

# THE INFLUENCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND POWER ON STATUS: HOW IT IS MANIFESTED IN THE OPEN OFFICE

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## Abstract

Organizational hierarchies are morphing from vertical to horizontal and as such, transforming cultures are shifting the focus from individualistic centrality to team performance and recognition. Status demarkation is blurred as employees struggle to define self-efficacy and establish identity within the organization.

This multi-site case study assumed a constructivist stance, building rich theory from employees' perceptions of where and how they work. Guided by a grounded theory methodology, data collection was triangulated across 96 interviews, observations captured through photographs and memos, and document review of floor plans and websites of two well-established corporations. Data was transcribed and coded resulting in emergent themes of representativeness, cultural underpinnings, collaboration, hierarchy, and power. Using Duffy's organizational structure as the conceptual framework, these themes informed the classification of work environments as hives, dens, cells, and clubs which were assessed against the constructs of autonomy, interaction, power, and status.

The theoretical supposition purports that collaborative work cultures must instill high autonomy and interaction among employees and in so doing, must mitigate the notion of 'power over' as manifested by hierarchy and surveillance. Evidence suggests that true collaboration is seemingly cloaked by the latent desire to watch others, the need for status, and the underlying manifestation of power as evidenced by the allocation and assignment of workspaces. While the organizational directive is to perpetuate a collaborative culture as evidenced by project and team work, the physical work environment overtly perpetuates the 'us versus them' or 'power over' culture nullifying innovative transformation and progress.