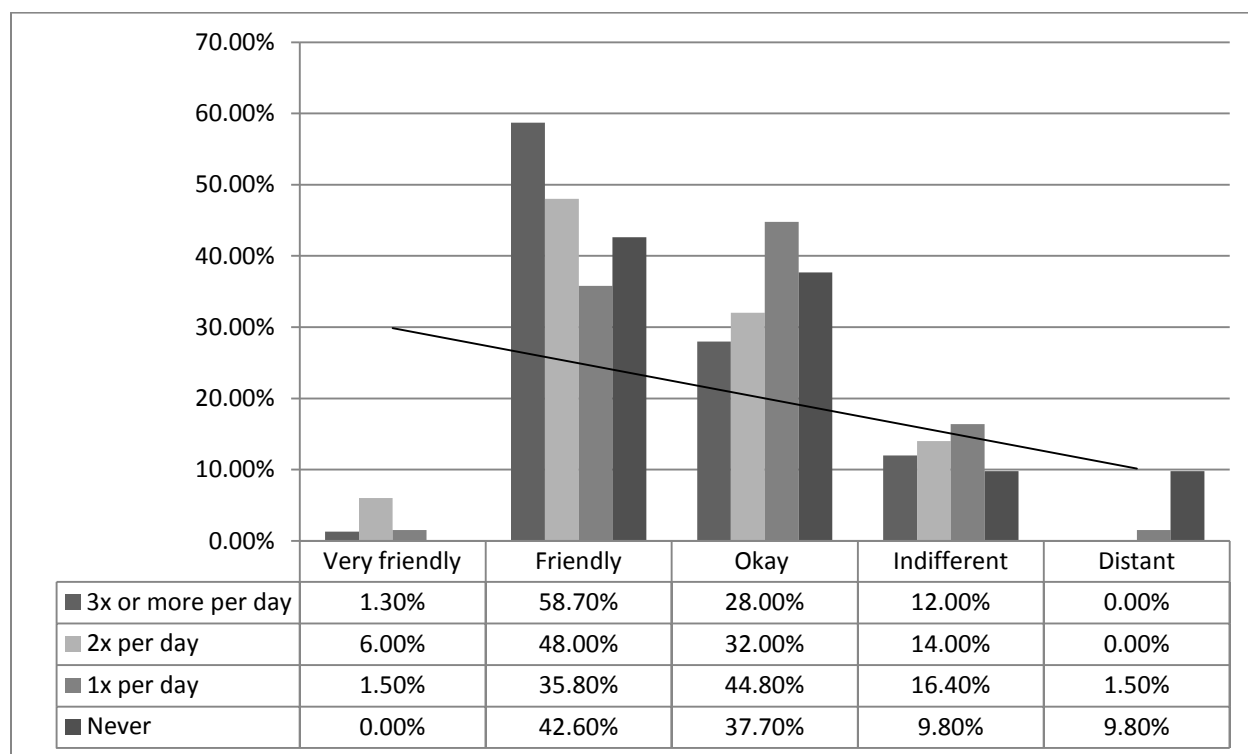
**Figure 4.27.** Frequency of Passing by Staffroom Compared to Perception of Staff Collegiality

Figure 4.27 indicates that people who pass by the staffroom on a daily basis think their staff is more collegial than those who never pass by, as indicated by the linear trend line on the “3x or more per day” response. According to Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, these results are very significant ( $\chi^2 = 28.8713$ ,  $df = 12$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). Like the increased perceptions of importance, busyness, and ambiance, from teachers who pass by the staffroom, these teachers also have increased perceptions of collegiality. In my opinion, this is one of the most striking findings from my research: when teachers see a place where staff gathers, outside of their own department workroom, they perceive their staffs to be more collegial, and perhaps a more enjoyable place to work.

#### 4.2.2 Frequency of use Pearson's Chi-squared tests

The second set of tests compared staffroom use with perception of use, importance, and ambiance. Not surprisingly, like teachers who pass by the staffroom regularly during their daily routine, teachers who actually use a staffroom regularly find the staffroom to be more important (Figure 4.27 – highly significant results), busier (Figure 4.28 – highly significant results), have better ambiance (Figure 4.27 – highly significant results), than those teachers who rarely or never use the staffroom. Like teachers who do not pass by the staffroom during their day, the staffroom also appears to be out of sight and out of mind for those who “rarely” or “never” use it. Infrequent users also feel that the staffroom is less busy, less important, less collegial, and has worse ambiance than those who use it.

**Figure 4.28.** Frequency of Use Compared to Perception of Importance

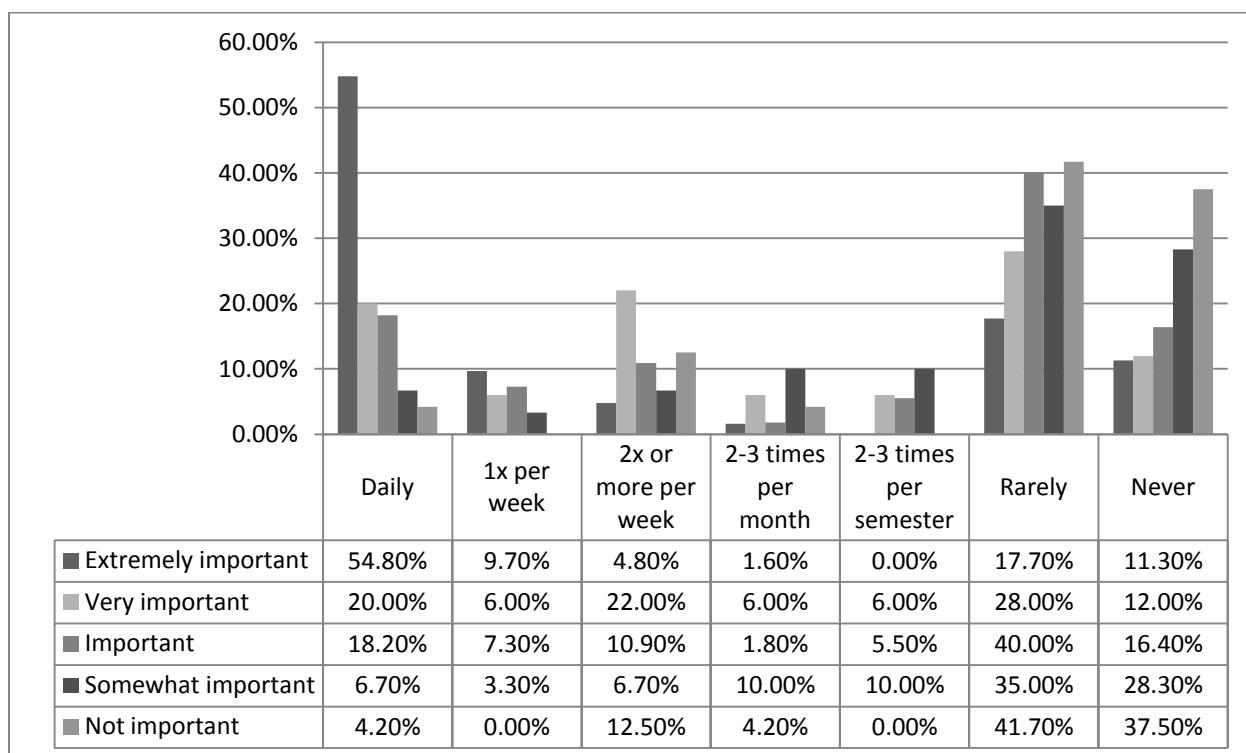


Figure 4.28 confirms that the more teachers use a secondary school staffroom, the more important they feel it is. According to Pearson's Chi-squared, these results are highly significant

( $\chi^2 = 80.1892$ ,  $df = 24$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This response is fairly predictable. If one uses something more frequently, then one also acknowledges its importance.

**Figure 4.29.** Frequency of Use Compared to Perception of Busyness

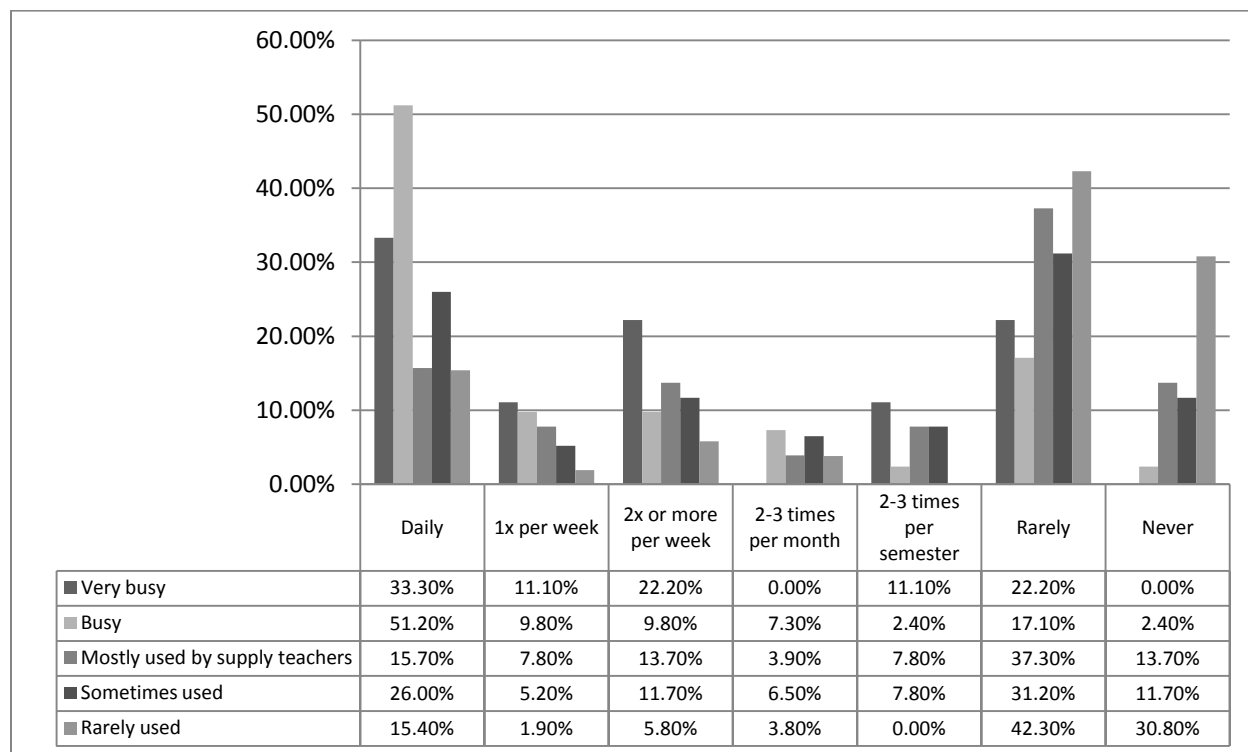


Figure 4.29 indicates that teachers who use the staffroom on a “daily” basis find it to be busier than teachers who “rarely” or “never” use the staffroom. According to Pearson's Chi-squared these results are highly significant ( $\chi^2 = 81.809$ ,  $df = 30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Teachers who use the staffroom daily find it busy, probably because they are there and see it as such. Teachers who do not use the staffroom seem to transfer their absence to others as well. There is little acknowledgement that although one teacher may not be using it, another one may be.

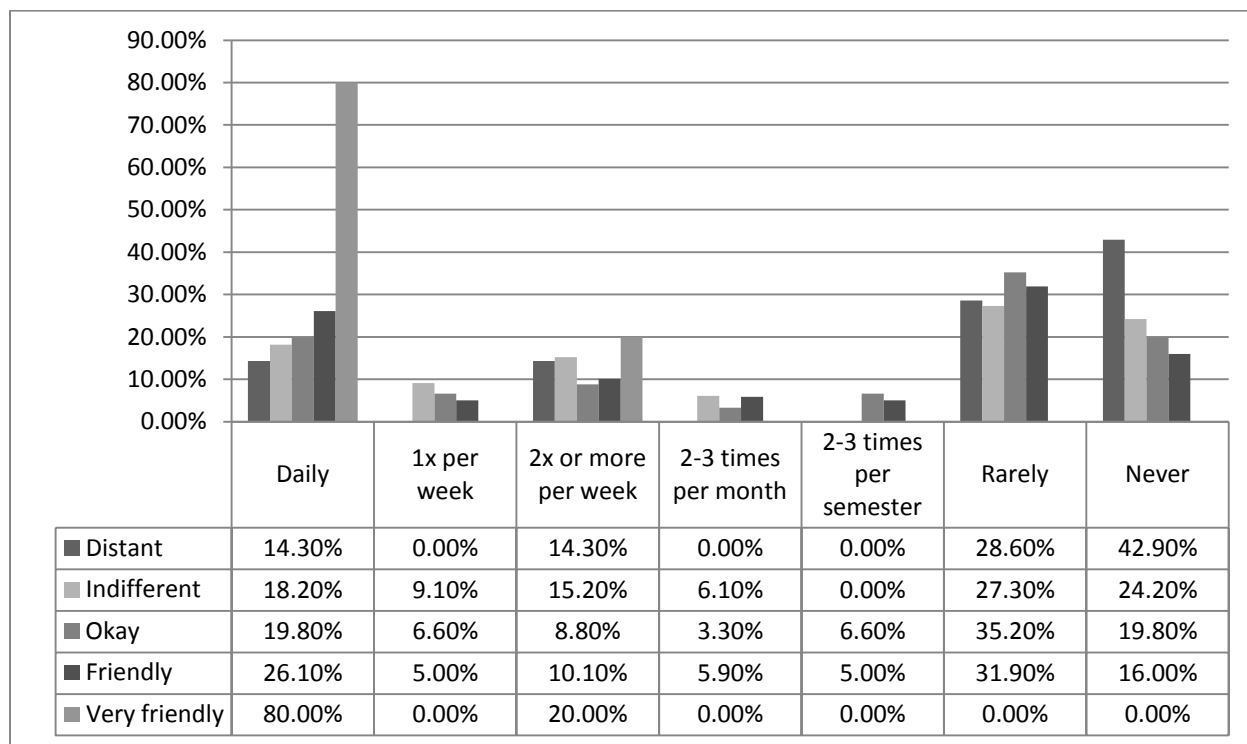
**Figure 4.30.** Frequency of Use Compared to Perception of Collegiality

Figure 4.30 indicates that teachers who use the staffroom at least once a day appear to perceive their staffs to be more collegial than those who use the staffroom less frequently. However, according to Pearson's Chi-squared these results are not significant ( $\chi^2 = 21.4295$ ,  $df = 24$ ,  $p < 0.6133$ ). These results make sense; teachers who use the staffroom are often using it for casual conversation over lunch in addition to work. These casual conversations provide opportunities to get to know other teachers personally in addition to professionally. They can also, as my own experience has found, provide opportunities for professional collaborations not found by limiting contact to those in one's subject department workroom.



### Figure 4.2.3 Years of Teaching Pearson's Chi-Squared tests

The third series of comparison tests sought to determine if the length of a teacher's career had a significant influence on changes in staffroom use, and perceptions of importance, collegiality, and busyness. It was found that teachers with the most years of experience expressed more change in their staffroom use, found staffrooms to be more important, and considered their staffs to be slightly more collegial than their less experienced colleagues.

**Figure 4.31.** Years of Teaching Compared to Change in Staffroom Use

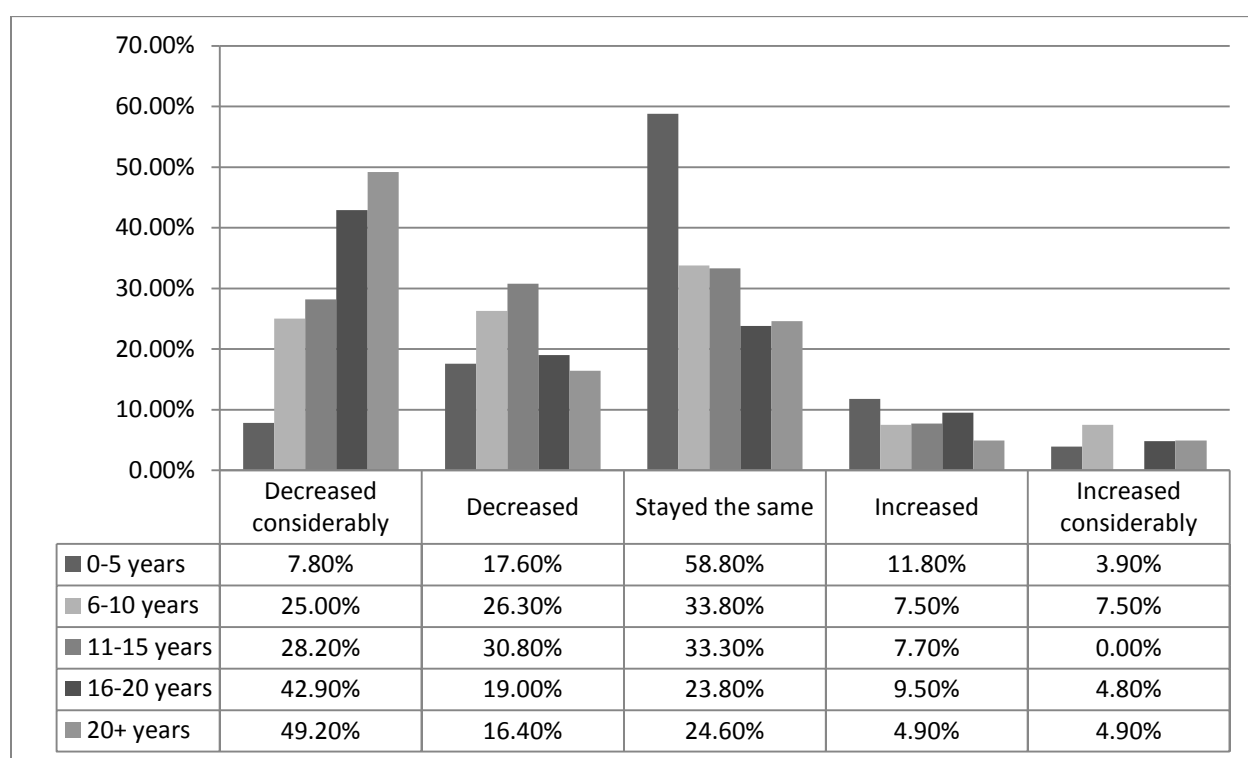


Figure 4.31 indicates that teachers who have taught 16 or more years feel that their staffroom use has decreased much more than teachers with less than five years of experience. According to Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, these results are very significant ( $\chi^2 = 37.1958$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $p = 0.002$ ). Teachers who have taught less than five years feel that their staffroom use has remained the same. This could indicate that they never used the staffroom in the first place.

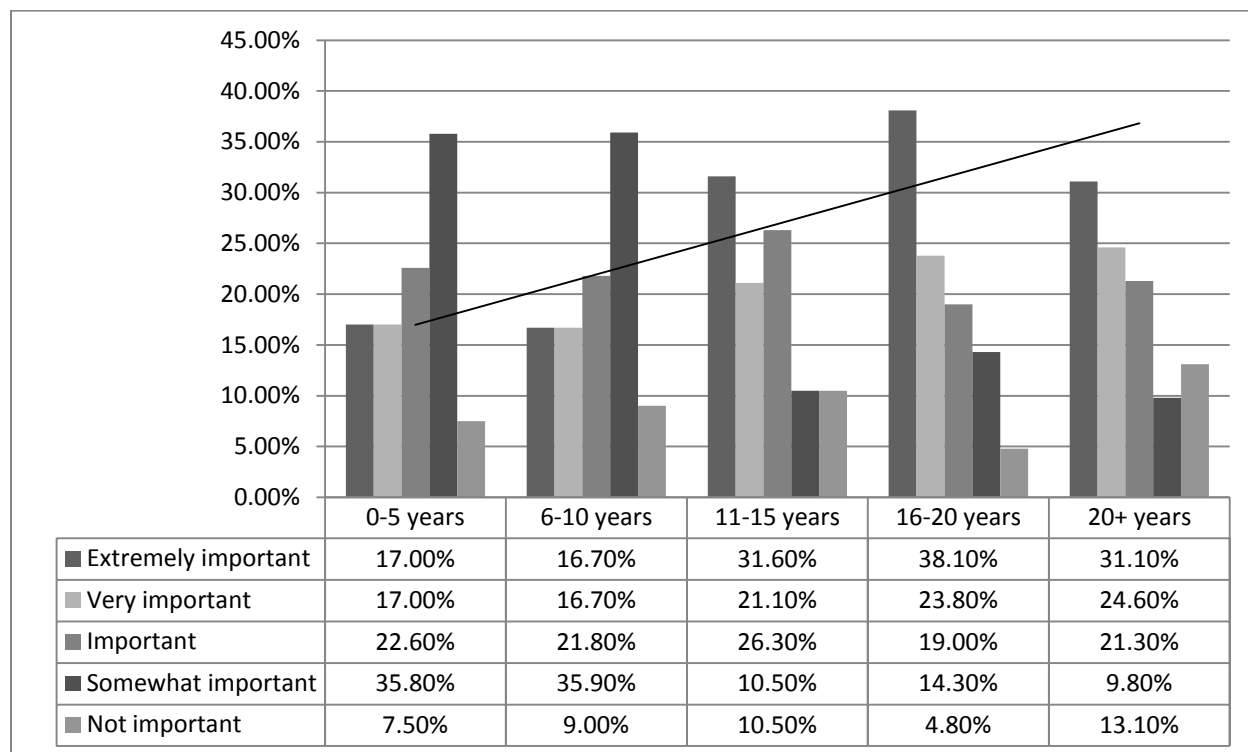
**Figure 4.32.** Years of Teaching Compared to Importance of Staffroom Use

Figure 4.32 indicates that more experienced teachers feel that staffrooms are more important than less experienced teachers as indicated by the rising trend line on the “extremely important” response. According to Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, these results are significant ( $\chi^2 = 28.5063$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ). However, it is important to note that just because less experienced teachers find staffrooms *less* important than older teachers it does not mean that they feel that staffrooms are not important. Less experienced teachers may simply not be in the habit of using the staffroom. The importance of habit as it pertains to lived spaces will be discussed in Chapter 7 (7.5).

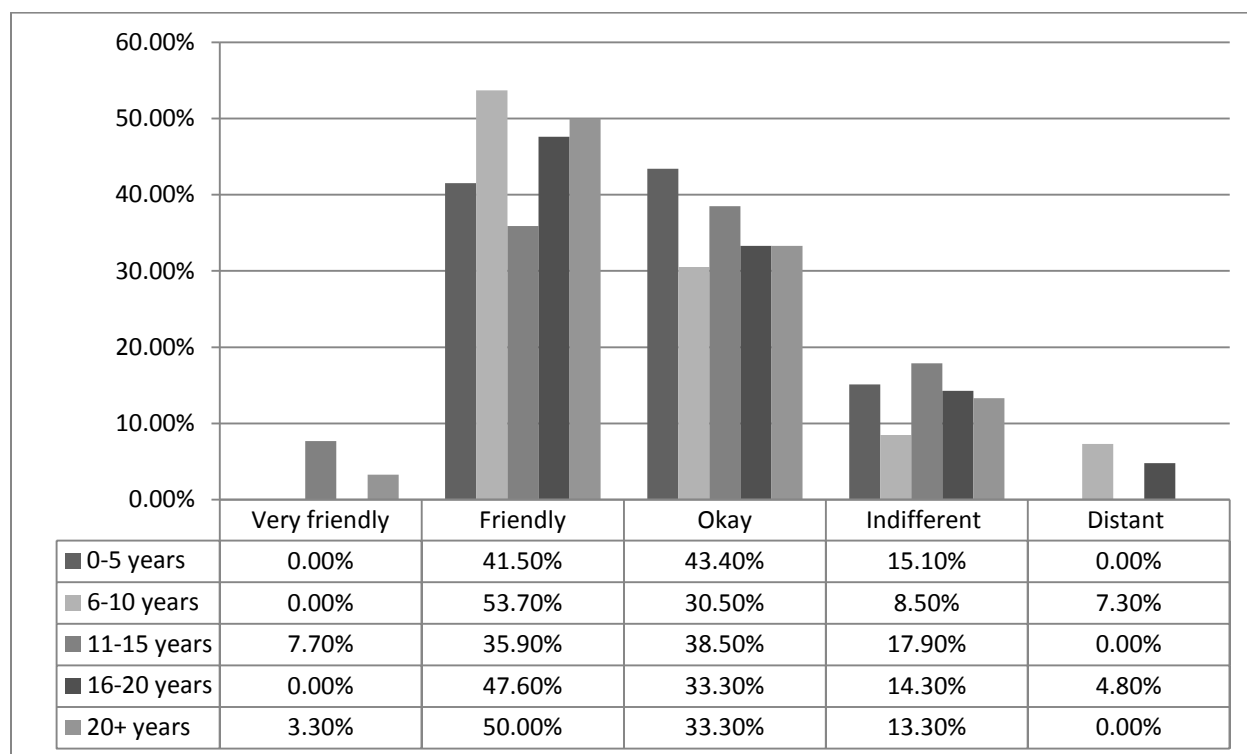
**Figure 4.33.** Years of Teaching Compared to Perception of Collegiality

Figure 4.33 shows that although Pearson's Chi-squared indicates a significant relationship between years of teaching and the perception of collegiality ( $\chi^2=31.8395$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), there appears to be no clear pattern from distribution of the survey responses. Teachers with 20 or more years of experience seem to perceive their staffs as marginally more collegial than new teachers. Overall, teachers feel positively about their colleagues, but this seems unrelated to the length of time in the profession.

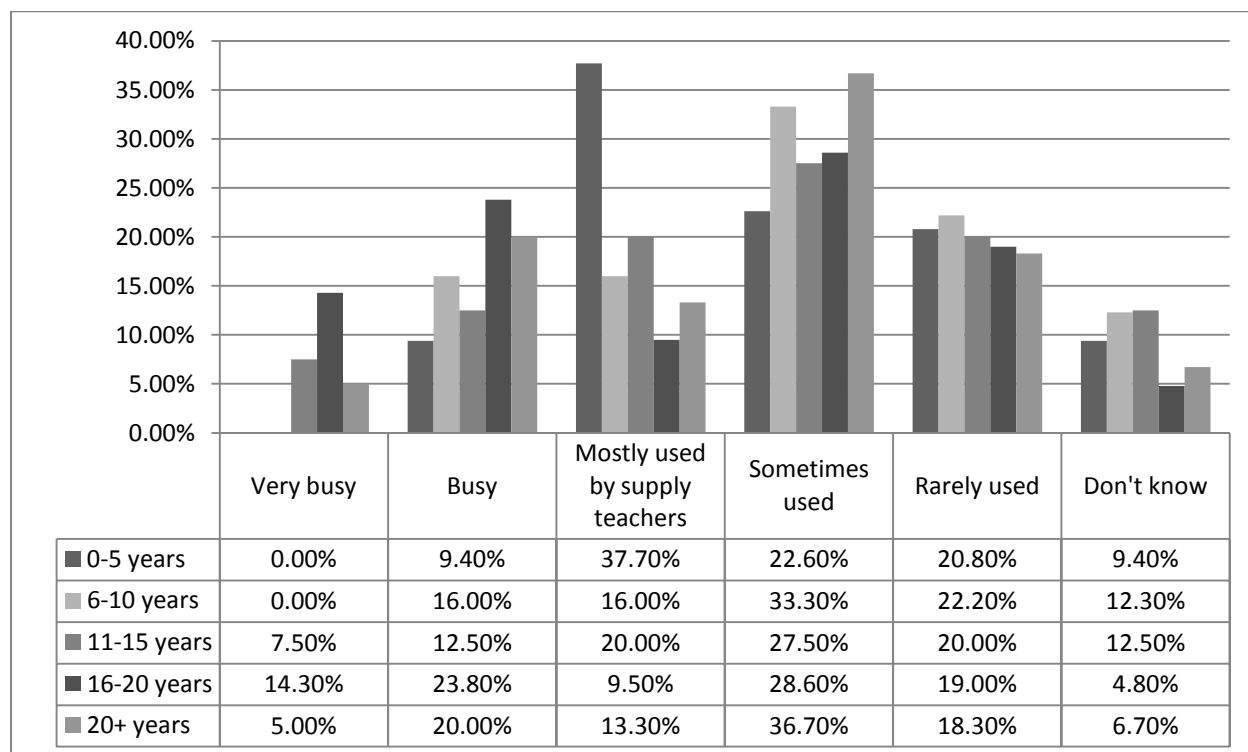
**Figure 4.34.** Years of Teaching Compared to Perception of Busyness

Figure 4.34 indicates that less experienced teachers feel that staffrooms are mostly used by supply teachers, and that teachers with more than 5 years of experience feel that staffrooms are at least sometimes used. According to Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, these results are significant ( $\chi^2 = 35.256$ ,  $df = 20$ ,  $p = 0.02$ ). Very few teachers feel that their staffroom is very busy. This reflects the indication of decline of secondary staffroom use previously shown in Figure 4.3 and discussed in detail in Chapter 1 (1.1) and Chapter 3 (3.1).

#### 4.2.4 Perception of Ambiance Pearson's Chi-squared tests

The fourth series of tests investigated the significance of ambiance as a factor in staffroom use. Teachers who perceive their staffrooms to have a positive ambiance also perceive their staffs to be busier and more collegial than those teachers who perceive the ambiance in their staffroom to be less than desirable.

**Figure 4.35.** Perception of Ambiance Compared to Perception of Busyness

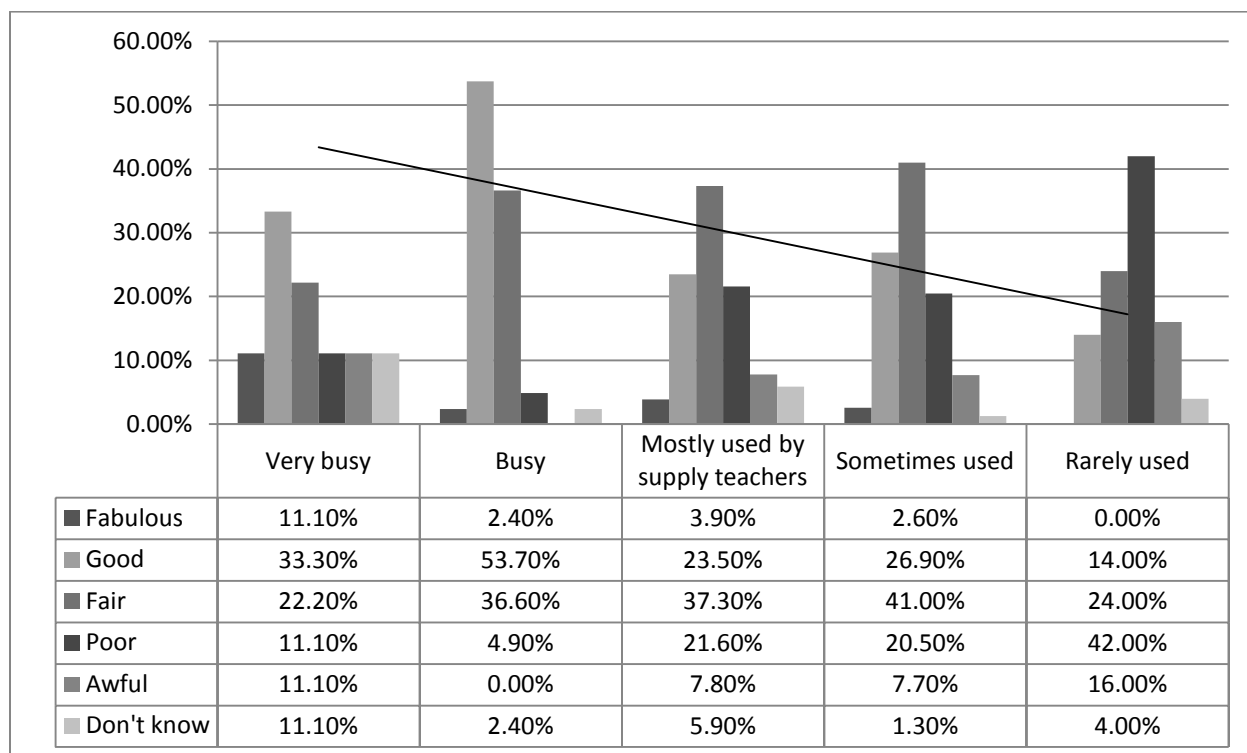


Figure 4.35 indicates that teachers who perceive the staffroom to be busy also perceive it to have a better ambiance than a staffroom that is rarely used. According to Pearson's Chi-squared these results are highly significant ( $\chi^2 = 79.5227$ ,  $df = 25$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The linear trend line on "good" shows a clear decline in perception of staffroom ambiance proportional to how busy the staffroom is perceived to be. People, as many of the respondents noted, are one of the contributing factors to a good ambiance. Several respondents mentioned in the optional

comments that they did not want to use the staffroom because there were no people. I suspect that this emptiness, whether literal or perceived, perpetuates itself.

**Figure 4.36.** Perception of Ambiance of Compared to Perception of Collegiality

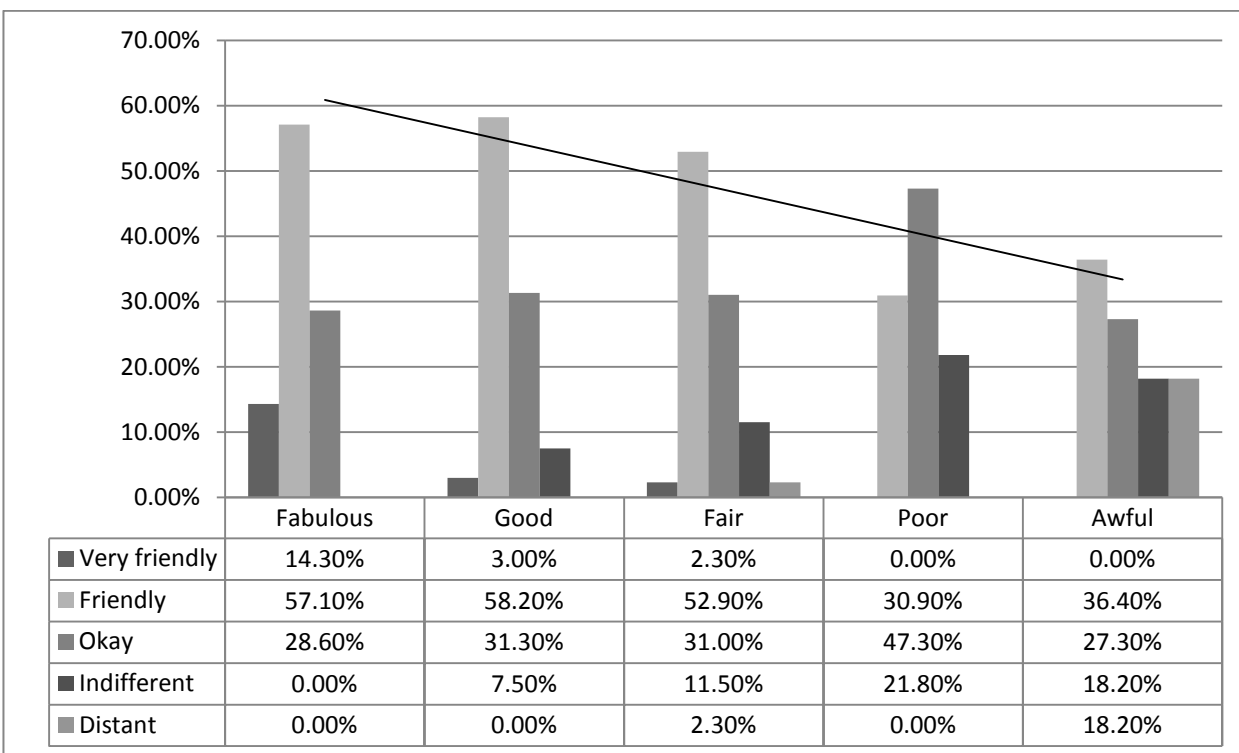


Figure 4.36 indicates that teachers who consider their staffroom ambiance to be “fabulous” or “good” also consider their staffs to be collegial. The perception of staff collegiality is shown by the trend line on “friendly” response, which declines with worse ambiance. According to Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, this result is highly significant ( $\chi^2 = 48.7843$ ,  $df = 20$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The perception of the ambiance of a staffroom appears to connect to the perception of the collegiality of a staff. Recall, as previously mentioned, (Figure 4.35), that busyness, or presence of people, is strongly connected to ambiance. The importance of ambiance is discussed in more depth in Chapter 6 (6.3.2).

#### 4.2.5 Use of staffrooms by administrators Pearson's Chi-squared tests

The last series of tests investigated the influence of administrative use of staffrooms on perceptions of collegiality, busyness, and ambiance. A very significant connection between both comparisons was found. A detailed discussion of the role of administrators in supporting, or not supporting, staffrooms is in Chapter 6 (6.5).

**Figure 4.37.** Staffroom Use by Administrators Compared to Perception of Collegiality

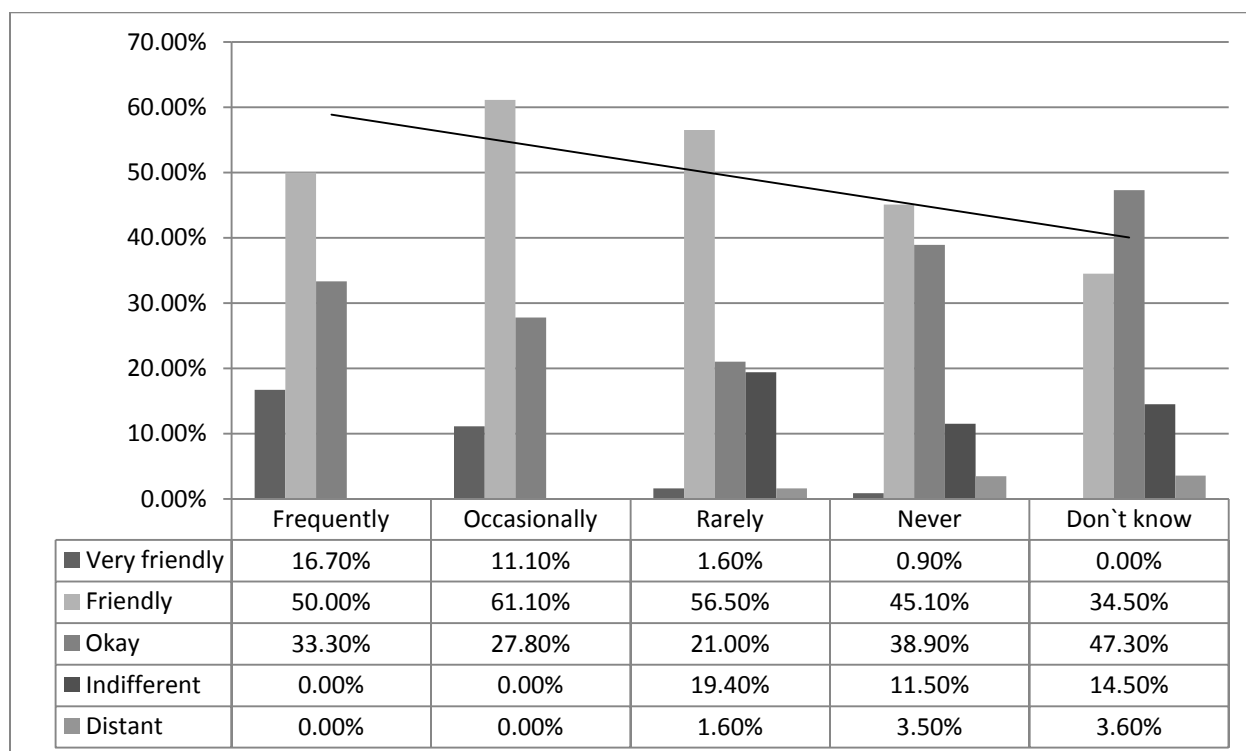


Figure 4.37 shows that teachers who feel that their administration eats lunch in the staffroom find the staff to be more collegial than schools where the administration does not use the staffroom. According to Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, these results are very significant ( $\chi^2 = 33.128$ ,  $df = 16$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ). Trend line is on the "friendly" collegiality response. Optional comments indicated that eating lunch in the staffroom occasionally was a good way to get to know staff on an informal basis.

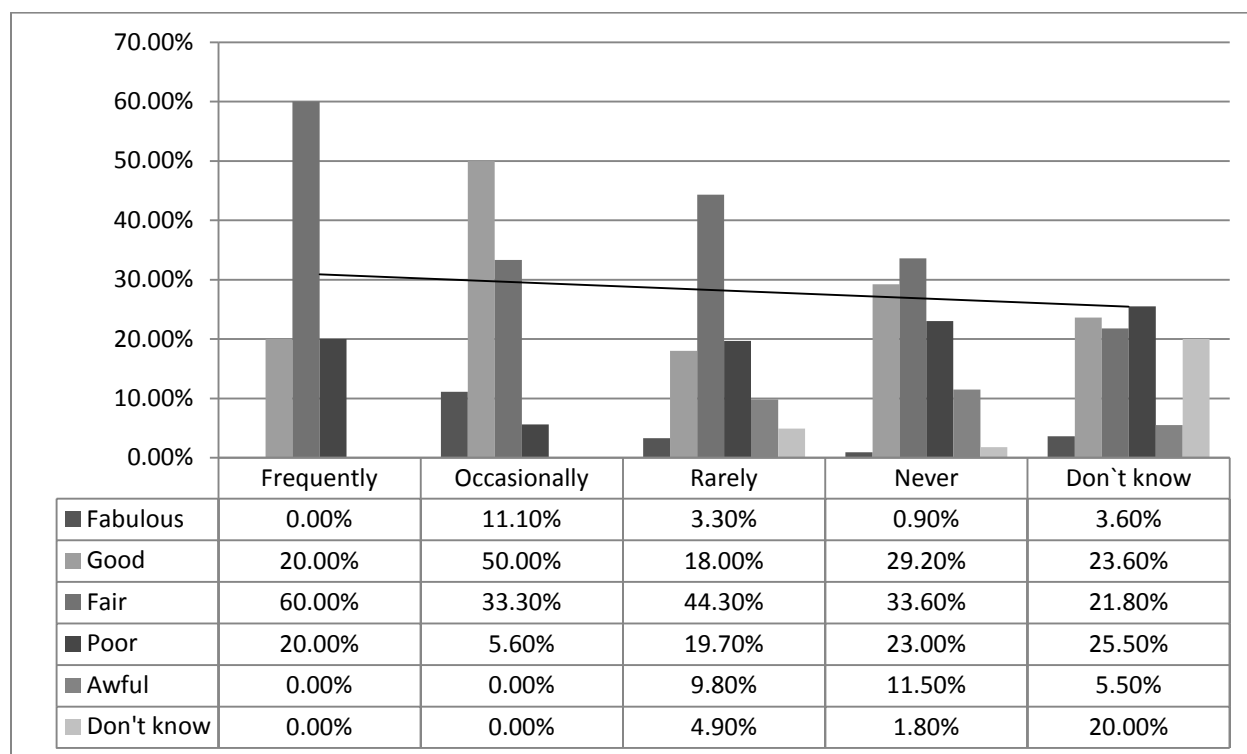
**Figure 4.38.** Staffroom Use by Administrators Compared to Perception of Ambiance

Figure 4.38 indicates that teachers who feel that their administration eats lunch in the staffroom find the ambiance of the staffroom to be better than schools where the administration does not use the staffroom. According to Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, these results are very significant ( $\chi^2 = 45.5639$ ,  $df = 20$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). Trend line is on the “good” ambiance response. Many schools, including East Central Secondary, have a separate eating area for administration that is often newer and better appointed than that of the general staffroom. Perhaps it is felt that if the staffroom is good enough for the administration to use then it must be an okay place. On the other hand, perhaps it is felt that if the administration only uses their own eating area that the staffroom is not good enough to use themselves – although good enough for the rest of the staff – or that the staff itself is not worth having lunch with. In defense of administrators, though, some respondents wrote that it is not appropriate for administrators to eat lunch in the staffroom where union matters may be discussed.



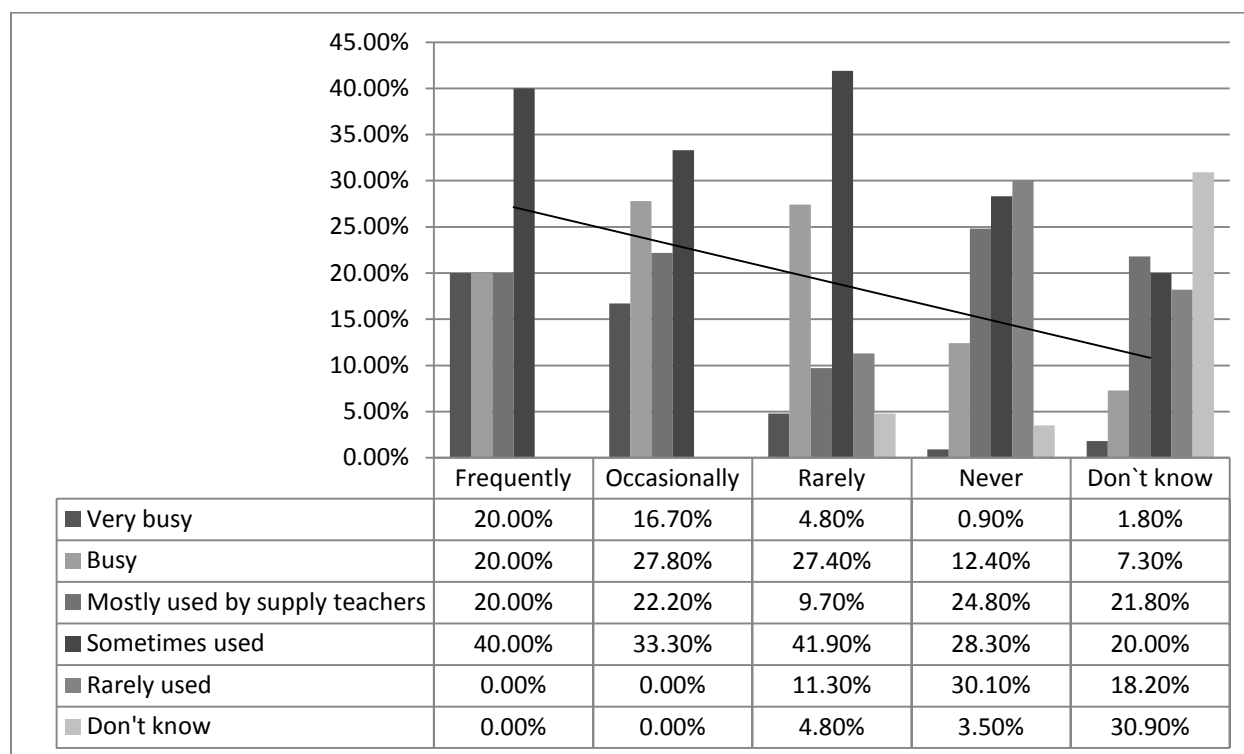
**Figure 4.39.** Staffroom Use by Administrators Compared to Perception of Busyness

Figure 4.39 indicates that teachers who feel that their administration eats lunch in the staffroom find the busyness of the staffroom to be more than schools where the administration does not use the staffroom. According to Pearson's Chi-squared test for independence, these results are highly significant ( $\chi^2 = 82.4059$ ,  $df = 20$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Trend line is on the “busy” response. The perception appears to be that staffrooms must be busy and worthwhile places to be if administrators take time from their busy day to visit.

## Chapter 5 Secondary school staffrooms as perceived spaces

This chapter is the first of three chapters that attempt to situate the causes and effects of the decline of secondary staffroom use within the three arms of Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad for the purposes of deeper analysis and discussion of implications beyond the presentation of results. Included in these chapters are pertinent comments made by survey and interview participants. However, the divisions between perceived, conceived, and lived spaces are necessarily somewhat fluid. Just as these spaces intersect, Lefebvre's triad, although appropriate to this study, resists any overly rigid attempts at categorization into its three parts: "This distinction must be handled with considerable caution. For one thing, there is a danger of introducing divisions and defeating the object of this exercise, which is to discover the unity of the productive process" (1995, p. 42). Thus, *perceived*, *conceived*, and *lived* overlap with the corresponding notions of spatial practice, representations of space, and representational spaces, and the categories of mental, physical, and social spaces. In doing so, Lefebvre's triad creates a plexus of interactions and reproductions. The following three chapters are therefore written with the recognition that Lefebvre's theory of social space is not solidly bounded and that permeability between the parts of the triad is not only likely, but inevitable and central to a broader understanding of this approach.

This chapter begins by offering some additional material regarding the definition of perceived spaces by building on my earlier review chapter, applying this definition to secondary school staffrooms, and discussing why departmental workrooms are not an adequate substitute for staffrooms. It continues the previous discussion of learning and professional development by applying the concept of communities of practice in relation to workroom and staffroom spaces, as well as their effects on collegiality. It then considers how the spaces that a secondary school

teacher may traverse, including subject department workrooms, can perpetuate the production and reproduction of teacher's work, perceptions, and thinking, often to the benefit of school boards and administrators through increased unpaid labour. This reproduction of expectations of teachers' labour also creates an environment that discourages time to relax or even take the number of minutes allowed for lunch to eat. The chapter concludes by returning to the specific space of staffrooms connecting ambiance and amenities such as accessibility to food with staffrooms as a social space.

## 5.1 Defining perceived spaces

Lefebvre writes that *perceived* spaces are defined by the relationships that are created within them:

...the relationship of local to the global; the representation of that relationship; actions and signs; the trivialized spaces of everyday life; and in opposition to these last, spaces made special by symbolic means as desirable or undesirable, benevolent or malevolent, sanctioned or forbidden to particular groups. We are not concerned here with mental or literary 'places', nor with philosophical *topoi*, but with places of a purely political and social kind. (1991, p. 288)

Perceived space constitutes the relations and interactions that occur within social space including the production and reproduction of labour and other forms of social interaction. "In concrete terms, one could think of networks of interaction and communication as they arise in everyday life (e.g. daily connections of residence and workplace) or in production process (production and exchange relations)" (Schmid, 2008, p. 36). Perceived space also includes the close relations between work and leisure (Prigge, 2008; Ronnenberger, 2008). "The places of social space are very different from those of natural space in that they are not simply juxtaposed:

they may be intercalated, combined, superimposed – they may even collide” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 88). From a distance the sea initially appears to meet the land and the mountain meet the desert, but these spaces begin to merge upon approach. Like natural spaces, social spaces are not so easily delineated when one looks closely. “Can the space of leisure (when it is indeed legitimate to speak of such a space), be envisaged as a void occupied by an entity called work?” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 191) Thus, perceived spaces apply to those spaces of labour that intersect with leisure, such as additional work overlapping with lunch breaks or time at home.

For most secondary school teachers, the subject department workroom is “the subset that dominates the social world of the school, as they know it” (Siskin, 1999, p. 30). Secondary staffrooms are the ambiguous spaces where labour intersects with leisure. They can be spaces of leisure, where teachers potentially eat their lunch and use some of their preparation time, but they are located within the worksite and can sometimes be spaces of labour in the form of such work as computer use, marking, or informal learning. Although 43.4% of survey respondents indicated that their primary reason for using the staffroom was lunch, work-related reasons for staffroom use figured prominently. Most work-related reasons that respondents gave for using the staffroom included photocopying, checking mailboxes, or using the Scantron machine. One respondent described the staffroom as “*a place to mark without being interrupted.*” Non-work activities that were mentioned were often perfunctory necessities, like using the bathroom, hardly a “leisure” activity. Even conversations were work-related: “*to find somebody who I know uses the staffroom in order to speak to them – likely about work-related issues.*” In the optional comment section, lunch or social conversations were mentioned much less frequently than work related reasons to visit the staffroom.

Staffrooms and workrooms appear to be designed as separate physical adjunctions within a larger physical structure, since staffrooms are separate, contained spaces away from workrooms, away from classrooms, and away from administrative offices. Superficially, one space does not appear to influence another. Yet the mental vision of a space overlaps with the physical.

Social space embodies distinct and distinctive “traits” which attach to the “pure” mental form of space, without, however, achieving a separate existence as its superadded content. Their analysis tells us what it is that confers a concrete (practical) existence upon space instead of leaving it confined within (mental) abstraction. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 292)

Staffrooms and departmental workrooms are also social spaces, and like all spaces, are never empty or completely self-contained, but rather full of habit, meaning, and reproduction of those habits and meanings. As perceived space indicates, social spaces permeate physical spaces.

Although many studies have considered the relationships between teachers and students, or even teachers and administrators, very little research has been done which considers the relationships between teachers, the sub-communities that are formed both intentionally and unintentionally between members of a school community, in the context of spatial analysis in particular. Considering staffrooms as perceived spaces is an exploration of such relationships.

## **5.2 Workrooms and why they do not always work**

In a secondary school, subject department workrooms are shared teacher offices, usually organized by subject department. The vast majority of respondents say that they spend their lunch and preparation periods in the departmental workrooms rather than the staffroom. These rooms are often conveniently located in relation to the subject classrooms. Teachers who teach in more than one department may find, though, that the workroom is not conveniently located to all

classes. For example, one music/math teacher had his workroom on the main floor by the music room, but his math classes on the second floor and out in portables.

Workrooms usually provide desk space for members of a single subject department. They often contain a cubby or small desk area for each teacher, with minimal shelf space above the cubby to store resource material. Teachers tend to use this space for marking, lesson preparation, and consultation with other department members regarding curriculum design and implementation. Frequently, there is a sink and microwave. There is occasionally, but not always, a table for eating or conferencing. As previously observed in the survey results, lunch is often eaten there, in spite of the fact that there is often not a dedicated lunch table. By contrast, a staffroom is a room, usually located by the main office, designed for use by all members of a staff for the purpose of break or eating lunch. This can be the location of events like staff breakfasts and baby showers, but in some schools the staffroom is too small to hold the entire staff, so these events have moved to other locations, such as the library. Samantha describes the difference between the functions of a staffroom and a workroom:

*A staffroom is supposed to be somewhere where you can go and relax, and vent if you need to vent and laugh. People can eat lunch. I always thought it was supposed to be somewhere that you could come and relax. I thought a workroom you went and that's where you did your work, your marking, and that's where you talked about courses and focussed on your work. And sometimes you'd eat at your desk, sometimes not. It depends on if you're somebody who's okay taking stuff home or staying later to work, however you arrange your day, but I guess I just didn't think a staffroom was supposed to be intensely for work. (Samantha, English, 25 years experience)*

Arguably, the most significant problem with departmental workrooms is that they keep one department isolated from another (Hargreaves & MacMillan, 1995; Johnson, 1990; McGregor, 2003; Siskin, 1991; Siskin & Little, 1995).

*I think part of it is the departments are widespread so we have a couple of different wings and the departments are all over the place – upstairs, downstairs and we do PD if we're just doing a late start or something then everyone is in their own departments...So many of our experiences are departmentalized that is where you make your friendships and you don't really need to leave your offices. (Angela, English, 5 years experience)*

Hargreaves and Macmillan (1995) describe this isolation as *balkanization*, a term with much stronger social and professional practice implications than mere separation.

What is at issue are not the general advantages and disadvantages of teachers working and associating together with smaller groups of their colleagues in school improvement teams or curriculum planning groups, for instance, but the particular patterns these subgroup associations take, along with their effects. (Hargreaves & Macmillan, 1995, p. 142)

They note four specific characteristics of balkanized subgroups: (1) *low permeability* – that professional practice is rarely shared from one departmental subgroup to another (2) *high permanence* – that the policies and practices of a subgroup become entrenched over time (3) *personal identification* – that there is a tendency for one subgroup to ignore the needs of others and (4) *political complexion* – that there is an imbalance of status within the subgroup.

#### 1. Low permeability

The first characteristic of balkanized subgroups is *low permeability*, when professional learning, “what teachers come to know, think, and believe” (Hargreaves and Macmillan, 1991, p.

142) occurs mainly in the subgroup of the department. Secondary schools are often very large, and a departmental workroom allows for a connection to a smaller group of colleagues than is practical in a large staff. One would think that, since most teachers spend their lunch and preparation breaks in the departmental workroom, these would be ideal spaces for collegiality and professional development. They can be great sources of subject information, especially for new teachers:

Teachers reported that, at their best, departments provided socialization and training for new members; ongoing personal encouragement and recognition, support for the maintenance of standards, the opportunity to be creative and influential; and the chance to improve their practice through joint planning, peer observation, co-teaching, and staff development. (Johnson, 1990, p. 173)

But, according to Johnson (1990), the reality is that few department members reported that their department offered “support or organized inculcation of norms and values” (p. 173). The problem is that learning which occurs only within a subgroup prevents the kind of learning, especially informal learning, that might occur in the broader representation of staff members to be found in an active staffroom.

A secondary school’s staffroom as a perceived space provides opportunities for the overlap of leisure and what David Livingstone (2008) identifies as informal learning. Livingstone defines informal education or training as occurring “when mentors take responsibility for instructing others without sustained reference to a pre-established curriculum in more incidental or spontaneous situations” (p. 15). For a teacher, this informal training often involves impromptu conversations in department workrooms, photocopier rooms, or staffrooms. Yet the importance of teacher-to-teacher talk has been underestimated, if not altogether ignored,



at times (Acker, 1999), and is therefore not facilitated, in spite of the fact that teachers frequently view other teachers as their primary source of learning. There is often a feeling of trust that the other teacher not only knows what another teacher is experiencing, but has survived it. Questions as simple as when the due date is for mark entry or what time duty starts at the school carnival will be asked of other teachers, not administrators, because a teacher does not want to disturb administrators with daily trivia, nor does a teacher want to let them know that these answers were not known in the first place. Issues surrounding students will often be discussed with other teachers rather than guidance counsellors because there is knowledge that another teacher has observed and interacted with the same student in a similar situation for a similar length of time. Moreover, it is often very useful for the English teacher to talk with the math teacher about a shared student to find out that the student excels at math, but not English, and then adopt another teacher's strategies to increase success. The staffroom can be an excellent place for this kind of cross-curricular encounter, since it is rare that teachers in the same subject department are going to be teaching the same student. A grade nine math student is unlikely to be taking another math course that semester, so there will be no one else in the department with whom to confer.

Laura, a retired librarian, explains the importance of staffroom conversations for informal learning:

*In terms of teacher issues whether that's union related or other you're isolated if you don't have a staffroom because that's your vehicle for the exchange of ideas... That's when you discover that the art department is doing a trip to New York City and wouldn't that be great to dovetail with the geography department and do collectively. There's all sorts of cross-curricular learning that goes on in a staffroom... I think that if you take away staffrooms you get a divided staff. You don't have the linkages, you don't have the*

*cross-curricular linkages. Nobody knows what any other department is doing. The pedagogy use in one department doesn't transfer to another department so pedagogically departments are isolated without staffroom interaction. Socially they're isolated.*

The counter argument may appear to be that mandated professional learning in the form of team meetings, staff meetings, and professional development sessions provide a needed opportunity for cross curricular sharing. The trouble is that teachers can attend mandatory in-service training and still choose to resist and continue with their past practice.

When preparation time was used in the context of mandated or *contrived collegiality* [emphasis in original] and collaborative planning, this created a proliferation of meetings and additional work that intensified teachers' work still further, and subjected them to additional administrative control instead of releasing them to develop these things themselves. (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 137)

There has been known for some time according to Harris (2001) "a growing recognition that 'top-down' approaches to school development and change have limited impact in raising pupil performance and achievement" (p. 478). Not all teacher learning - and I would argue, not even the majority of it - occurs during organized professional development sessions.

*Every time that we're together it's typically a forced gathering, you know a PD activity, a staff meeting, and with that sometimes comes negative vibes, and I think that they recognize that to have good social relations within the school can make everything go easier. Where, you know someone in a casual way, like in a personal way, you are far more likely to hear their side of an idea than if they're just that random person from department X. (Roger, board consultant - instructional technology resource teacher, 11 years experience)*

Angela recently transferred from a school with an active staffroom to one that is rarely used. During our interview, she expressed a sense of loss at the lack of informal conversations that used to occur in her previous staffroom. She was asked the primary function of a staffroom, and her response emphasized the importance of informal learning.

*I think to get together and share some ideas. I think we're missing that in general in teaching and I think that's missing in our school because if you have some of that cross-curricular stuff, you're finding out what other people are doing in other classes, especially for me teaching Spec Ed, it's really good to know what's happening in the other classes because I can help my students through whatever they need to get done*  
(Angela, special education teacher, five years experience)

Mike describes the staffroom as a place to learn about the daily occurrences of a school, in addition to learning more about individual students. He felt this was especially important in his position, as the gymnasiums were located on the far edge of the school away from the front office and other classrooms.

*You talk about how to work with different kids. You talk about what's coming up, what's going on in the school. I mean the only way to find those things out now is through email or through word of mouth. It's almost like if something happens bad in the school and you didn't see it, it didn't happen. I mean we're at the back of the school, there's some fight at the start of the school no one tells us, we don't know. There's no kind of internal method of discussion, whereas when you're in the staffroom people actually talked to each other.* (Mike, phys ed, 25 years experience)

Roger explains the importance of a staffroom as an informal learning environment for a new teacher who is barely keeping a head above water, yet there may be a colleague in the staffroom who could throw a lifeline:

*...or could give you the greatest five minute talk on what makes sense in the world of assessment and evaluation and open your eyes to seeing it a different way and suddenly have a mentor that's not from your department. The idea of having a mentor who is a different discipline is not the norm because those folks typically don't interface when it comes to the topics and you might not see the obvious connections where I think about some of the best conversations I have had with colleagues about certain students and behaviour and inevitably it's not people from my discipline because when those teachers from other disciplines have interfaces with that student it has been under very different circumstance and its maybe a very different outcome because they're successful in that area or they're not successful in that area and you can gain a lot more light about the students when you see them through the eyes of another lens. (Roger, board consultant - instructional technology resource teacher, 11 years experience)*

Staffrooms do not provide the only place for learning for teachers, but they can provide the ideal venue to facilitate the type of teacher-to-teacher exchange of knowledge that is will be actively sought, respected, remembered, and applied to daily practice. Unlike a staff meeting, where the directive is often predetermined and imposed by the administration (Ingersoll, 2003), or a workroom, where contact with other teachers is limited by proximity and subject, staffrooms have the potential to be fertile discussion grounds that allow an equal voice to all teachers concerned about improving the domain of knowledge at their school by making their school and their working conditions more effective.

## 2. High permanence

The second characteristic of balkanized subgroups is high permanence. Balkanization consists of subgroups “whose existence and membership are clearly delineated in *space* [emphasis in original] with clear boundaries between them” (Hargreaves & Macmillan, 1995, p. 142). Departmental workrooms can provide a group of like-minded individuals, contained within the same space, with whom to discuss specific subject issues. “Within the department, they can invoke the names of leaders in their field or tell jokes inaccessible to the wider public and be sure of being understood” (Siskin, 1991, p. 155). Another English teacher is going to get an English joke. The student population of most of the secondary schools in the investigated school board is usually at least 1500, greater than the entire population of many small towns in Ontario, making the need to find smaller groups with which to connect critical for teachers, as connecting with the entire staff becomes increasingly more difficult. According to Siskin (1995), staffrooms are the negotiated middle ground between “fragmented individualism” and “bonded community” (p. 28), or, put another way, the middle ground between the necessity of acting as an individual in a classroom and at the same time being part of a cohesive schoolwide community.

They acknowledge the logistical constraints of size, time, and space that make it impossible to establish a schoolwide “bonded community”, but also assert the value of social support and collaboration that makes it impossible to settle for “fragmented individualism.” (Siskin, 1995, p. 29)

Talbert and McLaughlin (2002) found that there were many benefits to teacher collaboration. “Teachers who collaborate on instruction are more likely to hold high expectations for students and for their colleagues, to innovate in their classrooms, and to have strong commitments to the teaching profession” (p. 327). Talbert and McLaughlin (2002) also found that how teachers

measured their work experience depended significantly on how they perceived the strength and character of their professional community.

Departmental workrooms are designed to foster professional communities for those who teach the same subject. A true sense of educational community, in terms of its contribution to things like a positive, developmental, and collegial professional practice, is more elusive and I would venture organic. It cannot be forced by proximity or even a sharing the same departmental practices. The unspoken objective is that department workrooms will encourage collaboration and collegiality, but both collegiality and collaboration are problematic terms. The terms “collaboration” and “collegially” are bandied about so often in education that it is widely presumed that their meaning is understood. “Teacher empowerment, critical reflection or commitment to continuous improvement are claims that are commonly made for collaboration and collegiality in general, but in practice they apply only to particular versions of it” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 188). Often, these terms are defined by the Ministry of Education, Boards of Education, and administrators, and not by the teachers themselves. As McGregor (2000) notes, these terms are often conflated to simply meaning “working together.” In spite of the many academic and labour definitions of collegiality with their many corresponding agendas, I suspect, from the comments and interviews, that for teachers the term “collegiality” simply means friendliness, getting along, knowing each other’s names, or a sense of being on the same side.

Although staffroom use has declined, many survey respondents still connected staffroom use with the development of what they perceived to be collegiality. Many respondents felt that the staffroom was the place to develop this.

*Builds contact and morale, cohesive collegiality*

- *It's knowing that it's there – a place to “run into” people who aren't in your department.*
- *Fosters a sense of community in my opinion*
- *I think if the staff used it regularly it would improve collegiality*
- *Very important aspect of the job – creates collegiality and feeling of community*

Leslie Siskin, investigated the departmental workrooms of two different secondary schools. The teachers Siskin (1991) described at Stanton, “have little time for collegial interaction; they ‘almost never’ talk with the majority of their school colleagues and do not know many by name” (p. 155). Teachers who responded to my survey or were interviewed expressed the same concern. An important consequence of the tendency to remain in a department workroom is a lack of knowledge of who is on staff. It is not unusual for secondary staff members to not know each other and thus not know if an adult they meet in the hall is another teacher, a supply teacher, a visitor, or an intruder. As one survey respondent wrote, “*Staffing has changed so quickly over recent years and there is so little time to get to know anyone. Frankly it is embarrassing working on a staff and not knowing names, what they teach or if they are LTOs [long term occasional teachers].*” As Lisa, a science teacher with eight years of experience observes, increased lack of recognition can also cause decreased basic courtesy. “*There's people that don't even acknowledge that you're standing there and don't even bother speaking to you.*” Collegiality, for teachers, means more than “just getting along,” it means knowing each other in the first place.

### 3. Personal identification

Another characteristic of a balkanized subgroup is what Hargreaves and Macmillan term *personal identification*. “Socialization into subjects or other subgroups constructs teachers’ identities in particular ways” (Hargreaves and Macmillan, 1995, p. 143). Departmental belonging

helps to construct a teacher's identity over both space and time. Long standing members of an English department, for example, will often determine everything from curriculum and practice to lunch and work habits. Newer members adopt these practices. The trouble is that adopting the professional practice of a subgroup prevents the adoption of professional practice from a larger group. Professional practices also may differ or conflict between departments. Communication between staff and consistency of expectations among them are the casualties. In this respect, singular identification with particular subgroups undermines the capacity for empathy and collaboration with others (Hargreaves & Macmillan, 1995, p. 143). Teachers from one department have very little chance to interact with teachers from other departments, except at staff meetings and professional development sessions. These encounters are often too controlled and agenda-driven to allow much opportunity for genuine conversations, as seats are usually arranged in rows or by departmental tables.

Two significant consequences occur as a result of teachers being bounded in the departments. The first is that best practice is not shared with other members of the school. "The innovations and changes taking place in specific subject departments were often invisible in the school more generally because these departments and their members were so strongly insulated from one another" (Hargreaves & MacMillan, 1995, p. 153). Secondly, resources and funding for items such as textbooks are not seen within the needs of the whole school but rather as items which must be fought over. "Critics charge that departments too often form bastions of conservatism, enclaves of professional self interest often at odds with (or indifferent to) the interests of students, parents, and communities" (Siskin & Little, 1995, p. 2). In this self-centered survival mode, there is little understanding or respect for schoolwide need (Johnson, 1990). There is little regard for the needs of other departments.



#### 4. Political Complexion

The fourth characteristic of balkanized groups is *political complexion*. This is the inherent inequality among members of what superficially appears to be a homogeneous group. The myriad of relationships to be found in perceived space can be very complicated. Staffrooms can be subdivided by age, sex, experience, and the level taught. For example, analyses of science department communities found that “biology, chemistry, and physics specialties can define distinct identities and collegial units within science departments” (Talbert, 1995, p. 85).

Teachers of older pupils tend to receive more status and rewards than teachers of younger ones; teachers of some subjects tend to receive more than teachers of others. In balkanized cultures there are winners and there are losers. There is grievance and there is greed. (Hargreaves & Macmillan, 1995, p. 144)

There is an expectation of collegiality in departmental workroom arrangements - in other words, an expectation that there will be a willing sharing of professional discourse and practice, but proximity does not necessarily guarantee trust or friendship.

Perceived spaces are the spaces in which relationships occur, but that does not mean that those relationships are always cordial. “Logical relationships are relations of inclusion and exclusion, conjunction and disjunction, implication and explication, iteration and reiteration, recurrence and repetition, and so forth” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 293). Subject department workrooms, unlike staffrooms, can become closed like gated communities. Supply teachers express a reluctance to enter these spaces except to pick up or drop off lesson plans. Because personal work areas are so small, there is a strong feeling of inappropriately invading personal space if one sits at someone else’s cubby, as Mary, an occasional teacher, explains:

*It very much feels like intruding on other people's territory. It really does. Part of it is because most people who are in the space are very busy and trying to get their stuff done, so if you walk in as a stranger, as a new face, you don't usually get a big welcome. You get closer to a "What do you want?" and usually it's just tell me where this guy's desk is I'm trying to find a piece of paper, or the markers, or whatever it is. But part of it is that people seem very territorial of what little space they get in the workrooms and so it feels like "Don't touch that book, it's on my desk," even if it's common supplies, this school another school, it doesn't matter. "It's my stuff." I feel like I'm intruding because that's the message you almost get. (Mary, occasional teacher, two years experience)*

Even full-time teachers or colleagues in the school can feel like intruders when they enter another subject's department workroom. Workrooms are also exactly what their names imply - rooms where work is done. It may not be directly teaching, as it is in a classroom, but it is nonetheless work. Most of the teachers interviewed for this research considered it bad form to interrupt someone who is marking or preparing a lesson. As Mark describes:

*If you walk into departments, you're bothering them because they're all working away on their laptops and doing their own thing and they're not conversing, they're just ignoring each other. It's like little kids' parallel play. They're all doing their own thing. No one's really together, they're just in the same room. (Mark, phys ed, 25 years experience)*

The same opportunity to facilitate collaboration can also provide an opportunity for criticism. Rani, a technology teacher with 22 years experience, explains that it can be intimidating to complain to one's departmental colleagues because there can be a perception that venting, or even asking for advice about lessons or classroom management, will result in criticism of the teacher's lesson, class management, or even competency:

*If you have difficulties you can't discuss it with your colleagues and if you do discuss it with your colleagues, it becomes a different issue, "Oh, your classroom management must be terrible or oh, maybe your planning is not good, or you didn't prepare your lesson plan." Criticism happens in the workplace so you don't want to do further discussion, you just close your feelings and you just work and do your mark stuff and what is supposed to be done. That's how I feel. That's why I don't use the workroom that much is because sometimes I like to discuss what other teachers are doing and when I come up here I think for some reason they open up – in the staffroom because they come from all different departments, right? They are not coming from the same department. We are all sharing, each person, and sometimes we share the students as well. My students are taking Tech courses but they are also taking English or Geography or Career Plan and the students are going to all different areas to learn and we discuss.*

(Rani, technology, 22 years experience)

Sometimes a teacher's best confidante and mentor may be found outside of the department, but being ensconced in one's department limits the opportunity to discover this. Certainly a staffroom can provide an opportunity for teachers to meet with others on staff who do not have a vested interest in that teacher's department.

One would expect that there would be a like-mindedness brought about by shared subject knowledge and practice that would lead to the development of a close collegial community.

Teachers reported that, at their best, departments provided socialization and training for new members; ongoing personal encouragement and recognition, support for the maintenance of standards, the opportunity to be creative and influential; and the chance to improve their practice through joint planning, peer observation, co-teaching, and staff

development. (Johnson, 1990, p.173)

As Siskin (1995) points out, “a house is not necessarily a home” (p. 35), nor is a departmental workroom. Sometimes the staffroom provides a place to go when the department becomes, as one respondent wrote, *“too busy, loud, crowded, or politically charged.”* Conversations can be lively or limited in a workroom, but what they cannot be is private. One cannot ignore the conversations that are occurring.

Respondents indicated a strong need for an alternative space to subject department workrooms. In fact, more teachers on the survey indicated the need to get away from colleagues than from students. This implies that workrooms are not always the best place for teachers to relax. Some teachers, at some time, feel the need to get away. *“A place to get away if you do not want to eat in your department office”* and, *“I think it’s important for teachers to have a place to go other than the department workrooms.”* A number of teachers identified that they came from a school without a staffroom and regretted its loss:

- *We do not have the use of a staffroom but would like one*
- *We do not have at staffroom at our school. I would use it if we had one.*

Staffrooms can also provide a much needed respite from a teacher’s work day, which can be fraught with emotionally charged moments. They allow teachers to recharge so as to be able to present each class and each student with the highest level of energy, enthusiasm, and commitment. The workroom often cannot afford this opportunity.

Secondary school teachers teach alone in their classrooms. Unlike most other professions, teachers “work in almost total isolation from other adults. In the motel-like structure of most schools, teachers get to see their colleagues only between classes at lunchtime, periods when they are often engaged in supervisory tasks” (deMarrais and LeCompte, 1995, p. 147). But

teachers are social beings not lighthouse keepers, and need to connect - in other words, to work, think, learn, and recharge, with other co-workers during the day to be their best in the classroom. This is one of the main reasons that teachers stay in their subject department workrooms, because the co-workers they know are there and there are other adults with whom to speak. As one survey respondent noted, *“I have 19 people in my department office so why go to a staffroom where no one is when I can talk with colleagues in my department office.”* But when teachers do not make connections outside of their subject departments, they lose not only an opportunity to learn, develop expertise, and better serve the students, but also the chance to develop the type of collegial relationships that have the potential to emotionally sustain them throughout their career.

Isolation can and does increase the stress and likelihood of burnout (deMarrais and LeCompte, 1995), resulting in ongoing health issues and potential departure from the profession. Increased stress of teachers and its effects upon health, job retention, and job performance has also been well researched (Abel & Sewell, 1999; Evers, 1999; Hargreaves, 1989; Holland, Gordon, & Lahelma, 2007; King & Peart, 1992; Lordan, 2008; Woods, 1984). A lack of places for a teacher to take a break in a day not only potentially increases stress, it also brings with it all of the associated health issues. Mike has observed the negative change that increased isolation has brought:

*There’s no camaraderie at all. There’s a lot of people I’ve never talked to. The first, probably the first ten or fifteen years here, you knew everybody on staff. Now, not at all. I go out of my way to kind of know people, but a lot of people don’t. And there’s no opportunities to do that. (Mike, phys ed, 25 years experience)*

Isolation potentially disconnects a staff and impedes the possibility for collaboration, cross-curricular building, and the opportunity to consult with other teachers of the same student.

Natasha describes the advantages to a new teacher of being in an active staffroom:

*So being a teacher that was in the position of being hired at one school at the beginning of the year and then later being excessed [removed from the school and transferred elsewhere because of a decreased need for teachers at a particular school], I found that in the first school which was a smaller staff with common lunch where everybody was in the staffroom, I found that I was able to make connections with the staff and fit in, I guess would be the best way of saying it, with the school. Because within two days, three days tops I had met almost everybody on staff or everybody was at least aware of me and knew that I was the new member on staff and what my responsibilities were, what I was teaching, how they might encounter me, deal with me. And I had propositions for extracurricular things within two or three days saying this is what I've done, nice to meet you, this is what I've done in the past, how do you feel about that. (Natasha, music and history, first year teaching)*

Natasha describes the connections that can be made in a staffroom. By meeting someone from another department, a teacher can also be introduced to and connect with that person's collegial contacts, further decreasing the feeling that one is working alone and increasing the opportunities for pedagogical success, student enrichment, and personal reinforcement. An active staffroom is one way to combat the isolation that can potentially harm a teacher's morale, psyche, and career, by allowing a teacher to easily connect with others.

Unlike a staff meeting, where the directive is often predetermined and imposed by the administration (Ingersoll, 2003), or a workroom, where contact with other teachers is limited by proximity and subject, staffrooms have the potential to be fertile discussion grounds that allow

an equal voice to all teachers concerned about improving the domain of knowledge at their school by making their school and their working conditions more effective.

### 5.3 Food and community

An examination of secondary school staffrooms as perceived spaces includes the close relations between work and leisure (Prigge, 2008; Ronnenberger, 2008). Although staffrooms can be the site of meetings and “lunch and learns,” their primary design purpose was as a place for staff to eat their lunch. The staffroom is a place for teachers to go during their leisure time on the job; in the case of the school board used for this study, this means a contractually negotiated 40-minute lunch period. It is no surprise, then, that food can be a significant factor in the level of staffroom use. Staffrooms are used more when food is present. Events such as BBQs, potlucks, and “payday” breakfasts bring people to the staffroom. (Payday breakfasts are breakfasts supplied at the expense of the members of a subject department for the whole school.) Sometimes a “payday” or “department-sponsored breakfast” is the only time that a teacher will visit the staffroom, and sometimes even that feels like an obligation, as one survey respondent commented. These, I argue, are the results and outcomes of perceived spatial practices as they occur over time.

Most survey respondents and interview participants indicated that they ate their lunch in their subject department workrooms. *“No one seems to use the staffroom at my school. Everyone eats their lunch in their department office. It is very segregated that way.”* Some respondents noted that lunch hour is the time that can be available to students for extra help so they prefer to be where they can be easily accessed.

- *I like eating in the Dept. Office near the classroom where I give extra help.*
- *As a guidance counsellor, I make myself available to students during my lunch as well as*

*before and after school.*

Other answers in the optional comment section from the survey of lunch locations included variations of “*at my desk*”, “*in an empty classroom*”, “*outside of the school on a bench*”, and even “*in my car.*”

Many described lunchtime as a work time, so eating became an activity combined with other work-related activities. “*Sometimes, if there is time, I eat while marking.*” This is a common lunchtime dilemma for many teachers. Linda describes how the minutes allotted for lunch are impacted by the time necessary to answer questions and shut down the classroom before a teacher can leave for a break:

*In the various schools that I have taught in, different amounts of time have been timetabled as lunch and I think that’s a huge role. It plays a huge factor in the usage of the room because if you don’t have enough time, often your students don’t promptly leave the room when the bell rings and sometimes it’s their lunch as well and they want to talk or connect after or they want to ask you a question about something and you don’t want to push them out the door and so you stay to talk. Well, if you have 40 minutes to have lunch and your student stays for 15 or 20 minutes, you use the facilities, you grab a bite to eat, you’re probably not going to go to the staffroom. (Linda, art, nine years experience)*

Easy accessibility to the cafeteria and the quality of the food available there makes a difference to usage as well. Some teachers teach in schools with access to food prepared by students from a hospitality program. As Rob said, “*The food was great. You would actually be okay not bringing lunch and buying food.*” Rob describes quality food as “*an underrated draw.*” East Central Secondary used to have, not only access to the cafeteria through a designated



window in the staffroom, but also, at one time, a separate staff menu. *“It was different food than what the kids were eating. It was nice.”* (Mark). Staff could receive their food through the window in the staffroom and then use the tables to eat. It was convenient. As administrations, budgets, and cafeteria providers changed, the separate menu was eliminated, and eventually, the separate access was closed. Teachers are currently required to line up with the students to enter the servery. This takes up precious minutes of a teacher’s designated lunch period as Linda explains:

*Having access to that food is really big because of you have to go to the server, line up with the students, get your food, pay for it, make your way back to the staffroom or the designated area, that also eats into your time.*

A change in the space brought about a change in practice. The inclination now is therefore to proceed back to the workroom to eat, rather than travelling out of one’s way to enter the staffroom.

One way that staff members were lured into a staffroom was through the organization of a “soup club.” The two teachers I spoke with who initiated such a program in their schools first heard of the idea through an elementary colleague. A soup club is an organized group of staff members who rotate through a roster, bringing in soup and bread on a designated day. Linda, who organized the soup club at East Central, explained the concept:

*We are on teams of 3-4. We take turns creating soup and bread for our group. So in teams of three we take turns offering different options, vegetarian and meat options of soup, and it’s been really great. The feedback has been really positive. It has been wonderful that it has been an open group. We have members from the office staff,*

*administration, teaching assistants from our special needs satellite school, and teaching staff as well.*

Roger, a teacher at another school, explains how the soup club went from a departmental event to one that included the whole staff:

*We created a project or a tradition in my department a few years back and I'm proud to say it was my idea and other people ran with that. I am just the ideas guy. I showed up one day with a Crockpot and a pot of soup and bread and said, " Help yourself to a bowl of soup," so everybody ladled out a bowl of soup and it was there for the three different periods that people eat lunch on. It was up and going for people to enjoy it and I said, "I think this would be great if we did this every Wednesday. It's the middle of the week, it will help us get over the hump of the week and on the road to the weekend." People went with it and I think that that first year we had maybe eight people that were members and that number has swollen to the point where they have to refill the Crockpot midway through the third period because there's so many and we have a big food grade plastic bucket that you take home and there's a line on it that says "fill to here" and that's your contribution. So if you have to do it once every dozen or so weeks, it doesn't seem like a big hardship and every Wednesday you show up and there's a bowl of soup and potentially a print out of the recipe and some fresh bread and it really created a great sort of tradition. That same school has been trying to revive their staffroom so the social committee is really putting a push on to do this. And that was one of the strategies they have used. They started a soup club that works out of the staffroom. And it would be more ideal than having it out of a science office space and it draws people down. (Roger, board consultant - instructional technology resource teacher, 11 years experience)*

Although the soup club increased the use of East Central's staffroom on the club days, not everyone chose to stay. Many, like John, admit to taking their soup and eating it back in the workroom. *"I must admit again that I don't usually eat the soup or the salad in the staffroom. That's a bit of a shame."* As several survey respondents pointed out, the workrooms contain mini fridges, microwaves, kettles, and sinks. This seemed to be the main reason why some respondents felt that staffrooms were no longer necessary. *"Doing away with it is just fine. Any of the amenities that are above are already in my office."* As the physical amenities of the subject department space began to match those of the staffroom space, one began to replace the other. Sadly, what did not always transfer, as previously explained, was the social aspect of staffroom spaces.

The two times that the staffroom at East Central has been active and filled with teachers this year both involved food. A Christmas dinner was provided to the staff over the various lunch hours. The room was decorated and filled with happy teachers conversing with people they didn't normally see in their day even though they shared the same lunch time. The second time was a recent teacher-appreciation breakfast to celebrate Education Week, where again the staffroom was full. Usage during the day substantially increased as staff member came into the room to see if there were still muffins and bagels left. All it took was a small amount of food to bring colleagues together and create a welcoming social atmosphere that regained, even if just temporarily, spatial practices that seemed lost.

#### **5.4 The production and reproduction of teachers' labour**

In one of the scenes from the 1936 movie *Modern Times*, Charlie Chaplin is employed on an assembly line, where his movements are precisely measured. His space is limited, his movements watched, and his break and lunch time examined to see if they can be made shorter

and more efficient. Chaplin is even hooked up to a feeding machine to see if he can eat and work at the same time. Teachers who work through their lunch, like Chaplin, provide additional labour benefits for their employers. Education, like many public sectors, has experienced persistent work intensification. Most work studies, however, are only concerned with how more work can be produced in less space, and how employers can reduce costs, while increasing production. Certainly, few studies have been approached from the employee's perspective. Exceptions to this can be found in studies concerned with injury prevention, such as the one on the effect of rest breaks on the productivity and well-being of workers by Dababneth, Swanson, and Shell (2001). Even then, if one were to take a sceptical view, the objective is to have the employee at work and working and to avoid paying expensive injury compensation, rather than to actually improve working conditions. Improvements to working conditions are seldom altruistic; they are about profit and the bottom line.

Students enter kindergarten with the whimsical notion that teachers sleep at the school and never go to the bathroom. As children grow into adults, I suspect that part of this imagery persists. The nostalgic practice of the teacher of early pioneer days being paid in chickens and firewood seems quaint, and on some level remains somehow logical. Teachers' work is too often exclusively associated with the students they teach. Therefore, as this logic extends, teachers should do their job primarily for the love of their craft and students, so long hours and low wages are to be expected and possibly even warranted. After all, everyone has been to school, and that experience makes many people feel uniquely qualified to define the parameters of a teacher's job, explicitly through their voting decisions and implicitly through conversations, support of varying degrees, and often complaints to teachers, administrators, governments, and the media.

There is much ambiguity about a teacher's position as a worker. From one perspective, teachers are individuals encapsulated in their individual classrooms with full control over their own curriculum, how they choose to learn it, and how they choose to teach it. On the other hand, teachers are part of the collective consciousness of a school. Researchers have long been aware of the ambiguity of a teacher's position in the world of professionals, and little appears to have changed since these early researchers investigated teaching as work. As far back as 1975, Dan Lortie noted the discrepancy between the qualifications demanded of teachers and the lack of autonomy that is normally afforded to those workers with similar qualifications. Teachers in Canada are required to have a minimum of five years of university training, yet do not benefit from the privileges of managers, such as independence of decision-making or budgetary discretion (Lortie, 1975). Their job is "marked by the absence of clear cut models for emulation, unclear lines of influence, multiple and controversial criteria, ambiguity about assessment timing, and instability in the product" (Lortie, 1975, p. 136). A few years later, Andy Hargreaves (1980) noted that, although the majority of teachers may see themselves as professionals, they are well aware that others do not. Teaching still sits on a tenuous fence between a recognized profession deserving of the commensurate benefits afforded most professions and an occupation that should be entered primarily for the love of children. But no matter how much teaching may be considered a calling by some, it is at the same time a job, and deserving of the basic rights that should be afforded all workers.

Lunch is a busy time for teachers. The following is one teacher's description of his or her lunchroom activities:

*Lunchtime supervisions (caf/library duty) – extracurricular activities with staff and students (e.g. committee/club meetings, cast rehearsals, etc.) – extra help for students*

*(catching them up on missed work, giving them extra time to work on class assignments, etc.) – maintain My Class sites (e.g. uploading assignments, posting announcements, etc.*

It is these duties and obligations that prevent teachers from using the staffroom. “*Staffrooms still have a purpose. Unfortunately, our job requirements have outgrown the time to use a staffroom appropriately or at all.*” Other work-related reasons given for visiting the staffroom given in the survey comment section included: using the washroom, photocopying, visiting a room that had windows, ping pong, staff functions that included food. One respondent even identified his or her desk as being in the staffroom! The 35% of respondents who say that their staffroom use has remained the same may include young teachers who have never used the staffroom, but instead choose to remain in their subject department work workroom. Lynn said the following about young teachers and their workload:

*I think they're busy. I think they're so caught up ...especially the new staff. It's almost like all these new staff coming in think that they have to be all... and they get on every single committee. They do so much. I don't even think that they take lunch half of them. (Lynn, special education, 25 years experience)*

Does a happy teaching staff make a more effective teaching staff? According to Timothy Judge et al (2001), research into the linkage between worker conditions and productivity is “nearly as old as the field of industrial-organizational psychology” (p. 392). A worker’s attitude definitely affects productivity. According to Weakliem and Frenkel (2006) there is “an empirical tendency for all kinds of positive or negative attitudes to go together – for example workers who are more satisfied with their jobs also tend to feel better about their co-workers and management” (p. 337). Workers also tended to stay at that job location rather than seek transfer or alternate employment. School boards and principals are rightfully concerned about keeping all

their teachers on the job. In any given year, more teachers leave the profession than retire (Borman & Dowling, 2008). Statistics for attrition rates within the first five years of teaching vary from 33% (Fenwick, 1992) to as high as 50% (Alliance for Excellent Education 2008). These departures cost school boards significant funds and time spent retraining in order to catch new teachers up to the direction that schools and their boards are headed (Darling-Hammond, 2003). Not only can departures be costly, they can also be detrimental to learning, as the knowledge base of the teaching staff is diminished (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006).

Employees transfer for many different, positive reasons: location, career growth or advancement, promotion, better facilities, greater autonomy, or pay increase. Teachers transfer for the same reasons. A position in a school closer to home may open up, as might a position in a school with a better academic reputation. An opportunity to become a department head or to teach a coveted senior course may open up. But employees also transfer to escape the elements of a negative workplace such as poor managers, poor or unsafe working environments, work-induced stress, and jobs which do not allow workers to use their training or skills. Dissatisfaction with workplace conditions was listed as the reason for teacher departure by 32.7% of those surveyed (Alliance, 2008). The reasons for teacher dissatisfaction did not vary much from the reasons for dissatisfaction given by employees in non-teaching professions: teachers felt that there was little opportunity for advancement, too much work and too little time in which to do it (Litt & Turk, 1985), and dissatisfaction with administrative support (Alliance, 2008). Teachers were unhappy, and felt that better job satisfaction could be obtained elsewhere. Teachers were more likely to stay in schools where school cultures were organized around collegial efforts (Guarino, Santibañez, & Daley, 2006). Teachers who are happy with their working conditions tend to stay. “For many teachers, the quality of staffroom life is what makes a school a ‘good one’”

(Hargreaves, 1980, p. 144). For many teachers it is their relationship with their colleagues that makes their job enjoyable, and the staffroom is where they can connect with those colleagues.

One would think that, like the work of a factory worker whose work is contained within the walls of a factory, the work of a teacher is contained within the walls of a particular school; but as Henri Lefebvre asks, “What is spatial practice under neocapitalism? It embodies a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, ‘private’ life and leisure)” (1991, p. 38). When a teacher marks at home, is the work space then the home? If a teacher thinks about the day’s lesson in the car on the way to the school, is the car then the workplace? If a teacher is having lunch in a staffroom and laughing with colleagues about a topic unrelated to the job, is the school then no longer a work site? If a teacher is in the staffroom, marking, or on the computer working on report cards, is the leisure space no longer a break area? A workplace is not bounded by four walls nor are work days bounded by the time which teachers officially spend working. As previously mentioned, the spaces in which work takes place are as varied as the work itself, and the practices of perceived space play a critical role in how these spaces are interpreted and negotiated. Aside from the obvious observation that work can occur in factories, homes, offices, fields, skies, oceans, and other physical settings, work also occurs when the job is pondered over breakfast, in the car on the drive to work, and in bed when thoughts of work prevent sleep. The workplace of teachers extends “well beyond the physical limits of the institution or the temporal boundaries of the school day” (McGregor, 2003, p. 365). Work occurs as teachers log into computers at home, or take home marking, or talk to their significant others. When the work day is done, teachers, like other labourers, take on other forms of work as they cook meals, care for children, and tend to the multiple other tasks that make up their lives. “Workplaces for many



people are diverse and not bounded by the traditional separation of spheres of production, consumption, and reproduction” (Dale & Burrell, 2008, p. 3).

People are working longer hours today than previously. One respondent noted that the idea of a staffroom is good, “*But the workload is insane. It’s risen steadily over the last ten years. There is no time for collaboration or relaxing.*” The traditional concept of a five-day work week and an eight-hour day is even less applicable to the modern office worker than it was previously (Duffy, 2008). Since work often takes place in the employee’s personal spaces, such as home and car, the company is saving the expenditure for such physical costs as heating, lighting, Internet connections, furniture, and office supplies. Employees from very diverse locales can now meet and consult electronically without the travel expenses of transportation and hotels. “At the most elementary level, it is clear that information technologies, when introduced in the work process, both in factories and in offices, considerably reduce working time per unit of output” (Castells, 1989, p. 173). Companies are receiving much more time and production from their employees with less expense.

At first glance, a teacher’s time and space seem to confirm the absolutist position of space that is “continuous, quantitative, penetrable and immovably fixed” (Urry, 1985, p. 21). The working hours, class hours, classrooms, school site, and break times are all prescribed by management. But a closer examination shows that teacher time-space reflects the viewpoint that it is what happens between time and space that matters. It is not time and space themselves that produce effects, but rather one’s interactions, both perceived and lived, with these two entities. Teacher time interacts with student time, free time interacts with job duties, and teacher space interacts with student space, and so on. The most obvious division in teacher work is that between actual classroom time and non-instructional time such as cafeteria supervision, on-call

supervision, hall duty, preparation periods, and lunch. Yet these divisions are not clearly demarcated by either time or space. Often what goes on between periods of labour is more labour. “For many teachers, the idea of sitting down for a leisurely break sounds more like something from an old-fashioned novel than a picture of daily life” (Hastings, 2008, p. 5). Work often includes what goes on in a staffroom. “The associated life of teachers is fundamental in their constructions of professional practice, workplace learning and progress towards an enhanced education for students” (McGregor, 2000, p. 2). Professional conversations about curriculum and student success that occur in staffrooms, no matter how casual, are still part of professional practice.

The top reason (58.3%) indicated on the survey for not using the staffroom is that teachers are too busy, and therefore, there is not enough time. Respondent comments support this:

- *Decreased in use due to increased responsibilities and deadlines which don't allow me the same amount of "down time" in a day.*
- *Workload on teachers has soooo [sic]increased that teachers no longer feel that they have a few minutes to spare to talk with one another.*
- *I'm too busy in my own classroom preparing.*
- *People don't have time to go to the staffroom. We are all busy with teaching duties.*
- *I think if staff used it regularly it would improve collegiality, but most teachers in our department feel too busy to take a proper lunch break.*

There was also a feeling that work had to be done during the lunch period in order to balance time between home and the job. “*I would prefer to work through my 75-minute break and take less work home to my family.*”

According to the survey, checking email is the primary work activity done during lunch breaks. The email is almost entirely work-related, such as messages about duties, extracurricular activities, fire drills, lockdowns, policy implementation, upcoming professional development sessions, messages from administrators, and messages about field trips from colleagues. Messages that used to be delivered fact to face, even ten years ago, are now delivered almost exclusively by email. In addition to checking email, teachers can spend their lunch break marking, coaching, tutoring, consulting, lesson planning, photocopying, or any one of a myriad of necessary tasks. Teachers spend more time working than socializing or actually eating during their lunch break. Senior executives in industry spend, on average, 35 minutes at lunch (Gurchiek, 2008), but, according to the survey for this thesis, teachers spend on average 5-14 minutes less than that. A teacher who is considered to be hard working is frequently perceived as one who sacrifices personal time. A teacher who is taking time for lunch is too often perceived as slacking. This attitude can be reproduced in department workrooms, where a teacher's lunch and work habits are both easily scrutinized by others. Of course, any sacrifice of personal time, no matter how willing, is basically unpaid labour, from an administrator's point of view, and hardly worth discouraging by maintaining or encouraging staffroom use. Thus, the practice of additional labour is not only reproduced but tacitly commended.

Staffrooms, unlike workrooms, are designed for break periods, such as lunch, or the possibility to sit, chat, or have a coffee during an unassigned prep period. Lynn, a special education teacher with 25 years of experience, describes the function of a staffroom: *"I think it's relaxing. It's a change in the environment, so it's pulling you outside. Because I think lots of time when you leave the environment, it's like you've been somewhere else, so you're more refreshed when you go back to work."* Unfortunately, many respondents on my survey said that they no

longer have time to take a break or even in some instances to take a lunch. This coincided with a 2008 study that found that company directors take less time at lunch than they did in 2003, and that they work through their lunch three days a week (Gurchiek, p. 30). A feeling of work intensification leaves teachers feeling harassed, stressed, and demoralised (Hall, 2004, p. 9). However, it has been proven that those who eat their lunch away from their desk are better able to cope with the stress of the job. A lunch break ensures peak performance (Gurchiek, 2008).

Contrary to the thinking of some administrators, rest breaks do not cause productivity to drop and are beneficial for a worker's well being (Dababneth, Swanson, & Shell, 2001). David Lee (2001) examined the morning tea break ritual of a nursing staff and found that these breaks "provide time, space and an environment where nurses can rest, relax, ventilate their feelings and gain support from their colleagues" (p. 69). He strongly recommended that any modification to the tea break should take the nurses' needs into account, so that both the nurses and their patients benefited. Of course, the same stress and need to rest, relax, and vent found in nurses can also be found in teachers. A staffroom "is indeed a haven in stormy seas, and recourse must be had to it at regular intervals" (Woods, 1984, p. 11). Linda, an art teacher of nine years, explains the reasons why she feels staffrooms are important to teacher health: "*I guess balance and wellness. Wellness is really important and it's easy to burn out especially when you're involved in coaching and extracurricular and, you know, trying to make a difference in your school.*" Providing a place for a teacher to take a break is of benefit for both the teachers and their students. Staffrooms, unlike workrooms which are designed for work, are the optimal and often the only place for such a break.

## **Chapter 6 Secondary school staffrooms as conceived spaces**

After all of the consideration of social spaces and relationships, it is easy to forget that staffrooms are a physically designed space, and, as such, subject to such physical limitations as location, size, window placement, and plumbing.

We may be sure that representations of space have a practical impact that they intervene in and modify spatial textures which are informed by effective knowledge and ideology.

Representations of space must therefore have a substantial role and a specific influence in the production of space. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42)

This chapter discusses staffrooms as physical spaces, with their accompanying limitations and attempts at control. As always, though, the arms of Lefebvre's triad intersect. Although control of spaces is the predominant arm of the triad according to Lefebvre, control cannot be accomplished without influencing the social relationships of perceived spaces and the metaphors and symbols of lived spaces that are used to reinforce that control. The chapter begins by defining Lefebvre's conceived spaces and then relating the concept specifically to staffrooms. It discusses physical location in terms of the advantages to be gained by having proximity to the center of control. Eating may be a social activity, as is the arrangement of tables and chairs, but the actual tables and chairs are a physical consideration. The amenities and physical aspects of secondary staffrooms will be examined as they relate to the decline of staffroom use and as a reflection of administrative control of the space. The chapter concludes with an investigation of the role of secondary administrators, who ultimately control the use of the space by either supporting its use or appropriating the space for other purposes such as classrooms.

## 6.1 Defining conceived spaces

The study of physical space initially appears to be straightforward; one can see a building, so hence one should be able to study it, but that building is located within a city block, that block within a city, that city within a territory, that territory within political control, and that political control within social influence. It is the variety of commonly used spatial terms - space, place, surroundings, locale, built environment, workspace, building, territory - that make these conceived spaces “difficult to aggregate” (Taylor & Spicer, 2007, p. 326).

Their intervention occurs by way of construction – in other words, by architecture, conceived of not as the building of a particular structure, palace or monument, but rather as a project embedded in a spatial context and a texture which calls for ‘representations’ that will not vanish into the symbolic or imaginary realms. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 42)

The inception of a building is not organic, like a mountain range or wild forest, but rather is planned, and with this plan comes all sorts of explicit and implicit intentions. Lefebvre (1991) characterizes conceived spaces as the following:

The space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers, as of a certain type of artist, all of whom identify what is perceived with what is conceived...it is the dominant space in any society or (mode of production). (p. 39)

Thus, architects design buildings for a particular use and for a particular client’s mandate. The architect’s blueprints, sketches, and models all carefully delineate how space is intended to be used. These representations of space appear to be so authentic that they are often mistaken for truth:

This conceived space is thought by those who make use of it to be true, despite the fact – or perhaps because of the fact – that it is geometrical: because it is a medium for objects, an object itself, and a locus for the objectification of plans. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 361)

Conceived spaces carry implied import because they are commissioned and planned. According to Schmid (2000), conceived spaces emerge through specialized (authoritative and often professionalized) discourse and comprise such descriptions as maps, pictures, signs, definitions, and scientific theories of space. The architect's blueprint makes the dream a concrete reality. One can hold and make marks on the blueprints, thus one can bring form or objectification to dreams of planning that were previously just ephemeral or abstract. The dream and the design plan are reiterated so many times that the plan often becomes confused with the edifice. The edifice and what it is supposed to symbolize also become confused with reality. The discourse of the planners and architects is "oriented toward valorizing, qualifying, and administering space, thereby supporting and legitimating the modes of operation of state and capital" (Ronneberger, 2008, p. 137). Certainly it is easy to thoroughly conflate a building, such as a factory, prison, or school, with its ideals of work, rehabilitation, and learning.

The more carefully one examines space, considering it not only with the eyes, not only with the intellect, but also with all the senses, with the total body, the more clearly one becomes aware of the conflicts at work within it, conflicts which foster the explosion of abstract space and production of the space that is *other*. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 391)

The meanings of workplace spatial organization are often hidden in aspects such as physical building, office and worker placement, and accepted social practice. "Height carries with it the association with the sky, the immensity of space, the dwelling place of the gods, the escape from the grounded nature of earthly travails and the sheer power of the vertical" (Dale &

Burrell, 2008, p. 50). David Harvey (1973) notes that the design of a medieval church said much about one's relationship with God. "It is no accident that those in the choir somehow seemed closer to God (and hence more privileged) than those in the nave" (p. 31). Corporate headquarters, parliament buildings, government offices, and universities are intentionally tall and imposing. "The image presented through the clear lines of the buildings, the materials chosen for their construction, the play of light and depth, amount to an exercise of power on the part of the architects and planners, which has now passed (non-human-like) on to the buildings themselves" (Allen, 2003, p. 114). Educational edifices represent status and power as much as political buildings and industrial headquarters. The fact that elementary schools are smaller than secondary schools, and even smaller than university buildings, is not just simply a matter of enrolment. It is a matter of status. Many elementary schools have equal or greater populations than secondary schools, but are still built with fewer floors and on less land than schools which house older students. Elementary schools are often plainer in appearance. Older secondary schools with years of academic excellence often resemble the ivy-covered buildings of a university more than the average modern neighbourhood high school. Certainly private schools use their large, ornate buildings and extensive grounds to give the impression of being more closely associated with universities than to schools located within the public system.

Schools may be planned for teaching and education as symbols of hope, a city's affluence and progress, and a student's future success, but they are also places of labour and bring with them all of the issues of control, power, and exclusion to be found in any workplace. Massey (1984) explains that, "spatial structures are established through social processes" (p. 147). The major aim of conceived space and studies of space as materializations of power relations is to "move from a focus on *how* surface manifestations of organized spaces operate, to the reasons



*why* [emphasis in original] spaces are configured as they are” (Taylor & Spicer, 2007, p. 332).

*Conceived* spaces are about design, intent, and its enforcement. To consider staffrooms as conceived spaces, one must consider their location, amenities, and the power that influences their use, development, and possible appropriation.

## **6.2 Issues of hierarchy and proximity**

Too often, the study of the physical is sacrificed for the study of the social. Past studies of organizational space in the workplace have emphasized the most obvious empirically observable aspects of it such as where people sit, where businesses are located, and resource distribution (Taylor & Spicer, 2007). This is no less true for schools, where studies of the physical aspects of schools are usually related to cost efficiency or student achievement. Lefebvre’s conceived space helps to resolve this polarisation between the physical space and the social interactions that occur within and because of it.

According to Sayer (1985), spatial relations, at least on a broad level, are “really a surrogate for the energy and time expended in travelling or exchanging information between places by a specific mode of transport and across a ‘space’ constituted by particular kinds of matter – oceans, roads, or whatever” (p. 83). This statement has applicability to teachers’ labour in that all spaces in schools are viewed as capital expenditures, and the utilisation of those spaces that are not perceived to have a direct impact on increasing particular conceptions of students’ success are seen as a waste of both time and resources. Thus, classrooms are for teaching, workrooms are for lesson planning, hallways are for efficient movement between classes, parking lots are entrances into the workplace, and none of these areas is designed for conversation or idle chatter. Certainly political and economic powers play a part in creating the spaces in which a teacher’s labour unfolds, but so does the superficially least-empowered group

of all, the students. Even a teacher's walk down the hall is influenced by the students that one encounters and either their assertion of power, control, and resistance, or their compliance.

As we saw earlier, location was identified (Figure 4.5) as the second greatest factor affecting the decline of staffroom use - 44.6% of survey respondents felt that the staffroom is too far away. Staffrooms that are centrally located are used more than staffrooms that are isolated away from a teacher's daily path.

*The staffroom at my previous school was convenient because it was close to the female and male teachers' washrooms. You actually had a place to hang your coats. So it was all within the same direction. You came in, hung your coat, went to the office, went to your class, and so as a result more was done. So I found that their staffroom was used more than the staffroom is here. And I do believe its location. (Mary, science, three years experience)*

*At my other school a lot of teachers did use the staffroom. I remember because, if you wanted to get food, there would be a whole bunch of teachers in there. But it was located in a very central area. (Jasmine, science, ten years experience)*

Sarah explains the relationship between the location of the classrooms in which she teaches and that of the staffroom:

*They're long hallways away or multiple hallways away depending on which direction I'm going. I never go up to the second floor, ever. So unless something is within the scope of your job or your needs, or whatever, you're not going to go even in that direction. I have no need to go down that hallway that the staffroom is located unless something specifically takes me there. I can go every single day of teaching and never go down that hallway. (Sarah, long term occasional teacher)*

Rob is very specific about the difficulty of reaching the staffroom from his teaching and workroom space:

*Since we're on the second floor, we'd have to walk down the stairs, walk through the doors, go down the hallway past the cafeteria, make a left. So you're looking at maybe about 25-30 second run from my office to the cafeteria and depending upon when I want to go, if it's during a lunch period, the hallway that I have to go through to get to there is very very busy especially when you get down to the bottom of the stairs in front of the cafeteria. ( Rob, science, six years experience)*

Teachers find it inconvenient to go out of their way to visit the staffroom in their day if their classes are located at the opposite end of the school. It is much easier to remain in the same area as their departmental workroom or classes.

- *No regular staff uses this room. Only supply teachers. It almost takes more effort to use the staffroom because it is on a different floor than my office and classrooms.*
- *It gives people a place to go for a 'break' - unfortunately, ours is too far away from my work area.*
- *I know the people that frequent it enjoy being there - we are just too far away in my department.*

Most teachers feel that it is not worth the effort and travel time to use it. This response overlaps with other causes that have been previously mentioned. There is nothing in the staffroom in the way of human company or amenities that is worth the loss of time to those who do not teach nearby.

- *I have been in a new school where the staffroom was well used. It was visited every day, at least twice, just to check mailboxes because it was right by the front office and was easily*

*accessible. You passed it all the time, whereas the staffroom in my present school is small, windowless, and hidden away in the middle of the school where I would never find myself unless I was looking for the staffroom. Even then it's hard to locate for a teacher new to the school.*

- *The school I taught at before this school had a very effective staff room. It was located in the center of the building, with many amenities, and it was frequented by about 60% of the staff. The school I'm currently in has an inconveniently-located staff room that about 6 teachers use a day.*

Staffrooms that are centrally located are passed by more often during a teacher's daily routine of heading to class, the main office, and to the departmental workroom. A teacher could have a class closer to the staffroom one semester and then be out in a portable at the other end of the school the next. This would decrease their use of the staffroom.

As shown in Chapter 4, teachers who pass by a staffroom daily use it more often than those teachers who don't (Figure 4.22 - highly significant result). They report that their personal use has changed less than those who do not pass by the staffroom (Figure 4.23 - very significant result). They also find the staffroom to be more important (Figures 4.24 - very significant result). Teachers who frequently pass by the staffroom perceive the staffroom to be busier (Figure 4.25 - highly significant result), have better ambiance (Figure 4.26 - significant result), and be more collegial (Figure 4.27 - very significant result) than those teachers who rarely or never pass by the staffroom during their day. Although it may seem obvious that teachers who pass by the staffroom use it more often, it is less obvious that not passing by the staffroom also increases the perception that the staffroom is not used. In other words, there is strong feeling that, if a teacher is not using the staffroom, then no one else must be using it either. The staffroom appears to be

out of sight and out of mind for those who rarely or never pass by it. People who rarely pass by the staffroom also feel that the staffroom is less busy, less important, less collegial, and has worse ambiance than those who pass by it more frequently. Staffrooms that are visible are more likely to be perceived as important. If a teacher does not see the staffroom, they do not perceive it as important. In a somewhat self-centred attitude, it appears that the feeling of teachers who do not pass by the staffroom is likely to be that a staffroom is not important to them; therefore, it is not important to others. These results are not surprising; a teacher who passes by the staffroom is more likely to perceive it as used. Teachers who do not use the staffroom think of the staffroom as a dead space, if they think of the staffroom at all during their day.

Architectural and physical elements place control of the visual in the hands of the organizations in charge of the buildings. The placement of corridors and work and break areas affects the ability of staff to interact, as well as how they do so. The location of the staffroom can sometimes indicate its priority in a school. In one school, where the staffroom had been removed, the staff complained, so an alternative was found. However, this alternative was not centrally located. Rather it was a room at the back of the library, and in order to reach it, a teacher had to travel through the library past the students. This made teachers, like Linda, feel uncomfortable:

*And when you're going into a space that no food or drink is allowed and you're in front of students and you're carrying your food through the library, you're obviously trying to be respectful of the rules that are set for students. I don't think the alternate space was used as much as the staffroom when it existed. (Linda, art, nine years experience)*

If a staffroom is located far away from mailboxes, copiers, and classrooms, teachers will socialize with others in their workroom. If a teacher's way to the classroom involves delays, such as groups of students who are in violation of one school rule or another, then a teacher may

expedite the way to the class by taking another corridor. From a practical viewpoint, lunch hours are short and, in a school with three floors, a journey from the class before lunch to the workroom to drop off books, then down to the first floor to the staffroom, can take easily take away many minutes of a one-hour lunch period. Additional time is used if a trip to the washroom is needed and by the return journey to the workroom to pick up supplies before travelling to teach the next class after lunch. It is often simply easier to remain in the workroom. Just as the river affects the shape of the riverbank and the riverbank affects the flow of the river, the physically designed layout and formally designated procedures for use of a school affect traffic flow, and traffic flow affects usage.

Schools share many similar features, such as: long corridors, classrooms, stairs, offices, cafeterias; specialized areas such as libraries and technology wings; and entrance halls, staffrooms, and department rooms (Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2000). Lefebvre (1991) notes that “visible boundaries, such as walls or enclosures in general, give rise for their part to an appearance of separation between spaces where in fact what exists is an ambiguous continuity” (p. 87). Much of school design views the building as a physical entity, without considering what happens when students and staff interact within the building:

The perception of gaps itself brings the whole body into play. Every group of places and objects has a centre, and this is therefore true of the house, the city or the whole world. The centre may be perceived from every side, and reached from every angle of approach; thus to occupy any vantage point is to perceive and discover everything that occurs. The centre so conceived can never become neutral or empty. It cannot be the “locus of an absence”, because it is occupied by Divinity, Wisdom, and Power, which by manifesting themselves show any impression of void to be illusionary. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 154)

Where, then, is the centre of a school? Is the centre of a school the same for teachers, administration, support staff, and students? Is the centre the place of labour or the place of rest? Is the centre the place of learning? If so, what learning and whose? The conceived centre may be reachable from every angle, but every individual can traverse the lines differently thus imposing their own lived reality and meaning on an otherwise conceived physical plan. However, no matter *where* the centre is or *whose* centre it is, the centre is never neutral or empty. If the center of a school is the front office, then it is fraught with symbols of power and exclusion. Doors can be closed. Desks and furniture are larger in the administrative offices and thus more intimidating. There are spaces within spaces and inner sanctums.

The same spatial hierarchy to be found in offices and industry applies to teachers and schools. Teaching carries with it an inherent hierarchy beyond the obvious divisions of teacher, department head, vice-principal, and principal. As Allen (2003) explains, dominance can bring about exclusion:

The more familiar sense in which domination is considered as pervasive stems from the notion of closed spaces; spaces constructed by groups building ‘walls’, sometimes literally, to exclude those who are not ‘the same’. (p. 172)

Permission is required to enter an administrator’s office, and a closed door is a signal of exclusion; however, a teacher’s classroom and workroom are considered open, and a closed door creates no barrier for administration. Proximity to the principal brings privilege and like-mindedness. “A sense of who belongs is achieved not by a collective construction of who is recognized as present, but rather by a set of rules which imposes a like-mindedness” (Allen, 2003, p. 172). Guidance teachers have a tendency to behave as if they were part of the administration rather more than the regular teaching staff, often because their offices are close to

those of the principal and vice-principals, and they are therefore privy to inside behaviours and histories.

As Doreen Massey (1985) observes, the nearer an employee is to the head office, the higher the status on the job. A school building influences the social relationships within it just as much as those social relations influence the physical aspects of the building. Proximity is everything. As living in close proximity to the chief or king was correlated with high social status (Soja, 1971), so is proximity to the main office of a school. Ideas, expertise, contacts, finances and so forth are all resources that are mediated by the center of power (Allen, 2003). Running around from class to class is much harder work for those teachers, and there are many, who are not assigned a permanent classroom (Gordon, Holland, & Lahelma, 2000). In a school, proximity to the principal is usually reserved for the vice-principals and guidance counsellors. Teachers are relegated to classrooms away from the office, often with less valued subjects, such as shop, music, and gym, positioned at the physical extremes of the school.

The notion of conceived space makes it clear that power is not just found in the external appearance of buildings, but also in their construction of spaces and boundaries, inclusions and exclusions, places for meeting and those for segregation. This power is impossible to entirely hide:

A non-essentialist stance towards social space – which for us includes space and identity in an ever open dialectic – thus points to a praxis that recognizes that no identity/space is so colonized by hegemony as to remove all traces of its organizing power. (Natter & Jones, 1997, p. 155)

By controlling the physical, work organizations and school boards also control the social.

“Power is not solely in the creation of the monumental, the overt portrayal of power, but in how



built forms embody different interests and identities” (Dale & Burrell, 2008, p. 46). The physical aspects of a staffroom reveal much about where the power lies in a school. If the staffroom is not maintained, it is sending a message that staff may not be valued, and staff may operate accordingly. This is especially emphasized when administrative spaces such as offices receive new paint and furniture while the staffroom lingers in neglect.

### **6.3 Amenities and ambiance**

One would think that perception of ambiance was based on perceptions of amenities. A well appointed staffroom should be apparent to all, but according to Figure 4.25, people who do not use the staffroom presume that it is worse than it may actually be. The problem with this line of thinking is that it perpetuates a negative discourse. Teachers who do not go to the staffroom perceive that it is uncomfortable or unwelcoming, even though this may not be true, and will continue to think this and never enter the staffroom. Teachers also connect collegiality with frequency of staffroom use (Figure 4.27). This was a surprising and important connection. The more a staffroom is used, the better it appears to be to the user. I suspect that the number one thing that is need in a staffroom to make it feel welcome and inviting is people. As one survey respondent explained, good conversations with close colleagues seem to be more important than other amenities:

*I have been at two schools. My current school has a lovely staffroom which no one uses.*

*My previous school had a horrible staffroom, no windows, uncomfortable furniture, but was always busy at lunch and a great place to socialize.*

The third most frequent reason for not using the staffroom, as shown in Figure 4.5., is that there is no one with whom to talk (36.3%).

*“Fewer and fewer people there, makes it less inviting” and “No one that I know goes there to eat their lunch.”* This of course, is a self-perpetuating problem because as fewer staff use the staffroom the more likely that it will remain empty. Other comments pertained to negative people. Twelve comments out of seventy mentioned that they are *“not interested in negative talk,”* or as another respondent wrote *“The people who frequent it whine, bitch and complain about everything.”* This seems to be in conflict with the respondent who complained of the lack of freedom to talk. *“We were deterred from using the staffroom because there were complaints that our conversations were too loud, and some staff just wanted to sit quietly and read their paper.”*

It may speak to the isolation of departmental workrooms where teachers are only in contact with those who teach the same subject. Teachers in staffrooms tend to be more diversified in their departments and so may perceive a wider sense of connection to those outside their own department and transfer this perception to the whole school. Similarly, teachers who only socialize with those in their departments may transfer this lack of connectivity beyond their personal experience to that of the whole staff. This is a very important reason to encourage staffroom use as it promotes the perception of staff unity.

Jeffery Lackney (1994) has made an extensive examination of the physical condition of American schools. He identified several factors related to a school's physicality, besides obvious deterioration that has had a negative impact on schools: overcrowding, classroom layouts that are not suitable for current instruction methods, poor facility management, and lack of teacher training in how to use space. Solutions to overhaul the educational system often ignore the physical comfort of teachers and students, “forcing them to implement educational reforms in dilapidated, over-heated or under-heated, environmentally toxic, poorly furnished, unsupplied

classrooms” (1994, p. 2). As Lackney points out, good design, or a space that is well conceived, only helps workers to better enjoy their work environment and potentially increase productivity. Of course, as seen in Chapter 4, there are many layers to consider when determining what makes the physical aspects of a workplace enjoyable.

As previously seen, (Figure 4.15), the majority of respondents (34.3%) felt that the ambiance of their staffroom could be rated as *fair*. However, almost twice as many respondents felt that their staffroom was *poor* or *awful* (30.4%) as those who felt it was good or fabulous (11.9%). Four respondents mentioned that they did not have a staffroom. Most respondents who wrote comments mentioned the lack of privacy - “*students have access, no privacy*” - and the physical condition of the room, such as the following comment: “*It is not maintained, in that paintings are half falling off the walls and there are student samples of work from over 10 years ago. The couches and tables are often dirty.*”

A teacher’s job is often compared to those in industry, and teachers are portrayed as unrealistic in their demands for congenial working conditions. Yet in terms of a place to eat one’s lunch, industry comes out ahead, according to Lynn, who previously worked in information technology before becoming a teacher.

*I came out of industry. I was in IT, so I was involved in tech and we had a huge kitchen that was fully stocked with food, and coffee, and a toaster, and a kettle, and it had a hotplate and a microwave, and you, know sugar, cream, and table and chairs, and we’d go in and have cook ups and it was somebody else’s turn this week and what are we going to eat? (Lynn, special education. 25 years experience)*

The fourth most frequent reason for not using the staffroom is a lack of ambiance (35.7%). The complaints included old, outdated, dirty, uncomfortable furniture and a lack of basic facilities such as water to drink.

- *There is no running water, no sink, windows are too high to actually see outside! Not used by most staff!*
- *Our staffroom isn't really a staffroom, it's an empty room with 2 couches 2 tables and a copier and a risograph.*

The fact that there was not a staffroom in a school was mentioned four times: *“There is not a staffroom at this school - very negative to staff morale.”*

Most of the items that respondents felt should be included in a staffroom, as indicated in Figure 4.11 were for simple food preparation such as a microwave, sink, paper towels, and a kettle. It is not untoward to expect a staffroom to contain a sink so that dishes can be cleaned and a kettle filled, yet a sink was missing in a few of the staffrooms I visited. Most of the non-plumbing-related items associated with food preparation are not expensive to provide, yet in many schools, including East Central Secondary, items like a microwave and a kettle were provided by donations from staff members, rather than monies allotted from school funds. Although computers ranked fairly high (81.2%) as an important inclusion, most work items, like photocopiers and mailboxes, ranked considerably lower in importance than basic necessities, such as comfortable chairs and paper towels. Most of the additional items that people wished to see included in their staffroom were things that could be considered for relaxation or recreational purposes, rather than work-related. Again, most of the suggested inclusions, with the exception of the wistful request for a fireplace with a floating floor - perhaps suggested by a teacher with a

desperate need to relax – would also be inexpensive to provide. Paper towels, dish soap, and a place to keep mugs are not extravagant requests.

There was some disagreement about the inclusion of work-related items, such as photocopiers. Two respondents commented that “*most of these items (if not all) are in every department office,*” and that “*copiers are the only item needed at the staffroom at our school,*” therefore, doing away with staffrooms would be “*just fine.*” However, at least twice as many respondents held the opposite opinion, that work-related items should be removed from staffrooms. “*This should be a place to eat, relax, talk, in other words, get away. All devices related to work should be removed.*” One respondent recognized that “*toxic machines such as photocopiers should not be where people are eating.*”

There was also some disagreement about the placement of computers in the staffroom. Some survey respondents appreciated being able to use a computer when the ones in their workroom were occupied, but others felt that computers detracted from the ability to interact with colleagues. Angela, an English teacher with five years experience, commented on the importance of personal interaction with colleagues: “*I think we are so attached to the computers and phones and everything. It’s nice to get away from technology so that you have time where you are face to face with someone.*” Roger, computer consultant for the board, also feels that computers to be used for work purposes are problematic in a staffroom when asked how he felt about putting computers in staffrooms:

*Well, it depends, are they using it for personal or are they using it for work? If it’s going to become another work station, then take it out of there because if people are going in there to decompress from the job then having another computer is just reaffirming that I should really be at my desk doing some work. To me your lunch is your time and if you*

*want to use the web or compose a sonnet or whatever on the computer then that's great that that tool is there and available to you. Now the criticism would be that we have limited computer budget how can we justify putting those into a staffroom on non-curricular use. (Roger, board consultant - instructional technology resource teacher, 11 years experience)*

It is interesting to note that more staffrooms seem to be equipped with a computer than a sink or kettle in a space that is supposed to be designed for eating one's lunch and relaxation.

A final factor of ambiance to consider is keeping the space as an adult space. The importance of this was mentioned several times:

- *It would be important if the staffroom were actually a room staff could use without a student presence.*
- *The non-student space to come to is valuable.*
- *We need a place to get away from your desk. To get way from students. Even if it is only for part of your lunch; someplace that is an exclusively adult space.*
- *There has to be an "adult multi-use place"*

Figure 4.13 shows considerable disparity between what teachers feel should be in a staffroom and what is actually there. Teachers feel that staffrooms are equipped with enough work-related items, even though this appears to be where administrations are investing funds. Rob described the difference between a well-used and an underutilized staffroom.

*The contrast that I find from here is in the staffrooms that I have utilized the most is they have one of the two big things in common. Number one, the staffroom contains access to the staff washroom and they also have the photocopiers, because any teacher knows that usually at some point you are either going to the photocopy room or you are going to go*

*to the washroom. Now, at the schools that I have been at there is always at least one photocopier, in some cases two photocopiers. They also have access to the washrooms. You can only get access to the staffrooms and then to the washrooms. There are certain schools, the newer schools, that have hospitality programs which if the staff wants to go get food, they can go to the staffroom, have their own little private window, order food, pay for it, and then because the tables and comfortable chairs, and the computers and the phones are all close by they would just go down and quickly sit down and they will eat their lunch and maybe while they eat their lunch, and while they are waiting, they can put some stuff in the photocopy machine, make a phone call, or go to the bathroom come back out and eat. In some of the staffrooms I know they also have the staff mailboxes so when you check your mailbox you have to go through the staffroom to do it. So I find if you put the mailboxes, the washrooms, and the photocopiers, if they're all in there and the staff can order food from the caf from the staffroom, I think that would go a long way to improving it. The ones that don't do it, like in our school we have a window to access the food but they don't serve. Everything else is non-existent and the worse staffroom I've ever been at was not a real authentic staffroom in the sense that the school that I was at never had one. So what they did was convert a classroom into one and this classroom... it was just like a simple classroom and they just put up some dividers and chairs and nothing else. You could tell it was used as a classroom in the past. It was not built to be a staffroom. (Rob, Math, four years experience)*

Survey respondents complained about staffrooms with poor lighting, uncomfortable furniture, and few, if any, people, which decreased the opportunities for them to serve anything but the most individualized needs. If a staffroom is neglected and has fewer amenities than a

teacher's workroom, then it is unlikely that it will be visited by staff. Why travel out of your way to a room that is dark and has no window, kettle, or comfortable furniture? If the department workroom offers better ambiance in the form of accessibility to people, personal knick knacks found at work stations, and the opportunity to eat one's lunch without being viewed by students, then it is logical that this becomes the preferred location for many teachers. A description of an ideal staffroom, as determined by comments made by survey respondents and additional research, is found in Chapter 8 (8.3).

#### **6.4 Issues of power and control in education**

Space is a human-created entity, and its control is no less so. However, writers have usually approached the question of control by investigating the attitudes of students, rather than teachers (Corrigan, Curtis, & Lanning, 1987). Having exclusive control over one's class and one's students was considered an important part of a teacher's identity (Nespor, 1997). Certainly, from the perspective of students, teachers often remain the face of control in schools, but when considering spatiality, it is not the teacher who exerts the dominant form of control overall; more fundamental forms of control are centred in the nature of what Lefebvre calls the monument itself, by which he means the seat of an institution (the church, the state, the school). "From this perspective, the monument is essentially repressive. Any space that is conceived to become organized around the monument is colonized and oppressed" (2003, p. 21). The political and control issues of school are as evident as those experienced in any battle over borders and boundaries - less bloody, but certainly not less evident. All too frequently, space is considered to be limited, and there is inevitably competition and conflict over its organisation and control (Urry, 1985). This conflict becomes fundamental in any exercise of power (Allen 2003; Foucault 1986; Lefebvre 1991). Conflict "requires the control of a superior organizational power, the



state. Conversely, this power, this supreme institution, tends to perpetuate its own conditions, to maintain that separation between the governed and the governing” (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 79). The very nature of this conflict and the spaces in which it is enacted perpetuates the conflict. In the case of schools, parents, students, other staff, and community are involved, but in many ways, ultimately, the primary combatants in this conflict are the teacher-workers and the state.

Lefebvre (1991) describes social and urban space as having “a structure far more reminiscent of flake *mille-feuille* pastry than of the homogeneous and isotropic space of classical (Euclidean/Cartesian) mathematics” (1991, p. 86). This cream-filled flaky pastry is an appropriate metaphor to apply to the spaces of the workplace. Health and working conditions layer upon production, which layers upon all other aspects of work. All of these layers are topped by a layer of management frosting, which defines the structure of the workplace while, at the same time, is often extraneous to the actual pastry underneath. At the risk of stretching a metaphor, one could say that, just as once a fork cuts the pastry the dessert’s many layers are unlikely to stay separated, as one investigates the workplace, one aspect of labour studies inevitably oozes into the next as others crumble, break apart, or get smashed. It is impossible to cut one aspect of the *mille-feuille* workplace cleanly away from the others. One must consider the interaction of all places of work when discussing workplace, and of course, who ultimately wields the fork and thereby ultimately controls consumption. Or as Lefebvre asks about social space: “Who promotes it? Who exploits it? And why and how do they do so?”

(1991, p. 90). The most frequent alternate use for staffrooms, as cited below, was classroom:

- *Our staffroom was turned into a classroom during the second year the school opened. Very negative impact on the staff.*
- *Half of it was converted into a classroom...it is much smaller now.*

- *The staffroom was used as a classroom for many years.*

It is difficult to think of another professional workplace that would remove the area where people eat their lunch and relax in order to permanently convert it to alternate uses, in the way that respondents report their staffrooms being turned into classrooms. The effect of this appropriation is that “*It does not have the ambiance of a private space for teachers.*” A teacher is now on the job, all the time, with no chance to regroup, recharge, or collect thoughts between one class and the next.

Other work-related responses for staffroom use included professional development or other meetings (30). This concurs with observations I made of various staffrooms during my interview visits. Many of the staffrooms I saw had been configured to accommodate meetings. One staffroom, in a two-year-old school, had a boardroom table, mailboxes, and a smart board. There was nothing in the room to indicate that it could or should be used as place of relaxation. There was no reason why a staff member would choose to eat lunch in such a cold and unwelcoming environment. Other staffrooms I saw had become the repository for items that needed storage: grad gowns, old exams, boxes of dusty decorations, and various flotsam and jetsam from long-forgotten school events from many years ago, creating the ambiance of an abandoned attic or basement, rather than a lunchroom.

Many comments listed various work-related forms of appropriation. Any person choosing to enter the staffroom to eat during such meetings and professional development sessions is bound to feel like an intruder and eat elsewhere.

- *Various PD activities, student assessments (Careers interviews), student club meetings*
- *Lunch and learn workshops for teachers*

Less frequent answers included uses such as storage, union voting station, student photographs, exams, and as a vaccination site for an elementary school. As one survey respondent wrote, a staffroom has been used for “*Everything...meetings, classroom, workroom, storage.*” Not all uses were negative, though. A few respondents mentioned events that attempted to bring staff together in a positive way, such as staff social functions like breakfasts, baby showers, and potluck meals: “*Monthly breakfasts put on by different departments. We all look forward to this community get together.*” There was a need expressed for staffs to connect socially, and the staffroom provided a suitable locale for this to happen. But, as one comment noted, this appears to be happening less and less: “*Social reasons to use the staffroom (i.e. order of good cheer, other gatherings) have disappeared over the years.*” Underlying such comments was a feeling of loss and regret and the disappearance of connectivity among colleagues.

Even something as apparently indicative of an open, inviting environment, as glass and windows has the ability to both exclude and occlude. Perhaps designed to give the illusion of space or openness, glass can sometimes place a worker on display and distort what is happening behind it. It can give the illusion of an open environment while simultaneously acting as a way of controlling and monitoring movement. It is easy to look through the glass to see whether workers are at their desk. Glass can also become an indicator of status, as workers aspire to move into a cubicle or office with an outside view. Glass, as Dale and Burrell (2008) mention, is a very contradictory architectural feature. Whereas the glass atrium in Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children brings in light and a sense of hope and psychologically removes one from the confined spaces of the wards and treatment rooms, glass in a school can have an opposite effect. One school that I worked in had glass windows on both sides of the workrooms. This was the same school that changed its staffroom into a permanent classroom. Curtains were forbidden in the

windows of the subject department workrooms, so that teachers were on view to students from both hallways. Since there was no staff lunchroom, there was no alternative space for teachers to go to in order to escape the demands of students who might wish to access them outside of classroom hours and appointment hours, and likewise no escape from unwanted observation by administration. Teachers were on display in the “fishbowl”, as these workrooms were called by the staff, as they marked, planned lessons, met, drank coffee, climbed on chairs to get books, and ate their lunch. Even in schools with a staffroom, some survey respondents described these rooms as having “*a wall of windows students can see in.*”

Power is often wielded through surveillance. Sometimes this power is direct as in the case of security cameras and alarms, and sometimes it is indirect. A “less distinct example of this exercise of power in open settings is where suggestion, not surveillance, holds sway. This is one of the hallmarks of seduction” (Allen, 2003, p. 175). This can be especially true when suggestion is offered through related policy and procedure. Conceived spaces can bring about their own overarching branding and agendas by design. Allen cites the example of the Potsdamer Platz/Sony Corporation in Berlin, where the space is branded as not only a repository of games and entertainment, but those connected to Sony. Even those people who move through the complex without the intent of buying or spending money are subject to the pull of the brand:

To move through the complex is to find oneself subject to a power whose imprint is decidedly modest, where spontaneity and impulsiveness rather than any systematic stress are the pulling force. At best, the experience generates interest in Sony’s merchandise, perhaps reinforcing a preference for a brand of goods over its competitors. (Allen, 2002, p. 177)

Unlike shopping complexes, however, schools are generally not subtle places. Suggestion is superseded by command and direct control.

Michel Foucault describes the panopticism of a village during a plague and compares this to a prison:

...this enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the centre and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchal figure, in which each individual is constantly located examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead – all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism. (1995, p. 197)

In the village, panopticism provided through a vigilant military prevents the hiding of bodies and the spread of disease. In a prison, the ever watchful eye of the guard in his tower induces in the inmate “a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault, 1995, p. 201). Foucault’s following description of a heterotopic site is as applicable to schools as it is to prisons:

In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or prison, or else the individual has to submit to certain rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make a certain gesture. (Foucault, 1986, p. 26)

In a school, classes and workrooms function as contained cells, where movement is controlled by a timetable and monitored by security cameras installed in the centrally located office. A school can carry with it a related form of branding in the guise of security badges, mascots, uniforms,

and logos. Students and adults who enter the building from outside the community are often as recognizable by their lack of identification as their sense of disorientation.

Foucault looked at the organization and control of space in early factories and found spatial micropolitics to consist of four elements: *Enclosure* (spaces defined for labour), *Partitioning* (to control communication and monitor movement), *Classification* (partitioning into like operations so supervision can be both general and individual), and *Ranking* (arrangement of individuals into a “hierarchy of knowledge” arranged in space. In spite of an illusion of choice, spaces in schools are no less controlled, and probably more so, than anywhere else. Classes and portables are *enclosures* where teacher labour is supposed to occur. Workrooms can be considered a form of *partitioning*. Here teachers are isolated and easily found by the office when not teaching. Communication is rarely private and often takes place in the presence of a colleague who has the potential to report to the department head, or in the presence of a department head who has the potential to report to administration. Communication is thus, to some degree, controlled, as teachers are unlikely to make serious complaints about the job or their class in this situation. *Ranking* also occurs. People closer to the front office, such as guidance counsellors, are considered to be more in the loop and in the know than those who teach outside the inner circle. Even vice-principal offices are ranked. A new vice-principal is often given the smallest office, which is farthest away from the principal. As another vice-principal leaves, the office space is once again assigned by rank. Within a workroom, there is an unspoken agreement that some desk spaces are better than others. A seat away from the phone and door ranks higher than one where interruptions must be dealt with more frequently. A seat near the department head, where one can act as a sounding board for spontaneous ideas, is considered to be of greater value and is often reserved for the more experienced members of the

department. As Dale and Burrell (2008) point out, the best control of a space by organizations is done so matter-of-factly that this control goes unnoticed.

## **6.5 Administration's influence on staffrooms**

As much as educational environments like to claim that all members are equal partners, they are not. School boards are subordinate to the edicts of the Ministry of Education, student wishes are frequently subordinate to the requests of teachers, and teachers' needs are usually subordinate to the commands of the administration. Principals are more managers than colleagues. They carry more decision-making power than teachers over issues such as staffing, timetabling, and budget. As a result, as has been the case for some time one way or another, teachers are at the mercy of the principal's scheduling and resource allotment (Lortie, 1975). Teachers may need the principal to intervene or act as a mediator on their behalf with parents or students (Corcoran, 1990; Lortie, 1975; Winter & Sweeney, 1994). Teachers may wish that a principal "should use his powers to augment those of teachers, and his use of authority should lighten their burden" (Lortie, 1975, p. 197), but as long as principals remain in a privileged position of power, reinforced by a bureaucratic mentality, the needs and wishes of teachers are subordinated to theirs. One former administrator at East Central valued and encouraged the interactions to be found in the staffroom. Jacob, a business teacher with 15 years experience, mentioned that "*the former principal would even announce it in staff meetings to use the staffroom; meet people, talk to people, and that meant more were using it.*" Lauren, a drama teacher with eight years of experience, mentioned that this principal used to eat lunch in the staffroom: "*She made a point of every day coming in here and eating lunch. She got to know us personally. She knew our names. She knew who we were as people and not just as employees.*" This administrator actively promoted the staffroom and helped the staff to feel valued.

Roger, who taught science at Heritage Hills, felt that Gordon Duncan, principal of Heritage Hills Secondary, was an administrator whose presence in the staffroom helped the staff feel acknowledged and valued.

*Back when I was going to that staffroom, we had a different admin back then and the principal of the day used to go down there and have lunch quite regularly as did the office manager and many of the other clerical staff. The VPs to a lesser extent, but that particular principal who was down there, it was a chance where you had his ear and he had yours. And it was a level field or at least it was the perception of that. He wasn't down there as the principal, he was down there as they guy you work with having lunch and that was a different management style. That particular guy, he was kind of old school. His handshake was his word and his values may not have been as aligned with some of the things that we typically expect of senior management in the board and people like that. And he would get into discussions where he was trying to draw out some information, but he always knew to keep it light in the staffroom because he didn't want to disrupt that harmony which in retrospect I didn't realize it at the time because I was still relatively new to the profession and I hadn't worked with a lot of administrators at the point. I didn't realize how neat that was.*

Some survey respondents agreed that administrators should visit the staffroom - *“it would be nice to see them taking a break and socializing with teachers”* - or wrote that *“it is really nice when they do though, as it give times to connect over things other than business as usual.”*

However, some teachers surveyed felt that the staffroom should be out of bounds to administrators in order to be a place, where as one respondent described, staff should be able to *“share mutual concerns and conduct union business.”* Another teacher wrote:



*Admin should not “hang out” with staff – they are admin, not the friends or colleagues of the teaching staff. Staff need a place to share and bitch and complain about their life and the job and often that complaining is about admin teams or school decisions.*

Many respondents noted that administration would visit the staffroom on the days that food was provided, such as staff breakfasts, and others noted that administration would occasionally visit to chat but not eat there. As successful as Lauren’s soup club was at East Central, the principal would often visit to pick up her soup and then leave to eat it elsewhere.

So how many administrators do eat their lunch in the general staffroom? As previously shown, the survey indicated that respondents perceived (Figure 4.18) that 44.5% of administrators *never* eat their lunch in the staffroom and only 2.4% of administrators *frequently* do so. Teachers who noted their administrators ate lunch in the staffroom at least some of the time felt that their staff were more collegial (Figure 4.36) and that the staffroom had better ambiance (Figure 4.47), and was busier (Figure 4.38) than those who reported that their administrators never ate lunch in the staffroom. These figures demonstrate the importance of administrators taking the time to occasionally eat their lunch in the staffroom. In actuality, however, this rarely happened in the schools surveyed. Sometimes this was by physical design. Some respondents noted that members of the administration had their own eating area. This was true for both East Central and Heritage Hills and the majority of the staffrooms that I visited. Interestingly, this kitchen was often shared by members of the guidance department. As explained earlier, proximity brings privilege. This area was usually located close to the office, was well appointed with kitchen facilities, tables and chairs. In the case of East Central, there were signs posted in the kitchen reminding the majority of the teaching staff that the office kitchen was not theirs:

The office area kitchen and washroom facilities are for use by the **office and guidance staff** [boldface in original]. If you need to use the office kitchen, it is expected that you clean up after yourself. Also please do not remove any mugs or cutlery from the office kitchen. These mugs/cutlery are personal items brought provided by the office staff for use by them only.

Remember that the staffroom at East Central did not have a sink to fill the kettle or wash dishes so the office kitchen provided the only alternative to a sink in the washroom which usually did not have hot water.

An administrator can choose not to actively support a staffroom, or encourage and support, the use of a staffroom as in the case of Gordon Duncan, principal of Heritage Hills.

Roger describes this support:

*He is a wonderful man and is doing great things there and respects his staff. He's the kind of guy that if you organize a lunch and learn for technology he buys lunch. He's encouraging people to get together to learn to collaborate and that's an anomaly.*

Duncan invested in new furniture, computers, and actively encouraged his staff to use the space. This investment was reflected in his opinion of his staff.

*I think that the reality is that a staff is a group of people who work together towards a common purpose, together I hope, but they're still people. They're still human beings and they're going to behave as human beings. You have to value people. If you build an organization that relies upon people being not human and being in a way superhuman and perfect, then you're doomed to failure because there's nobody who can fill those roles so I think you definitely want to nurture people being people and being responsible people, but being people. (Gordon Duncan, principal, Heritage Hills)*

Darlene, a vice-principal of another well-used staffroom, had an opinion of her staff that echoed that of Gordon Duncan: *“As part of our work here, we recognize that if we want happy students part of it is to make sure that our teachers are happy as well so we want them to be pleased in their workspace.”* Both Gordon and Darlene worked at schools that were repeatedly referred to during my interviews as schools in which people wanted to teach. Indeed, if the annual job posting lists were any indication, these were schools where people rarely left and positions rarely opened.

Another staffroom success story is told by Angela Webster, deputy principal of Parkside Community College in Cambridge, to Stephen Hastings. The staffroom at Parkside had become “run-down cluttered and shabby,” but the administration felt that they had “a strong and committed staff that deserved quality spaces in which to operate.” (Hastings, 2004, p.1). The staff was consulted about what changes were to be made. Lighting was improved by adding natural light, worn out furniture was replaced, seating added and assorted beverages made available all day. The result was a redesigned a space that successfully functioned as a workspace, social space, and eating area.

This, however, is not the way that many secondary school administrators view their staffrooms. For many, the staffroom is not viewed as important, beyond a place for supply teachers to throw their coats. As Lefebvre (1991) explains, this lack of investment can contribute to the eventual discouragement of social relations and the continued reproduction of this change:

The capitalist mode of production begins by producing things, and by ‘investing’ in places. Then the reproduction of social relations becomes problematic, as it plays a part in practice, modifying it in the process. And eventually it becomes necessary to reproduce nature also and to master space by producing it – that is, the political space of

capitalism – while at the same time reducing it in order to prevent the production of new social relations. (p. 219)

A dedicated staffroom is not in the best interest of administrators either financially in terms of having unfunded space since it is not a classroom, or in terms of encouraging a school's labour force to stop working temporarily. Indeed, social spaces are rarely willingly funded by capitalists. Not every administrator is willing to invest capital in the staffroom. Although Gordon Duncan, the principal of Heritage Hills invests in his staffroom and acknowledges its importance, he explains that a staffroom is a potential financial liability.

*The building, and it's not consistent, and I'm only learning this part myself, the grants that school boards receive for school use of space is based on square footage so if you have a large staffroom that's a lot of square footage and our allocation for our custodians is based on that funding so caring for it is also based on that square footage and if you have a smaller staffroom you could buy back in terms of the cost for the funding that's attached to it through classrooms or a larger library or a large drama room or something like that so you have to make those decisions when you are designing the plant, what's going to be the best use of things. So wide hallways are really nice and probably they're safer and they contribute to a better climate for students as opposed to some schools where the hallways are really tight and the ceilings low, it affects people's behaviour so you might choose to make larger hallways but it'll eat up some of your funding and that will take away from your ability to make other spaces larger. So how do you set priorities? That's a really tough question.*

An administrator can decide to re-appoint priorities and ignore the staffroom space as in the case of a series of principals at East Central. This causes the staffroom to become

progressively more dilapidated and dysfunctional. By the time Patricia Armstrong became principal, no money had been spent on it for over eight years. At the time of our interview, Armstrong had not spent money on the staffroom, nor did she have any immediate intent to do so. She felt that her staff had little or no interest in the staffroom. *“Perhaps the people who have been here for awhile have been more aware of it. The impression I get in my position is that people have other things to worry about other than the staffroom.”* Patricia’s attitude was directly contradicted by members of the staff, like Jasmine, who felt that the staffroom was too uninviting to enter: *“I feel it’s cold and it’s dark in there and it’s dingy and I don’t want to go. It feels like you’re in a dungeon in there,”* or Mark, who missed a staffroom:

*All the new industrial psychology stuff says that if you have a five minute nap in the middle of the day you’d be a better person. Your blood pressure would be lower, dah dah dada dah dah. There’s nowhere I could take a nap for five minutes here. There’s nowhere I could even relax for five minutes let alone have a nap. Maybe I’d sit in my car and sleep, maybe (laughs) but you know all the experts say that relaxing during the day is good for you. Well, it doesn’t happen here.*

Administrative investment in a staffroom is important, if only for management of staff perception about the administration’s concern for them. Administrators receive a certain amount of capital budget for renovating their own office space. It does not go unnoticed when a new principal invests capital funding in painting their office and acquiring new furniture while claiming that there is no funding to repaint a staffroom. Members of a staff that feel they are worth at least the cost of a tea kettle are more likely to show more loyalty than a staff that doesn’t. It is no coincidence that the two schools in which principals had made an active

investment in the staffroom were consistently described as places where people wanted to work.

Gordon Duncan, principal at Heritage Hills explains:

*I think there is subtext to everything you do so if you've suggested that you put some money into the staffroom there's a commentary that's there, that people are valued. You know you would like people to think about space in a different way and invite them to come in. Whether or not it's your intent to make that commentary, you may be making that commentary regardless.*

Conceived spaces are about enforcement of intent. An investment in the staffroom is an investment in the staff, and staff members perceive it as such. As a result, they are more willing to be supportive of larger school agendas. The staff trusts that the administrator is at least somewhat aware of their needs as employees and concerned about them as human beings. "Such reliable interpersonal behavior is fundamental to advancing the basic instrumental aims of any collective activity. Not surprisingly, it operates as another core criterion for trust discernments in all of the role relation sets around schooling" (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 26). When a principal has done the best job possible of listening to a teacher's concerns and addressing them, the principal is trusted. Teachers have much to lose when trust with their principal is broken. When there is no trust, teachers become excessively concerned about both real and imagined harm (Hoy, Gage, & Tarter, 2006). The goal of communication, when it exists at all, is "the protection of one's interest and the reduction of one's anxiety rather than the transmission of ideas" (Tschannen-Moran, 2009, p. 229). Teachers come to feel that they are not professionals and "little more than assembly-line workers or clerks, whose job was merely to organize, disseminate, and process predeveloped tasks" (deMarrais & LeCompte, 1995, p. 158). This type

of top-down control deprofessionalizes and demotivates teachers. It fosters alienation and apathy (Ingersoll, 2003). As a result, self-esteem and programs suffer.

Administrators control what equipment can or cannot be in a workroom or staffroom, even if the equipment is provided by the members of the staff themselves. One administrator was responsible for removing a couch from a department workroom at East Central. As Oksana explains, this couch had become a place for teachers, including those not in the department to come and hang out: *“Our office was also a place where people would drop in and have snacks, which we usually had, and just chat. We were told it was not professional to have a couch and so it was taken away.”* Mark, who did not have his space in the workroom with the couch, remembers its removal:

*Someone brought a couch in and they were told to get rid of that because it wasn't fair that they had a couch and no one else did. So they were told not to be comfortable and enjoy themselves because you can't have a good time when you're teaching.*

Roger tells of how one principal's attitude towards recreational equipment changed the attitude and co-operation of the staff.

*At one time the school had ping pong tables throughout the hallways and students were playing ping pong at lunch all the time. Small population at the time and more common lunches so that was doable. As the population was swelling there was a concern raised about fire hazards and that type of thing so all of a sudden the ping pong tables went into storage. One day we were putting some athletic equipment into a room and noticed these ping pong tables and said what's this about? So this was before my time at the school. We said so why don't we haul one out? It was near the end of the school year so we hauled this thing out cause we had the time to do so, took it down to the staffroom, set it*

*up, played a game and decided next year when we get back in the fall this is what we are going to do. We are going to go down at lunch and get a tournament going because the school I had been at previous was a small town school, we had a pool table in the staffroom that the principal had taken discretionary funds and purchased a full-sized billiard table. It was beautiful and there were pool tournaments on a regular basis that would start on lunch on Friday. There would be some preliminary games on lunches and then Friday after school the teachers would stay and they made this into their staff social night. And that's the thing another principal came in and sold the pool table and bought some couches and it really ruffled some feathers and it immediately that school went from being a faculty that really worked well with their administration to many of them who had their backs up.*

Administrators not only control the financial investment in a staffroom, they control the use of the space itself. Many schools had used the staffroom as a classroom when schools were over crowded, although logic would seem to dictate that when the student population increases so does that of the teaching staff and thus the necessity to provide more spaces for the staff not less. At East Central the staffroom was turned into a classroom for part of the day. The reasons were that it wasn't being used and that the space was needed.

*I don't remember anything about staff being upset, but I can imagine a supply teacher who has a first period spare, where are they going to go? They could go to the library and read a book, I guess. If they wanted to eat their lunch first period they could go to the caf I guess. (Brad, Vice-Principal)*

An overworked administrator may make what seems like a logical decision without being aware of all of the details and people involved. According to Lauren, when the East Central



staffroom was turned into a classroom, the staff was not consulted and many were upset. *“It was a done deal.”* This is fairly typical of general policy-making in schools. Teachers may have control over what happens in their own class, but lack input into general school policies which are often determined by senior staff in meetings controlled by administrators (Connell, 1985). The administration was concerned about student needs and lack of space and made a decision without being fully aware of the impact of that decision upon its staff members. Lauren recalls an incident with a supply teacher who was unable to use the staffroom because of a class in progress.

*One time I went to the bathroom. Our bathroom has that little room before you actually go into the bathrooms and I saw a supply teacher sitting in there on a chair period one last year. And I’m like, “What are you doing in here?” And she goes, “Well the staffroom is being used and I have nowhere else to go.” It was horrible. (Lauren, drama, eight years)*

The cafeteria at East Central is not open period one and the library is often full to capacity. A supply teacher would not know where the workrooms are and would simply have no other place to go first period when not teaching.

As was pointed out previously, administrators control the use of school space including staffrooms. Some of the appropriated uses of a staffroom that survey respondents mentioned were as follows: meeting place, workshops, union votes, math tutor room, focus groups, professional development activities, student club meetings, parent interaction, place for grad photos, vaccination clinic for elementary students, heads meetings, student reward events, exams, student photographs for registration, storage, music practice room, coffee house events, computer use, Scantron storage, and department meetings. One school had even eliminated the

staffroom altogether and turned it into a permanent class space for the hospitality program. This was a five-year-old building whose original design included a beautiful staffroom with huge windows which opened out to a courtyard in the warmer weather. This room was taken completely away from the staff by the administration, who turned it into a fulltime classroom, leaving the staff with nowhere to go to eat their lunch except their workroom. Mark has a theory about why appropriation happens: *“The reality is it’s almost like a planned thing to divide and conquer. You know if you keep people separate from each other they can’t complain about things.”*

The disconnect was shocking between the principal who claimed proudly that her staff did not mind the loss of a staffroom and the many comments given on the survey that identified the school by name, although this was not asked, and vehemently resented the loss of space: *“Our staffroom was turned into a classroom during the second year the school opened. Very negative impact on the staff.”*

It is very easy for the staffroom to lose its original purpose when the administration reassigns it as a classroom. When a new teacher who has not experienced a thriving staffroom culture sees that the staffroom can be used as a classroom because it is empty then it is a logical assumption that the staffroom can be used for student conferencing. This happened at least twice while I sat in the staffroom this year, by two different teachers. One new teacher expected me to leave the staffroom so the conference could take place. When another staff member came in to have a coffee or eat lunch, the presumption was that the staff member had interrupted the student and became an intrusion, rather than the teacher/student conference encroaching on staff space. When it was suggested that the conference room might provide a more appropriate venue for a teacher/student conference, the response was, *“Oh, I didn’t think of that.”* In this new teacher’s

mind, the staffroom's primary purpose had become to accommodate students, not teachers.

Teachers who sat in the staffroom were doing nothing, and by implication, not working as hard as the teacher who was conferencing with a student.

Hargreaves (1989) explains how some administrators judge the productivity of their staff by their minimal misuse of downtime. Administrators tend to view time as monochronic, with priority given to task completion and adherence to schedule. These principals "proudly proclaimed they never [emphasis in original] see their teachers just [emphasis in original] having a coffee" (p. 26). Anything other than work, such as relaxation or conversation, during preparation time was considered illegitimate. Hargreaves (1989) further explains that teachers tend to view time as polychronic. Many tasks are being accomplished at the same time. With a polychronic time view, context and the quality of completion take priority over schedule management. Gordon Duncan, principal at Heritage Hills, recognizes this:

*There's a trade off in everybody's life between what they do with their personal time versus their work time so if people have expectations about what they need to get done, they usually find a way of doing it and meeting the expectation.*

A teacher can be having a cup of coffee while thinking of ways to improve the design of a lesson or even while focusing with greater precision on the many tasks involved in the next lesson. If conceived spaces are about control and intent as much as about design, then it is administrators who ultimately wield this control in a school. The administration formulates what Connell (1985) calls the political order of the school: the patterns of authority and consent, resistance and opposition that can determine the tone and character of the school. As such, an administration can positively or negatively influence a school's culture (King & Peart, 1992; Lordan, 2008). Questions of authority, power, and culture are intimately bound to those of space.

## **Chapter 7 Secondary school staffrooms as lived spaces**

One can theorize about the philosophical nature of space, but ultimately space is a practical and lived human experience. “In other words, there are no philosophical questions that arise over the nature of space – the answer lies in human practice” (Harvey, 1973, p. 13). This chapter situates secondary school staffrooms within the final arm of Lefebvre’s spatial triad, that of *lived* space. Ironically, lived space seems to have been largely ignored in the investigation of teacher’s work at the expense of physical space and spatial control. Yet it is in this arm of Lefebvre’s spatial triad that we find the metaphors that embed expectations of school use, the history that perpetuates the reproduction of teacher labour, the opportunity for appropriation from administrators who take space, and the hope of teachers who attempt to revitalize it. If social space is like “flake *mille-feuille* pastry” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 86) in its many layers, then lived space must be like eating that same pastry: messy, impossible to keep intact, liable to be shared, and certainly lingering in memory from both the crumbs on the plate and the remnants of frosting on hands. This chapter defines lived space and attempts to establish that, in spite of the decline of their use, secondary staffrooms are still alive. Their use may have changed in some schools, but they are not necessarily dead spaces. This chapter reports on the observations made of the staffrooms of East Central Secondary School and Heritage Hills Secondary Schools as lived spaces. Finally, the chapter continues to place staffrooms within lived spaces by examining the metaphors, time, and history that reproduce their use patterns.

### **7.1 Defining lived spaces**

Spaces may be designed by architects and implemented by governments and managers, but they are lived in by people, and with those people come the time, history and developed metaphors of space. As Jan Nesor explains, “Space can’t be treated as a static totality. It is

constantly lived, experienced, reordered by those who move through it” (p. 94). Lived space brings with it the possibility of rebellion, appropriation, change, dissolution, and sometimes hope. Lived space is the active arm of Lefebvre’s spatial triad. Lived space demands action. “This is the space which imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 39). It is the space of everyday experiences (Merrifield, 2006). It is the way space is used and lived in despite design, intent, and even enforcement.

All spaces - because space is a social construct - are lived spaces. Even if the space appears to disappear, what is happening is change, not eradication. “No space ever vanishes utterly, leaving no trace. Even the sites of Troy, Susa or Leptis Magna still enshrine the superimposed spaces of the succession of cities that have occupied them” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 164). Remnants of the space remain in memory and design. To consider a staffroom as a lived space one must consider not only its intended use, but its current use, and whether or not that has changed from its original purpose. Members of a school community often carve out their own additional spaces (Soja, 1989). Students are assigned classrooms and teachers are assigned workrooms and staffrooms, but people have a way of finding more places in spaces. Groups of students will seek out a stairwell in which to socialize with friends. This becomes claimed as their area. Teachers will avoid kitchens in administrative areas, because they are not perceived as their space. On the other hand, teachers will freely converse with one another on the side of the parking lot away from where the administration parks. Members of a school form their social group contingent on available space and create new spaces as needed to accommodate their social group. As previously mentioned, for many teachers this is the department workroom. Yet even as teachers find spaces other than the staffroom in which to meet and eat, the staffroom

itself remains. Even when the staffroom is turned into a classroom, the staffroom remains in the memory and the history of the school.

## 7.2 Secondary school staffrooms – not dead yet

As seen in Figure 4.3, only 13% of survey respondents have experienced an increase in staffroom use. Staffroom use has decreased for every demographic group except for males and teachers with less than 5 years of experience, who may never or rarely have used the staffroom in the first place. Teachers who use the staffroom daily or 2 times or more per week have not decreased their staffroom use to the same extent. This is not surprising, as teachers who continue to use staffroom have probably done so throughout their career. 61.7% of teachers who have taught more than 16 years claim staffroom use has decreased or decreased considerably. Sam describes the decline of staffroom use at her school.

*Much less. Much much less. When I first started here, this room was attached to that conference room over there and both rooms were staffrooms so you had people flowing between the two and they were totally jammed. People were sitting on the arms of couches. (Samantha, English, 25 years experience)*

Figure 4.1.4 showed that only 19.5% of respondents felt that staffrooms were busy or very busy. A greater number, 50.8%, felt that staffrooms were rarely or only sometimes used.

*There's nobody to eat lunch with anymore because nobody comes down here anymore so that's why. At least you used to be able to talk with other people in the school but now nobody uses it, supply teachers and the odd person using the computer I've found (Mark, phys ed, 25 years experience)*

- *Fewer and fewer people there, makes it less inviting.*
- *No one I know goes there to eat their lunch.*

Lack of use becomes a self-perpetuating problem. As staffrooms empty, teachers will not eat there because there is no one to talk to. As they eat elsewhere, staffrooms remain unused. If staffrooms are not being used, how can they be described as *lived* spaces? Would not a better description be *dead* space? Non-users and some administrators believe so, but this reflects their inability to know what life still remains in a staffroom and what new life may grow.

Staffrooms are currently viewed as extremely important (Figure 4.9). The majority of respondents (66.6%) felt that secondary school staffrooms were an important, very important, or extremely important part of school spaces.

*I think they need to be brought back to their original purpose and that we desperately need them, desperately. For places to be able to relax, let your hair down, have fun, to eat together, to get to know each other, to become more united as a department, as a staff. That's a time where people from every department can get together and meet each other.* (Samantha, English, 25 years experience)

Survey respondents noted the need for a space where teachers could be together from different departments and linked this need with morale and collegiality. Some respondents mentioned the need to take a break or to get away from their workrooms: “*Teachers must have somewhere to go when their workrooms are too busy, loud, crowded or politically charged.*” One very practical observation was that “*it is not advisable for science teachers to eat in their office when the chemical preparation room is directly attached.*” Other practical considerations would be noise factors associated with workrooms attached to gymnasiums or music rooms.

Respondents also commented on the need for staffrooms as a place for supply teachers: “*Supply teachers need it because they do not have workrooms and they need a*

*place to hang their coats and access the internet.*” At East Central, like at many other schools, the staffroom, was used by supply teachers. This group formed a tight-knit community that shared information about school policies and job opportunities. This was a group that was often ignored by and excluded from other departments. Too many respondents referred to them as *“just supply teachers,”* as if these teachers did not matter as if and they were somehow inconsequential because of their transient nature. The reality is that groups of supply teachers are in a secondary school every day and some individual supply teachers are called into a school on a very regular basis. Theirs is a lively and vital component of a secondary school staff. Often made to feel like intruders in a departmental workroom, they are relegated to the staffroom. Their community, sadly and too often by necessity, is only each other.

Many respondents perceived that it was only supply teachers who used the staffroom and that they would have nowhere else to go during lunch and preparation time if staffrooms were removed.

- *Staffrooms seem to be exclusively used by occasional teachers who definitely need a place to stay during their down time.*
- *I think they are vital to have in a school (especially for occasional teachers to have their own space for lunch), but I don't think my current staff utilizes theirs as much as they could.*

Some respondents who claimed that staffrooms were never used chose to ignore their use by supply teachers indicating a marked dichotomy between contract teachers and those who are only temporary and therefore even worth noticing let alone being considered colleagues.



In addition to being used by supply teachers, the staffroom at East Central was also used as office space by the teachers and assistants who worked in the satellite classroom of one of the board's special needs schools. James, a special needs teacher also working in a satellite classroom of another school, found himself between two staffs. He was too far away from his main school to have office space and not formally a part of East Central, so he did not have office space there either. He had a desk in the room in which he taught his special needs students and used the staffroom as his office for computer use, although he did not keep any of his work materials there. When James first started at East Central, four years ago, he was able to connect with other staff members, including myself, to find learning opportunities for his students. Through our staffroom meetings, we were able to set up a very successful musical collaboration between my students and his. This collaboration continued as long as we were both at East Central. However, in even in the short time James was at East Central, he noticed and a decline in staffroom use and his program felt the effect of the change.

*Part of my job is to make myself available to staff in order to provide opportunities for my students. So in the past when the staffroom was used more, there was more of an opportunity for that, i.e. making connections with you on our first year. You were in the staffroom and using it quite a bit. The ladies I work with were using it quite a bit and so on. So being social and making those connections is important to my job. This year I've made no connections in here with staff because they don't use it. They all stay in their departments. (James, special needs, five years experience)*

Alternate uses for staffrooms included many things, as previously noted in Chapter 6, including meetings, graduation photos, and staff breakfasts. The most insidious alternate use, though, was that of a classroom. This type of appropriation is particularly sinister because once

space is taken away it is unlikely to be returned. Staff find other spaces to eat their lunch, form new habits, and are not apt to put their need for a place to have a coffee in competition with a student's need to have a classroom.

Frequently, workspace is appropriated by managers and instituted for their own purposes, but sometimes the workers fight back. Lived spaces or spaces of representation are emergent and transformative. They are subject to change or sublation. They “may be linked to underground and clandestine sides of life and don't obey rules of consistency or cohesiveness” (Merrifield, 2006, p. 110). Sometimes a lived space becomes a reaction to imposed rules and expectations. Architects may design, and managers may plan, but people have a way of making spaces their own.

Representations of space are certainly abstract, but they also play a part in social and political practice: established relationships between objects and people in represented space are subordinate to a logic which will sooner or later break them up because of their lack of consistency. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 41)

Consider a restaurant, where the client expectation of table service and table setting means elegance and atmosphere to the diner, but work and expediency to the server (Allen, 2003).

Consider a parking lot that is used for its designated purpose during the daytime but becomes a skateboard arena at night. Consider a staffroom designed for lunches and breaks that becomes a venue for a baby shower after work or becomes a classroom during the first period of the day.

“Many a political tension over the use and social meaning of a public space would fall under the rubric of spatial contradiction where the attachment of one group clashes with the formal designations of another” (Allen, 2003, p. 166). Lefebvre offers the example of streets given over to traffic instead of pedestrians. “Wherever streets disappeared, criminality increased, became

organized. In the street and through the space it offered, a group (the city itself) took shape, appeared, appropriated places, realized and appropriated space-time” (2003, p. 19). One group superimposes its agenda onto that of another. Lefebvre asks the same question that I have about this sort of appropriation:

It concerns the silence of the “users” of this space. Why do they allow themselves to be manipulated in ways so damaging to their spaces and their daily life without embarking on massive revolts? ... Has bureaucracy already achieved such power that no political force can successfully resist it? (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 51)

Lefebvre (1991) ponders if the answer might be because the space has now been “endowed with an illusionary special status” (p. 52). In the case of a staffroom, student needs always trump those of the staff. A class then becomes “special status”, certainly elevated status over a staffroom. I think that teachers are too overworked and tired to rebel and that the removal of one of the few places dedicated to their needs happens so subtly, and often without consultation, that it goes not only unchallenged but unnoticed until new habits have formed and it appears to no longer matter. Lived spaces are also about challenge and rebellion, though, and a few staffrooms are fighting to maintain their existence. Some staffs are trying to reclaim their staffrooms by bringing in recreational equipment, such as ping pong tables, at their own expense, organizing soup clubs or breakfasts, or just by coming into the staffroom, sitting down, and staking a claim to the space.

### **7.3 East Central and Heritage Hills Secondary Schools**

Part of this investigation was the observation of two staffrooms as they are currently lived. When I started, I thought that it might be difficult to locate rarely-used staffrooms that

could be examined. I was worried that principals would not be willing to come forward to discuss their staffrooms. Both fears proved to be unfounded. I was a teacher at East Central Secondary at the time of this research, so this staffroom was chosen, not only as a matter of convenience and easy confirmation of lack of use, but also because of a good working relationship with colleagues who had taught at the school for many years and were willing to speak about the changes, and a principal, Patricia Armstrong, who was willing to talk honestly about the role of administration in staffroom spaces.

### **East Central Secondary School**

The first task in this research was to determine if the staffroom at East Central Secondary had ever been actively used and, if so, if its use had declined. Lauren, a drama teacher with eight years experience, remembered that the staffroom used to be a busy place. *“When I first came here there were a lot of people in the staffroom. It would be normal to have the tables full, but everybody just stopped coming in.”* Mark, a phys ed teacher with 25 years of experience, all at East Central Secondary School, confirmed the staffroom decline. *“We used to eat lunch in here every day until about five years ago and it went to nothing. Now nobody uses it, supply teachers and the odd person using the computer.”* Jacob, a business teacher with 15 years experience, says, *“Anyone who comes here gets their food and walks out.”* By all accounts from those interviewed, the staffroom at East Central has turned from a vibrant meeting place five years ago to what Jacob so aptly describes as *“a haunted house.”*

East Central Secondary is an urban school, built in 1972 to house 1000 students. At the time of this study, it had a population of 1418 students. It had recently been designated an at-risk school by the province of Ontario. The school has 24 portables. It has a staff of 127, which varies from those who have spent most of their career teaching at East Central Secondary to those who

are just entering the profession for the first time. The school is administered by one principal and three vice-principals. East Central used to have both a staffroom and a lunchroom. Through the years, the staffroom, which was centrally located in the building, was taken away and turned into a playschool. What was formerly the lunchroom now functions as both a staffroom and lunchroom. In addition, as occasion requires, this staffroom has been used as a classroom and has become a conference room for students.

The staffroom at East Central is 15' by 24', approximately half the size of a standard classroom. It is painted two shades of a nondescript medium green. Composite pictures of previous staff hang haphazardly upon the walls. Many random years of staff pictures are missing. There are four round tables which can each comfortably seat four. A small sitting area has one square dark green leather couch, a single matching chair, and a small coffee table. Three computers face the back wall. The staffroom has a fridge and one very small barely functioning microwave brought in many years ago by a staff member. It has no windows, no closets to hang coats, no cupboards to hold mugs, no paper towels, no vending machines, no wireless access, no coffee maker, and no sink to rinse dishes or draw water for a kettle. Most significantly, it also has very few people in it. The current staffroom at East Central is not centrally located. It is away from the office, the workrooms, and the staff washrooms. Unless one is intentionally going to the room, there is no reason to pass by the staffroom.

Patricia Armstrong, principal at East Central, does not feel that the staffroom is of concern to the current staff. *"It's not important to them. I don't think it's a priority. It's been of interest to you, partly because you're organically interested and because you're doing your thesis on it but I've had no real discussions about the staffroom with anybody other than you and*

*the person who has started the soup group.”* She does, however, recognize the need to develop relationships outside of those created at task-oriented PD sessions or on committees.

*I think that while relationships can definitely be built as people work together on meaningful tasks that are going to bring about improvement for the students and the school, relationships are also built when you get to know people, and you get to know people and their lives beyond school when you have time to engage in those conversations and those conversations are generally not happening when you’re sitting at a table with a task that you’re supposed to do. (Patricia Armstrong, principal, East Central)*

**Figure 7.1.** East Central Staffroom



Figure 7.1 is a photograph of the East Central staffroom: dark, small, windowless, and empty. The newspapers were placed on the table by the librarian three days before this picture

was taken, to be read by the occasional supply teacher who used the room. The pink plastic tablecloths on the back tables were the remnants of the soup club meeting a few days previously. The microwave, donated by a staff member five years ago, is seldom cleaned, as there is no access to water in the room. This is the only kitchen-type accessory in the room, besides the fridge. Behind the few tables is a row of computers and a Scantron machine. There are a few old staff pictures, but a number of years are missing and the current staff picture is not on the wall. There is one art print, not showing in this picture, that is the same dismal shade of green as the walls. Other than the outdated OSSTF notice board at the back of the room, these are the only decorations. When asked what she would do with an unlimited budget to improve the staffroom, Armstrong's answer was very practical.

*Things like a microwave, a fridge, possibly a dishwasher so that people would have dishes there and could clean up after themselves and that would encourage people to eat there. You'd have colours and artwork up that would encourage people to want to be there, and furniture that is nice and new as well as easily cleaned. Maybe, it's vinyl you can wipe it up easily so people could eat there as well as relax there. (Patricia Armstrong, principal, East Central)*

Of course, in order for a dishwasher to be installed, a plumbing connection would have to be made, an unlikely expense in a school with a very limited capital budget.

### **Heritage Hills Secondary School**

It was actually much more difficult to find an example of a well-used staffroom for this research. During my interviews with teachers and administration, Heritage Hills Secondary School was repeatedly mentioned as both as having an active staffroom and being a great place to teach. Heritage Hills is located within a 15-minute driving distance from East Central. It was

built in 1988 and now holds about 1500 students. It has been designated an eco-school for its focus on energy conservation and recycling.

The staffroom at Heritage Hills was spacious and bright. It was about four times the size of that of East Central. It was divided into an eating area, with table and chairs, and a sitting area, with comfortable sofas and a coffee table. Even though this picture was taken during an off time with few staff in the building, one can see coffee cups, water jugs, books, and plates, indicating recent use. Gordon Duncan, the principal, was very proud to speak of his staffroom and the staff with whom he worked. One of the interesting features in the room was a memorial corner dedicated to two of the previous staff members who had passed on.

**Figure 7.2.** Heritage Hills Staffroom Tables and Mailboxes



Gordon Duncan guesses that the staffroom is used by between 20-50% of the staff during each of the day's three lunch periods. He felt very strongly about the role of a staffroom:



*It's social and it's an opportunity for people to get to know each other which is what I think you want to have happen on a staff. I think community is really important on staff. I think community is a sense of shared responsibility for the group and I think it is easy to be segmented in the secondary school, in a large secondary school, and not have that sense of community. I think also in many schools I've worked in, the department offices, and the composition of the departments, some of them is really positive and some of it is not really positive. Some sort of negative chemistry can perpetuate itself if it doesn't have an opportunity to mix with a larger group. And I think that there probably are some people who get into a particular department and they feel somewhat marginalized because they are not part of the structure, the culture, that's there. I know formally there have been some department members of schools I have been in that could not work in an office any longer because they felt marginalized and we had to find a way to find another location for them to be because it was that difficult for them. You know having an opportunity to have a common space where it's legitimate and appropriate to be with a variety of different people of your choosing is a nice thing, a good thing. (Gordon Duncan, principal, Heritage Hills)*

Laura, a former teacher at Heritage Hills, concurs that the staffroom was designed to be used by the staff during their day, not created as a space to be forgotten:

*Even though the individual workrooms were equipped with a fridge and a microwave and I think a kettle and a sink, it was equipped with the notion that teachers should sometimes during the day teachers should be in the staffroom. And they had up to date computers not the ones that had been thrown out of classrooms. They had coffee brewing in the morning and it was free so people would tend to drop in and have a little cup of coffee*

*and a quick chat and there was real sense of collegiality even though people worked very very hard. (Laura, librarian, retired)*

Recycling is a strong mandate of Heritage Hills, and the staffroom includes not only a blue box, but facilities to recycle old electronics, such as batteries. The bank of computers is at the side and well out of the way of the eating and conversational areas.

Gordon Duncan was very aware of the space and took an active role in facilitating its configuration.

*We rearranged the furniture because it was illogical the way it was set up. It was not a good space socially and the way the computers were set up was not really sensible. The computers were set up with there's a window a bank of windows and the computers were perpendicular to that so they stretched into a lot of the space so there wasn't the tables and chairs the way they are. They couldn't fit in as efficiently as they are so it was a lot more cramped. It felt a lot more cramped than it is so we moved the tables flush up to the glass and near workspaces and it stretches a bit further distance, but it doesn't matter. It's a better set up for it. We made some changes with regard to the use of bulletin boards and we set up a better bin system for the mail, but that isn't really a staffroom issue it is just more efficient. (Gordon Duncan, principal, Heritage Hills)*

**Figure 7.3** Heritage Hills Staffroom Tables and Sitting Area



I think that it is really important to notice the constant use of the “we” when Gordon Duncan speaks. He overtly admires and respects that people he works with and is conscious of how his investment in a staffroom space is a visible investment in his team.

*I think there is subtext to everything you do so if you’ve suggested that you put some money into the staffroom there’s a commentary that’s there that people are valued. You know you would like people to think about space in a different way and invite them to come in. Whether or not it’s your intent to make that commentary, you may be making that commentary regardless. (Gordon Duncan, principal, Heritage Hills)*

Gordon Duncan has taken an active role in sustaining a vital staffroom by being aware of its positive effect on the staff. The actual capital investment has been minimal, but the benefits of taking such an interest have been incalculable to both the staff and the students. His philosophy has paid off in staff members who are loyal and happy to work at this school.

## 7.4 Metaphor, time, and history

Lived spaces are influenced and defined by metaphor, time, and history. The lived spaces of staffrooms are influenced by all three. Metaphors used by survey respondents to describe their staffrooms such as *empty*, *wasteland*, *friendly*, and *break* may not only define, but perpetuate patterns of use in a secondary school staffroom. Time, the enemy of all teachers, is a constant consideration when deciding to eat lunch. Teachers are at the mercy of time constraints imposed by time tables, labour contracts, and non-classroom duties that must be accomplished. History forms habit and it is this habit that often transforms into permanent use patterns.

### Metaphor

The arms of Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad are interconnected, and movement of an individual member of a given social group from one arm to another without confusion is only possible through the use of common images and symbols. "There is a constant to-and-fro both between the component elements and between the parts and the whole" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 141). Metaphor provides symbolic shorthand to understanding a space. Carrie Paechter (2004) observes that there is an abundance of spatial metaphors used to describe schools and schooling. The teaching profession is described to as a *field* and the curriculum as *core*, *spiral*, or *scaffolded*. Achievement is measured by *gaps*, *levels*, and *thresholds*. Learning can be *distance*, *distributed*, or *student-centered*. Paechter asserts that we live by the metaphors we choose. "Metaphors are not only embedded in, but constitutive of, particular discourses" (2004, p. 461). Whereas education may profess to advocate and respect individualism, the underpinnings of the profession's vocabulary would suggest the opposite. "As the discourse of attainment and hierarchy became more dominant, more and more of these metaphors were introduced, thus further supporting the hegemony of this discourse" (Paechter, 2004, p. 462). Dominant

metaphors reinforce and sustain dominant spatial practice. Jane McGregor observes that the term “concrete” indicates a physical form, but that the use of the term in juxtaposition with the definition of school as a social world “is intriguing as it highlights the polarisation of the physical and the social” (2004, p. 347).

I suspect that staffrooms are also subject to metaphor. If the dominant discourse is that staffrooms are a place for supply teachers, old teachers, complainers, and slackers, or even worse, for nobody, then the implied metaphor for some teachers is: “That’s not me, so I don’t belong, and I won’t go.” If staffrooms are used as storage rooms, meeting rooms, or for student groups, then the perception is that staffrooms are not for staff. If staffrooms are equipped with computers, phones, whiteboards, and meeting tables, then the visual metaphor is that a staffroom is for work not relaxation. Figure 4.35 shows that teachers who consider their staffroom ambience to be *fabulous* or *good* also consider their staffs to be collegial. This was an important and surprising connection. Perhaps a good ambience is a metaphor for a staff that is worth capital investment from administrators. Perhaps it emphasizes the importance of people as part of that ambience. A staffroom full of people is considered to be a metaphor for a collegial staff.

## **Time**

If space is a human construction, then time is even more so. As Lefebvre argues, “time *per se* is an absurdity” (1991, p. 181). John Urry (1995) explains the contradictory nature of space and time:

Space and time only exist when they are entities in some sense *in* space and time. Hence, they do not exist without at least two existent objects, which occupy a relationship within time-space. This means incidentally if there are at least two such objects then there is

never nothing - there is, as Kant argued, space - that is the space between these two objects. (1995, p. 25)

Nature may provide different seasons and the change from day to night, but it is humans who divide nature into months, weeks, days, and hours. Elden (2004) claims that time is merely a representation. To divide time into measures privileges the clock. "The measure of time, is no longer time, just as the measure of work is no longer work" (p. 173). Space occurs over time and history and "Lefebvre did not privilege space at the expense of time, or vice versa" (Kiper, Goonewardena, Schmid, & Milgrom, 2008, p. 9). Time is the key factor in production costs and capital accumulation. If more can be produced in less time, then more profit will result. Time is also the backbone of history. "Let everyone look at the space around them. What do they see? Do they see *time*? They live time, after all; they are *in* time. Yet all anyone sees is movements" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 95). Although it has been the past practice of the social sciences to favour the analysis of time over that of space (Taylor & Spicer, 2007), space and time must be considered simultaneously. In fact, it is impossible to ignore time when considering space and vice versa. "Social space is not only variable from individual to individual and from group to group; it is also variable over *time* [emphasis in original]" (Harvey, 1973, p. 36). History, convention, and accepted practice all influence the use and development of both a physical or social space. Time has particular relevance to the spaces of labour, as Richard Walker (1985) notes, because, although employment takes place in space, the creation, destruction and re-creation of viable employment relations occur over *time*. "Lived time loses its form and social interest – with the exception, that is, of time spent working" (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 95). Certainly, work takes place over time, likewise compensation for labour. As Barbara Adams (1995) explains, the presumption that "time is money" forms the foundation of Western business practice.

Labour is paid by the hour, the week, or the month. Companies calculate their labour costs in “man-hours”. Surplus value and profit cannot be established without reference to time. The life-span of a machine is reckoned in relation to the amount of work it produces within a specific period. Overtime, “time-out” through absenteeism, and strikes all form integral aspects of the calculation of a business’s production costs, its efficiency, and its performance in relation to competitors. (Adams, 1995, p. 89)

The spatial ordering of pedagogy is also a temporal ordering, a dynamic embedded, for example, in the texts of school timetables, which distribute people and artefacts to both time *and* places, ostensibly to learn and to teach. Each such ordering has effects on what is taught, learned, by whom, where, what subjectivity work is being attempted, and how power is exercised in these particular orders of sociality (Fenwick, Edwards, & Sawchuk, 2011, p. 161). Time well spent is time spent productively.

The principles that underlay the time-table in its traditional form was essentially negative, it was the principle of non-idleness: it was forbidden to waste time, which was counted by God and paid for by men; the time-table was to eliminate the danger of wasting it – a moral offence and economic dishonesty. (Foucault, 1995, p. 154)

Time for teachers must be spent as directed and, as in all institutions, spent as productively and economically as possible. Although time is a human construct, it is considered by those who control it to be a limited commodity and to waste it a sin. Teachers are controlled by time. “The articulation of space through time is powerfully manifested by the timetable. This locates staff, students and curricula” (McGregor, 2003, p. 364). Capital production is an issue of time. Cost and benefits are all rooted in time. How much can be made in a certain period of time affects the place in which it is produced. Time is critical in the discussion of conventions of a

workplace. Workplace practices such as pay scales, management hierarchy, and use of physical space all develop, become entrenched, and remain unchallenged over *time*.

Schools exist in time and function with time. School timetables are, of course, the most obvious manifestation of this. Time is controlled, and, by controlling time, the school attempts to control space. Students and teachers are supposed to be at a certain place at a certain time. During lunch periods, supposedly free time, there are areas where one group goes, but not the other. Lack of time was one of the major reasons that survey respondents and those interviewed gave for not being able to use the staffroom. This is not new. Teachers have often, and quite rightfully, complained about lack of time (Lortie, 1975; Acker 1999, Hargeaves, 1994; Hall 2004). After all, “one can never strictly say that one has ‘finished’ teaching students” (Lortie, 1975, p. 177).

Time is a considerable factor when deciding where to eat one’s lunch. Lunch break is strictly regulated by the school timetable and contract. Roger explains the complications involved in a typical teacher’s timetable, where lunch could be scheduled for periods two, three, or four:

*I consider periods 2, 3, 4 to be a triple lunch. But you’re right. I do know of schools that do have what you just described as well. And that’s an interesting piece to it as well. In a school that’s taken an extended period and chopped it into three subsections, those 40 minute windows really become a defined lunch. Whereas a school that has a period 2 lunch that starts at 9:30 in the morning, you know when are you going to eat your lunch? Is that when you’re going to eat it, in the first 40 minutes and the last 40 minutes depending upon what you’ve got to accomplish in a day, that may vary. And it often would impede the whole trip to the staffroom because you’re thinking well if I’m going to*



*go down there at 9:30 I'm not really ready to eat lunch yet. If you've got another prep period somewhere else that you can turn into your lunch then you're probably going to eat later in the day and just have a quick snack and get some work done.*

Time may be a human construct, but teachers are at its mercy in every aspect of their working day. Lindén & Nyberg (2009) describe a similar situation to that of teachers when describing the lunch situation of bus drivers. Like teachers, bus drivers work alone. “The lunch room offers a chance to meet colleagues and talk about everyday issues” (p. 45). But this chance to meet is impeded by time issues, such as waiting for a microwave to become available and eating lunch in the allotted time before returning to work. “Such work is governed by a strict schedule where every minute is important. Clock-time, where every minute is essential, often conflicts with meal-time, the time needed to eat a full meal or just relax between shifts” (p. 43). The authors go on to note that such time restrictions often result in the workers choosing quick meal solutions, such as cakes or sweets, that kept the hunger away, but did not add to health.

Teachers at this school board were granted a 40-minute, uninterrupted lunch under their employment contract. The majority of respondents (56.7%) took 20 minutes or less for lunch (Figure 4.8). This is consistent with the complaint that there is not enough time and that workloads have increased. Lynn describes the change that she has observed throughout her career:

*I think staff have taken on more. Over the years, I believe just as an example that department heads did not have a full course load and they had an assistant besides that. I think that the class sizes might have been smaller. That staff weren't as involved as much with regard to the paperwork and stuff they have to do. I believe a few years ago there were secretaries. The secretaries would type the exams and do all the photocopying. So*

*instead of spending all of your lunch in the photocopy room, that was all done by somebody else. So your planning time could be used for your planning. But right now I think that their planning time is taken up and if you're involved in other areas of the school which is part of your job description - you're supposed to be part of the school community - then I think that that's taking up a lot of your time. So there's no time for other things to take that full hour to go socialize and spend an hour on your lunch.*

(Lynn, special education, 25 years experience)

Lynn recalls a time when department heads had assistants and additional release time to organize their department. Teachers also had a dedicated secretary to complete typing and photocopying. Computers and word processing have made secretaries redundant for typing, but tasks like photocopying, which involves waiting for one of the limited numbers of working photocopiers to be free, have added a considerable amount of time to the job. These are tasks which can only be accomplished outside of classroom hours, in other words, during lunch or preparation time, or even before or after school.

## **History**

Time creates history. This, according to Elden (2004), is why “we need to retain an abstract sense of time *alongside* [emphasis in original] examinations of ‘lived time’” (p. 173). Images and metaphor, important components of lived space, have their origins in history, “in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 41). Time and history provide the “variable containers” of social geography (Soja, 1989). They also create tradition. Allen (2003) provides the example of the Bank of England which is designed to be visually impressive. “Once inside, the weight of the past may be measured just as easily by the ears, by the play of sounds, floating voices and muffled silences”

(p. 172). Schools are replete with historical artefacts and traditions. Old tests and files, used textbooks, leftover props from plays in storage rooms, trophies, pictures of old staff members, students, and administrators, and outdated curriculum books can be found in virtually every educational institute (McGregor, 2004). These artefacts also provide part of a school's oral and social history, which provides the foundation for current practices. Decisions such as a music concert in November, pictures hung on a particular wall, administration not being responsible for coffee at a staff meeting, or supply teachers always getting assigned cafeteria duty are often rooted in history, not logic.

Appropriation is one of the main concerns of decreased staffroom use. As teacher spaces are not used, they are re-appropriated for student or administrative use. Once these spaces are taken over, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to return them to their original use. At the same time, though, it is impossible to erase the fact that staffrooms were once indeed staffrooms. On a grander scale, as schools are being shut down and used for other purposes, it is always possible to see that the building was once a school. No space disappears without a trace. Not even in a school. One use and change are just superimposed upon the last, and all changes are superimposed upon the physical and social foundational structures. Staffrooms that are changed into classrooms still reside in the memories of the staff and these memories are passed on to new members. The original lunchroom of East Central Secondary School was turned into a playschool, but its original purpose was still remembered by the staff, even though it was many years ago. It was remembered as a space that was taken from them and relinquished voluntarily. Changing a staffroom to a full-time classroom at one school could not erase its proximity to the cafeteria or its doors that opened out into a courtyard.

Staffrooms as lived spaces are full of history. Lefebvre notes that this history of individuals and a people exists whether or not there is awareness of the history:

Representational spaces need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness, Redolent with imaginary and symbolic elements, they have their source in history – in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people.

Ethnologists, anthropologists and psychoanalysts are students of such representational spaces, whether they are aware of it or not. (Lefebvre, 1991, p.41)

Some of the most active staffrooms I visited had the history of their staff on display through photographs. Heritage Hills has a corner devoted to the memory of two of its members who had passed on from cancer, serving as a tangible reminder that they are not forgotten.

Senior teachers have watched the change in staffroom use over their careers. They have also lived the increase in workload. Many of the senior teachers interviewed commented on how the job has changed and how there seems to be little time to socialize. One respondent noted that, *“people were a lot less stressed when I started teaching and used the staffroom. It was a great way to know people in other departments and discuss concerns.”* Many respondents noted that there was not enough time. *“It’s the workload; we don’t have time. The purpose is still valid.”* Some teachers actively promote staffroom use to younger teachers, as the writer of this comment does: *“A well-used staffroom is important for the development of collegiality and staff cohesiveness. I actively encourage new staff members to visit the staffroom on a regular basis.”* For some teachers it took the survey to make them think about utilizing the staffroom. *“It would be nice to eat my lunch there. I’m not sure why I don’t.”*

History informs habit. Wolin and Bennet (1984) analyzed family traditions and note that the family itself chooses the occasions it will ultimately embrace as traditions. “Perhaps this

element of choice contributes to the high degree of meaning family members generally attribute to their traditions and the attachment they exhibit to their continued observance. Family traditions seem to say, “This is the way we are; this is our family” (p. 3). It is easy enough to substitute “department” for “family”. A teacher who joins a department that has an established ritual of eating lunch in the department workroom is likely to eat lunch there, too, in order to become a member of the departmental family. As Wolin and Bennet (1984) note, “Although families gain and lose members, the ritual itself is a holding action against change, a buttress for continuity” (p. 8). Younger teachers may have become accustomed to using the workroom instead of the staffroom from the beginning of their career and, therefore, never experienced a change. It is very common for a young teacher to be introduced to the members of a subject department and emulate the lunch and break habits of their immediate colleagues. Thus, a young teacher may feel that his or her staffroom use have not declined because they never used it in the first place. A staffroom that has a history of being active stands a better chance of remaining so, particularly if seasoned staff can inculcate newer staff to its benefits.

## Chapter 8 Conclusion

Spatial theory teaches us that space is not *nothing*, nor is it *empty*. Space is both active and bordered. Whether or not that edge is concrete like a wall or nebulous like the edge of a galaxy, the edge is still there and within these spaces is much physical and social motion. “The true theoretical problem, however, is to relate these spheres to one another, and to uncover the mediation between them” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 298). Spatial theory, and possibly only spatial theory, has the ability to negotiate this mediation. For secondary school staffrooms, this concept that space is not empty means that although staffroom use may have declined, they are far from vacant or inert. Staffrooms are filled with supply teachers, baby showers, staff breakfasts, voting stations, history, and memories. They are bordered and influenced by their location, administrative support, and past practice of use. The application of spatial theory allows the borders between the physical aspects of a staffroom to be traversed in conjunction with those of the social, and the political. Lefebvre’s spatial triad provided a particularly salient way of applying spatial theory to the interconnected realities of staffrooms as perceived, conceived, and lived spaces.

Staffroom use has declined, but this study tends to support the argument that this does not mean that staffrooms should be eliminated. In spite of the reasons that respondents gave for not using the staffroom, 76.5% of survey respondents felt that staffrooms were a necessary part of a school and under no circumstances should they be eliminated. Those who use the staffroom at least twice a week were even more likely, at 91.8%, to feel that staffrooms were important. That perhaps was not a complete surprise, but even those who never use the staffroom were more likely to feel that a staffroom was still important. At the most basic level, teachers, like other workers, need a place to relax and get away, if only to perform better and develop professionally.

This is crucial in a job that is emotionally charged and constantly dealing with people. Things happen in a classroom: students have a bad day and lose their temper, lessons can go awry, teachers are sometimes tired, and students can sometimes hit a nerve. This is not necessarily the sign of a bad teacher, but rather a consequence of working in a profession that deals with people, and which in turn requires spaces with the capacity for professional coping, thinking, and developing, as well as rejuvenation. Teachers occasionally need to vent, deconstruct, or defuse in order to walk into the next class fairly and calmly, and better serve the needs of their students.

The staffroom can provide a place of quiet or a colleague who can provide professional support and advice. The department workroom does not necessarily provide this escape for all teachers. Enforced proximity and uniformity does not always work for all teachers at all times. “The space that homogenizes thus has nothing homogeneous about it. After its fashion, which is polyscopic and plural, it subsumes and unites scattered fragments or elements by force” (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 308). Occasionally, the frictions created by many personalities enclosed in a small space can be the reason why some teachers need an alternate place to relax. Furthermore, subject department workrooms may confine best practice to a department, limit the capacity for broader exchange of ideas and professional development, as well as prevent the cultivation of a positive schoolwide climate.

The main reasons for a decline in staffroom use were identified as increased workload, isolated location, poor ambiance, and an increased tendency to remain in the departmental workrooms. Teachers perceive that their workload has increased, and this increase has been substantiated (Clarke, Hart, & Livingstone, 2000; Evers, 1999; Hargreaves, 1989; Holland, Gordon, & Lahelma, 2007; King & Peart, 1992; Lordan, 2008; Smaller, 2000). As a result, in order to further avoid the encroachment of work obligations into personal time away from the

job site, and after work hours, teachers, like many professionals in the private sector (Gurchiek 2008), are working through their lunches. As one survey respondent observes, *“In reality, a lunch as such, is a rare thing; every day includes a working lunch period; impossible to get away from work; impossible to relax during the day.”* Teachers no longer feel that they have the luxury of taking time away from task to go to the staffroom to have a cup of coffee or socialize.

Spatial theory considers the physical aspects of a space and one of the essential physical aspects of staffrooms is their location which was determined to be critical factor in their use. Teachers who pass by the staffroom on a regular basis are not only more likely to use it, but also describe their staffroom as busier, with better ambiance, and their staff as more collegial than teachers who never pass by the it. A teacher cannot pass by the staffroom if it is isolated in the corner of a building. Staffrooms which are located as far away as three floors from the teacher’s workroom present an almost impossible labyrinth to negotiate, through crowded hallways, down stairs, into cafeterias, into staffrooms, and then the reverse journey, during the limited time allotted to lunch. The physical trip becomes almost impossible to traverse in a 40-minute lunch period. *“We are a three floor school and I am on the third. In a 40 minute lunch I don’t have time to go there and eat and then return.”* Isolation also brings neglect and eventually relegates the staffroom to a distant memory for all but supply teachers, if it is thought of at all. No one wants to sit in a room that is devoid of windows, light, or comfortable furniture, especially if this room rarely has the option of being with other people when casual conversation is wanted. Administrative support, in the form of interest, dedicated funds, and participation, is therefore important to healthy staffroom use for it is administrators who ultimately decide if a staffroom remains available to staff or if a staffroom is appropriated for other purposes such as a classroom.



Dominated space and appropriated space may in principle be combined – and ideally at least, they ought to be combined. But history – which is to say the history of accumulation – is also the history of their separation and mutual antagonism. The winner in the contest, moreover, has been domination. (Lefebvre, 1991, p. 166)

This research has shown that administrators who invest in the staffroom visibly show that they are investing in their staff and, as a result, increase staff perception they work in a collegial and friendly environment. Often this investment does not involve a large outlay of capital. Kettles, working microwaves, and comfortable furniture go a long way to buying goodwill.

### **8.1 Answers to research questions**

Henri's Lefebvre's spatial triad has proved a useful tool for seeking answers to the research questions, but it is so much more than a convenient means of organization. It is only through the multi-faceted lens provided by Lefebvre that we can understand and integrate the intertwined and complex social factors that influence and reproduce the patterns of staffroom use. The same theory that allows us to examine staffrooms separately as perceived, conceived, and lived also provides the means for the necessary task of re-examining staffrooms as a whole.

[It] suggests a possible criterion for distinguishing between ideology and practice as well as between ideology and knowledge (or, as otherwise stated, for distinguishing between the *lived* on the one hand and the *perceived* and the *conceived* [emphasis in original] on the other, and for discerning their interrelationship, their oppositions and dispositions, and what they reveal *versus* what they conceal). (Lefebvre, 1995, p. 53)

It is this link between ideology and practice that makes Lefebvre's spatial theory critical to this study. It is one thing to consider the perceived spaces of teachers' labour and say that teachers are too busy to use the staffroom, but it is quite another to link this labour to location

and community and its sub groups, such as departmental workrooms, or to link the perceived space of teachers' labour with the administrative control of these spaces as they were conceived. The interpretation of spatial linkages such as these is not only facilitated, but I would venture, only made possible through the use of Lefebvre's spatial triad.

### **Answers to primary questions**

1. Has secondary staffroom use in one major Canadian school board changed?

Change of secondary staffroom use was the easiest question to answer, and the decline of staffroom use was the only research question that was clearly addressed by previous researchers (Hastings, 2004, McGregor 2003). As previously mentioned, secondary school staffroom use in the investigated school board, or the actual lived use of this space "decreased" or "significantly decreased" for 51.3% of the survey respondents. All categories including new teachers, experienced teachers, regular users and infrequent users expressed a personal decline in staffroom use.

2. What are the factors and dynamics associated with change or lack of change in staffroom use in secondary schools?

To the best of my knowledge, this study was one of the only investigations into the causes of the decline of staffroom use. The causes are a reflection of the closely interwoven arms of Lefebvre's triad. The primary factor that contributed to secondary school staffroom decline is perception of increased workload. As in, for example, Hargreaves (1994), teachers feel that they no longer have the time to relax and visit the staffroom or even eat their lunch. This is a reflection of the perceived arm of the triad which concerns itself with the production and reproduction of labour. However, increase workload is not the only factor in staffroom decline. The perceived space of labour connects to the conceived space of design and location. Location

is another factor that has contributed to the decline of use. This is especially true in newer buildings with three floors. Staffrooms are often located on the first floor and it is difficult for teachers on the third floor or opposite end of the building to leave their class, drop off materials in the workroom, travel down three flights of stairs, eat lunch and then do the trip in reverse. Administrators, those who administer staffrooms as conceived spaces, also have a huge influence on the way that staffrooms are supported. Administrators may suspect that it is not in the best interests of the production of labour to encourage workers to step away from their primary work area such as classrooms and workrooms; thus investment in a staffroom, which does not directly service student needs, does not make sense for these administrators. It is not enough to study where labour takes place, but also where spaces designated for discretionary use of professional time occur. If these spaces are too far apart to travel between them then, inevitably, it will be the use of the discretionary professional space that will be abandoned. The concept of staffrooms as conceived spaces overlaps with the concept of staffrooms as lived spaces. Another significant factor is a lack of ambiance and facilities, a factor considered under the design of conceived spaces, in the staffroom. Ambiance, as shown, also includes a lack of people, a matter of how space is lived. Teachers want to socialize with other people and, if the staffroom is empty, they will seek company elsewhere, usually in the department workroom. History is another consideration of lived space as teachers develop the habit of eating with their departmental colleagues; they are more likely to continue to do so.

3. Does staffroom use relate to low staff engagement, absenteeism, burnout, and retention rates?

Little, if any, previous research has considered the effect of the decline of staffroom use. The results of this study showed that the answer to this research question was largely determined

by viewing staffroom spaces from the perspective of all three arms of Lefebvre's triad.

Comments from both survey respondents and those interviewed suggested some concrete links between an inter-connected staff, as previously discussed in the context of perceived space, and a positive working environment, another aspect of perceived space. Respondents commented on the feeling of sadness at not knowing their colleagues and the feeling that there was no longer a sense of community: *"It's really important to be able to get out of your department and socialize with others. It builds positive work environments, relationships and overall staff satisfaction."*

Administrators often have the power to encourage teachers to leave the departmental workroom and join with others on staff. This is only one example of how power affects labour. Although this investigation did not prove this, interviews indicated a reluctance to change schools when staff was perceived as very friendly. This is an issue that transcends staffrooms as a mere employee perk, or even as a mere potential mechanism for staff morale. This makes the preservation of staffrooms, or an equivalent space to encourage positive professional relationships, an issue of paramount importance to administrators from the perspective of labour retention and its resulting connection to cost effectiveness and retention of professional skills.

4. Are staffrooms still considered by teachers to be a necessary component of their workplace spaces?

The majority of respondents (66.6%) felt that secondary school staffrooms were an important, very important, or extremely important part of their work spaces and their professional work lives. This included males and females, at all levels of experience, and both users and non-users. Even those respondents who never used the staffroom felt that it was a space worth preserving in a school. *"They have outlived their purpose, but I don't want to see them go – I want to see them improved, more inviting and attract more people."* In other words,

there was a desire to change the way that staffrooms are currently lived. Many comments were given on the survey to explain the reasons why staffrooms are still considered important lived spaces in a school. From a labour perspective, or that of perceived space, these reasons expressed more than a simple desire not to have an employee benefit taken away; rather the reasons expressed a desire for improved job performance. It was felt that staffrooms were important in order for people to be able to put names to faces. It is not only, as one respondent wrote, *“embarrassing working on a staff and not knowing names, what they teach or if they are LTOs”*, it is something that likely undermines and creates barriers to effective work in a variety of ways. One is unlikely to create professional partnerships or seek advice from someone whose name is not known. The staffroom is invaluable in this regard. It provides a place for teachers to meet with teachers from other departments as we saw earlier *“for the casual exchange of ideas and information about what is going on with the school/individual students*. Also included in the staffroom’s importance is the fact that staffrooms continue to provide a uniquely significant lived space for supply teachers: a place *“to go when there is no place for them in the school or they feel unwelcome in the department.”*

### **Answers to secondary questions**

1. What is the percentage of staff members who use secondary staffrooms?
2. For what purpose do teachers use staffrooms?
3. Where do teachers spend their non-classroom time?
4. What are the characteristics of an active staffroom?
5. Is an active staffroom an indication of a collegial and supportive work environment? Can such an environment exist in a school with low staffroom use?
6. Can a profile be created of staffroom users and non-users?

The survey showed that 39.5% of respondents use the staffroom at least once a week. The survey also showed that 51% of respondents use the staffroom rarely or never at all. Teachers use staffrooms to eat their lunch, to meet and socialize with colleagues who are in other department workrooms, to exchange advice about students, to de-stress, to relax, to laugh and to cry. The staffroom is perceived as a more neutral place to share the difficulties of the day. Teachers primarily spend their non-classroom time working in their departmental workrooms, although this is not always the optimal location for everyone all the time. Question 4 was a difficult question to investigate, as there are so few active staffrooms in this board. The general predictors, however, seem to be staffs that are collegial and know each other, a supportive principal, a history of ongoing staffroom use, and a staffroom that has basic physical amenities such as windows or light, space, comfortable clean furniture, and a fresh coat of paint.

In many staffrooms, the primary users are supply teachers, who have nowhere else in the building to leave their coat and belongings. The average staffroom user is someone who already uses it. This is significantly more likely to happen if the person passes by the staffroom as part of the daily routine. The average non-user is someone who has not developed the habit of using the staffroom. Frequent users wrote comments like, "*It's the social nucleus of the staff,*" or, "*Are you kidding? My life revolves around the staffroom.*" Non-users mentioned factors such as workload and location as reasons for not using the staffroom, but even non-users mentioned the value of the space. "*Just because I do not use it as frequently does not mean that it does not have value.*" The survey neglected to account for the fact that some schools have their mailboxes and washrooms located in the staffroom and, for many teachers, this is their only reason to visit: "*Mail, washroom, photocopying.*" This was a survey flaw. Daily use could therefore be simply to pick up mail or use the washroom, depending on the staffroom. The term "use" was ambiguous

and did not specify eating lunch or socializing. The answer of daily staffroom use (23.3%) in this question, however, does seem to agree with question #10, which asks specifically where respondents eat lunch and indicates that 23.6% of respondents eat their lunch in the staffroom

It is difficult to develop an accurate, overarching profile of the average user of a staffroom, because many intangible and varying factors can affect use. Use depends on the staffroom of a particular school, the staffroom habits of colleagues, location of one's classroom in relation to the location of the staffroom, and past practice. An attractive and well-used staffroom is more likely to generate continued use; therefore, if a teacher has left a well-used staffroom and transfers to a school where the staffroom is not used, use is likely to decrease. If the people in a department are used to eating together in the workroom, then it is unlikely that this will change. When a teacher transfers to a department, those teachers are likely to be the first people met. It is logical that these will be the people that the teacher has lunch with. If the habit is to eat lunch in the department then that is where the new teacher will eat lunch. Teachers are unlikely to use a staffroom that is at the other end of the school and away from their daily routine. "Out of sight and out of mind" is certainly a factor in this decision, but so is the reality of the difficulty of having to negotiate the way through halls crowded with students, down three flights of stairs to a secluded staffroom, and then making the return trip in the limited lunch period.

A comparison of the survey answers between daily users and teachers who rarely or never use the staffroom reveals some general characteristics, but it would be unwise to interpret these results as definitive. Therefore, with caution, I offer the following general observations: "Daily" staffroom users tend to be seasoned teachers with many years of experience (42.4%). They pass by the staffroom at least twice in their daily routine (86.5%). They use the full 40

minutes allotted for lunch to eat their lunch (40%). Eating lunch and social contact are their primary reasons for visiting the staffroom. They are 29.9% more likely to feel that it is “very important or important” to maintain a staffroom than the survey average. They rank the collegiality of their staff as “friendly or very friendly” (58.4%), and overwhelmingly feel that staffrooms have not outlived their purpose (96.6%).

*Rarely or never* users tend to be less experienced than daily users, but this does not mean that there are not young teachers who use the staffroom daily and older teachers who never use the staffroom. They report a considerable decrease in their use over the course of their career (76.3%). They use about half of the allotted 40 minutes to eat their lunch (36.4%). Their primary purpose for visiting the staffroom is to attend meetings. They are 5.4% more likely than daily users and 1.5% more than the survey average to rank the collegiality of their staff as *distant* or *indifferent*. They are 14.2% less likely to feel that it is “very important or extremely important” to maintain a secondary staffroom than the survey average. They feel that staffrooms have outlived their purpose 27.2% more than daily users and 7.1% more than the survey average.

Who uses staffrooms? Most respondents indicated supply teachers. In staffrooms that appeared to be empty, supply teachers were sometimes present. It is evidence of an interesting dichotomy in the profession when supply teachers are so little considered as staff that the staffroom is described as “empty.” What was once designed for the permanent staff community has become a home for the disenfranchised. Supply teachers need a place to hang their coat, store their belongings, and eat their lunch. Too often workrooms are not the place to do this. Conversations and work stop, people stare, and, perhaps unintentionally, the small and somewhat intimate space of a workroom can make outsiders, such as supply teachers, feel like intruders when they enter.



Teachers who regularly used the staffroom significantly ranked their staffs as more collegial than teachers who did not use the staffroom. Of course, as people meet people they tend to think that they are friendlier. Teachers know more teachers and have more people to say hello to in the halls. The sense of isolation is decreased. Collegial and supportive work environments can certainly exist in schools without active staffrooms, but only if a conscious effort is made by staff to get to know each other and work together and alternate meeting places are provided. It is unlikely that departmental workrooms alone can replace the function of a staffroom for interdepartmental conversations and the building of cross-departmental connections and cohesiveness.

## **8.2 The ideal staffroom**

What would the ideal staffroom look like? According to the people interviewed and the survey respondents, the ideal staffroom would have light, preferably natural light provided by working windows, a warm, inviting atmosphere, and conveniences such as a microwave, kettle, sink, and access to food. *“It would be nice if maybe the bathrooms were attached as well so you don’t feel quite as on display going into the bathroom.”* It would be centrally located. It would have comfortable furniture and a current paint job. It would be consciously decorated with up-to-date staff photos that included both first and last names. It would have telephones in a private area. It would have a union bulletin board and a professional lending library, but it would also provide the opportunity for leisure activities. Some suggested inclusions were a television set, a radio or music player, a ping pong, or pool table or other recreational equipment and most importantly, as one respondent emphatically suggested *“People!!!”* It would have better equipment than the workrooms, so there would be a reason to leave the workroom to socialize. It would not, as is the case of so many staffrooms, become the repository for outdated computers,

old donated microwaves, and leftover furniture. It would “create a flexible, comfortable and professional environment where all staff feel valued including the provision of high quality materials and furniture as well as careful consideration of the requirements of those with different roles in the school” (McGregor, 2009, p. 6). In an ideal situation, there would be a separate, general workroom that would have lockers or closets (for supply teachers and visitors to store their belongings), computers, photocopiers, and desk space. If there was not the space to locate this kind of general work area in a separate room, then the “work” components would be in a staffroom that is large enough to have this equipment separated from the leisure area. The ideal staffroom would be comfortable, inviting, and help the staff realize that the administration considers their comfort and emotional well being to be a worthwhile financial investment.

### **8.3 Implications of research**

This research has clearly established that staffroom use has decreased. As a result they have been neglected, abandoned, appropriated, and even eliminated. Once again, however, it must be pointed out that this would not matter if there were alternate spaces that provided for teachers to get together in an informal setting in order to learn, maintain healthful well-being, and develop a cohesive school community. But these alternate spaces do not exist, and the spaces provided by departmental workrooms are a poor substitute. Comments provided by survey respondents and those interviewed connected a decline in staffroom use with a perceived decline in collegiality and morale. Although the lack of collegiality cannot be causally connected to staffroom decline, it is important to note the underlying sense of loss felt by many of the respondents. None of the survey comments commended the decision to eliminate a staffroom from the school. Most comments about the lack of a staffroom were a variation of the following: *“There is not a staffroom in at this school – very negative to staff morale.”* Even young teachers

felt that their staffs were not as cohesive as when they started teaching: *I've only been teaching for 4 years and I have already noticed a shift. Teaching is a wonderful career, but relationships with colleagues are essential.*” Many expressed regret at not knowing the names of most of their colleagues. Others remembered a time when staff would get together to celebrate the life events of staff members such as weddings and births, and commented that their schools no longer had a social committee to organize these events. *“Our staff is overstressed and people are less and less open to socialize, a trend I see all over.”* Overall, although people could not necessarily connect the cause with a decrease in staffroom use, there was a strong underlying feeling of sadness at the perceived loss of sociability and cohesiveness in secondary school staffs.

This research contributes to the body of knowledge of education, particularly teachers' working conditions. It also has importance for its contribution to education policy making, particularly that of developing effective, compassionate administrators who see the value in making a small, but critical investment in their staff in order to realize the benefits of this investment through increased benefits to students. It seems trite to say that happy teachers make happy students, but the fact is no less true for its apparentness. “To be effective, schools rely upon the energy, confidence and commitment of individual teachers” (Hall, 2004, p. 6). Teachers who are tired and disconnected do not make good educators. Teachers who feel that their efforts are valued and have a genuine opportunity to share their enthusiasm and ideas with colleagues in a genuine informal setting make great teachers. They become secure, supported, willing to try new techniques, learn from others, and risk a new level of success. If staffrooms are eliminated in a school, then an authentic alternative must be found so that true communities of professional practice can flourish.

More research needs to be done on the effect of isolating teachers in workrooms. I suspect that teachers have become less attached to their schools and now view the profession as a generic job rather than identifying with a particular school. How many transfers are because of general dissatisfaction with the current school (indifferent administration or staff) rather than their current position (subject being taught)? How has this isolation affected the work environment of teachers and ultimately the students? Can a teacher who views the school with indifference still be able to fully engage with the students? There is also more research needed to explore the question of whether a decline in staffroom use relates to low staff engagement, absenteeism, burnout, and retention rates. It would be of further use to pursue the potential connection between schools with low achievement and staffs who perceive a lack of collegiality. An investigation into the alternate venues and ways of creating cohesiveness in a secondary school staff would be a critical practical study. Further research should include an investigation of the climates and cultures of departmental workrooms, a uniquely secondary school phenomenon. Finally, a potential connection between the decline of staffroom use and perceived decline in collegiality would be a critical study for the future.

# Appendix 1

## Survey questions

1. How long have you been teaching?

0-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16-20 years

20+ years

2. How long have you been teaching at your current school?

0-5 years

6-10 years

11-15 years

16-20 years

20+ years

3. What is your sex?

Male

Female

4. What is your primary department this semester?

History/Geography

Arts

Business

English

Guidance

Math

Moderns

Phys Ed

Science

Special Education

Technology

Other (please specify)

5. How often do you pass by the staffroom during your daily routine?

Never

1x per day

2x per day

3x or more per day

6. How often do you use the staffroom?

Daily

1x p

2x or more per week

2-3 times per month

2-3 times per semester

Rarely

Never

7. Has your staffroom use changed since the beginning of your teaching career?

Increased considerably

Increased

Stayed the same

Decreased

Decreased considerably

8. What are your reasons for visiting the staffroom? Check all that apply.

Use the phone

Conversation

Relaxation

Lunch

Coffee/Snack

Meeting

Computer use

Get away from the workroom

Get away from the students

I don't visit the staffroom

Other (please specify)

9. If you do not use the staffroom, what reasons dissuade you from using it? Check all that apply.

I'm too busy

Staffroom is too far away

There is no one to talk to

There is no microwave to heat my lunch

It's too crowded

Lack of ambiance

Other (please specify)

10. Where do you usually eat your lunch?

Workroom

Staffroom

Off site

I don't eat lunch

Other (please specify)

11. To the best of your knowledge, has the staffroom in your current school ever been used for a purpose other than its originally intended function (e.g. classroom, professional development)

No

Yes

If yes, please specify

12. How many of the 40 minutes allotted for lunch do you usually use to eat?

1-10 minutes

11-20 minutes

21-30 minutes

31-40 minutes

I don't eat lunch

13. How important is it for a secondary school to maintain a staffroom?

Not important

Somewhat important

Important

Very important

Extremely important

OPTIONAL: Please explain

14. Which of the following should be included in a staffroom? Check all that apply.

Microwave

Fridge

Photocopier

Sink

Computers

Cupboards

Coffee Maker

Sofa

Windows

Kettle

Comfortable chairs

Scantron

Paper towels

Staff mailboxes

Other (please specify)

15. Which of the following is included in your current staffroom? Check all that apply.

Microwave

Fridge

Photocopier

Sink

Computers

Cupboards

Coffee Maker

Sofa

Windows

Kettle

Comfortable chairs

Scantron

Paper towels

Staff mailboxes

Other (please specify)

16. What activities do you do during your lunch time? Check all that apply.

Help/coach students

Mark

Professional

Photocopy

Phone parents

conversations

Leave the building

Check email

Social conversations

Eat

Update SIS

Professional computer

Socialize

Head out for a coffee

use

Lesson plan

run

Casual computer use

Walk/Physical activity

Consult with guidance  
or administration



Other (please specify)

17. How busy is your staffroom?

Rarely used

Sometimes used

Mostly used by supply teachers

Busy

Very busy

Don't know

18. Rate the ambiance of the staffroom in your school.

Awful

Poor

Fair

Good

Fabulous

Don't know

OPTIONAL Comments

19. How often is the staffroom accessed by students?

Never

Rarely

Occasionally

Frequently

Don't know

20. For what purpose do students access the staffroom? Choose all that apply.

Students do not access the staffroom

Teacher/student conference

Use the microwave

Prepare food for clubs or teams

Store backpacks, jackets, or equipment

Other (please specify)

21. How often do members of the administration eat lunch in the staffroom?

Never

Rarely

Occasionally

Frequently

Don't know

OPTIONAL Comments

22. Rate the overall collegiality of your current staff.

Distant (it's a job; people do not know each other)

Indifferent (polite, but not everyone knows each other)

Okay (teachers know the people in their department, but may not know all other names or faces)

Friendly (most teachers in the school know each other by face and name)

Very friendly (actively social)

OPTIONAL comments

23. Have staffrooms outlived their purpose?

Yes

No

Please explain

## **Appendix 2**

### **Guided interview questions for teachers**

- 1) How has your use of staffroom changed since you began teaching?
- 2) Where do you eat your lunch on most days? How do you feel about eating your lunch in this location?
- 3) How much time do you spend eating your lunch?
- 4) How do you spend the rest of your lunch when you are done eating?
- 5) Describe what you do and where you go when you feel the need to relax or de-stress on the job.
- 6) How social is your staff? Would you explain, please?
- 7) How do you think staffroom use has changed since you began teaching? What are the reasons for this change?
- 8) What do you think is the most important function of a staffroom?
- 9) What do you think is the most important function of a departmental workroom?
- 10) What is the difference between a staffroom and a departmental workroom?
- 11) If you could design the perfect staffroom, what would it be like?
- 12) How important is it for a secondary school to have a staffroom?
- 12) How social is your staff?

## **Appendix 3**

### **Guided interview questions for LTO/Supply teachers**

1. How many years have you been teaching?
2. What are your main teaching subjects?
3. How welcome do you feel in these subject workrooms?
4. How often do you use the staffroom?
5. What is your reason for using the staffroom?
6. Describe the best staffroom you ever visited.
7. What was the overall vibe of this school?
8. Describe the most unpleasant staffroom you ever visited?
9. What was the overall vibe of this school?
10. How often do people approach you to talk or join them in the staffroom?
11. What do you feel is the purpose of a staffroom?
12. In your opinion, have staffrooms outlived their purpose?

## **Appendix 4**

### **Guided interview questions for administration**

#### **Background**

How many years were you a teacher before you were an administrator?

How many schools did you teach at before you were an administrator?

At how many schools, including this one, have you worked?

At how many schools have you been an administrator?

#### **Personal Staffroom Use**

How often do you use the staffroom at your current school?

What factors contribute to this level of usage?

How, if at all, has your use of the staffroom changed since you started teaching?

Please describe the best staffroom you encountered during your years as an educator?

#### **This school's staffroom**

How many students and staff are in this school?

How would you describe the overall tone of the school?

How would you describe the staffroom in this school?

How does the staffroom of this school compare to the best staffroom that you previously described?

In your opinion, is this staffroom well used? What factors contribute to this level of use?

What, if anything, have you been able to do to better the physical space or amenities of the staffroom?

What, if anything, would you like to do to improve the physical spaces or amenities of the staffroom? What prevents you from doing this?

How important is the use of a staffroom to this staff? Please explain why you feel this way.

What, if any, are the advantages of a staffroom to this staff?

What, if any, are the disadvantages of a staffroom to your staff?

#### **General**

In your opinion, have staffrooms outlived their purpose? Please explain.

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