This paper explores what Stuart Wilson (Wilson 1951) has described as the proto-linguistic properties of space organization. With specific reference to the office context, it examines the ways in which spaces and spatial relationships are used to supplement other methods of formal person-to-person communication such as speech and gesturalisation. Zone definition and territoriality, such that the spatial and tactile environment are seen to be central to the communicative aspect of spaces, and the building form which supports the spatial relationships to further articulated through symbolic embellishment to give greater emphasis to social and spatial positional differences. The use and organization of office spaces is thought to be related more to the establishing and sustaining of specific social relationships between the occupants of the rooms and their visitors, than to the effects of some of the physical environmental elements such as sunshine, view and daylight.
was seated with his back to a blank wall, in such a way that he could see all the visitors’ chairs, and the door, with only minor head or body movements.

The organization and use of the room to provide cues for interaction through territoriality, sitting, distance, and personal orientation, closely fits Goffman’s theory of performances, where social distance is seen as the “interception of the structural and dramaturgical aspects of group behaviour”, and in which region and region behaviour are central concepts. (Goffman 1959 Ch. 1, Ch. 3) Goffman says that the impression and understanding fostered by the performance will tend to saturate the region, and the time span, so that any individual located in the situation will be in a position to observe the performance, and be guided by the definition of the situation which the performance fosters. In the example of the interview situation, the whole of the occupant’s room was the region in which the occupant was performing at the time of the interview, and in which he was creating impressions about himself, his organization, and his role within it. It would have been difficult for him to convey these impressions had the interview taken place in another room, or in another building.

In Goffman’s distinction between front regions, back regions, and outside regions, the important aspect seems to be the conceptual barriers between front regions and outside regions. These barriers are also used to foster impressions about the people and activities in the front region. In the office example here, the ground floor receptional, the hallways, and the lobby and the secretary could all be considered as impression managing barriers between the outside and our occupant’s front region. This use of objects and people for impression management has also been called presenting a front (Goffman 1959 Ch. 1) and in this example, both the occupant’s personal front, and the organization’s corporate front are being presented by the use of expensive materials, spacious hallways, and well groomed receptionists and secretaries. Probably the most important way in which the interview situation involves interaction with a receptionist and a secretary is not to ensure privacy and freedom from distraction for the occupant, but was also a highly conventionalized piece of impression management provided by the organization.

Components of self-presentations seem to be important in this context: self-image, and ego-ideal. (Argyle 1967 Ch. 9) When a person is engaging in interaction, and particularly when on his own in a room or territory, it becomes an extension of his physical person. When students move into dormitories, they immediately set about making changes in the furniture arrangements, and pinning up pictures, (van der Ryn and Silverstein 1968) This activity which has been called personalization (Rapoport 1967) can also be seen as using the room to extend the occupant’s personal front. Similarly, the interviewee’s room contained many symbols expressing his personal attitudes, status, and role in the organization, and also of the organization, and also of the organization, and also of the organization.

The use of objects as symbols of status and rank is highly organized in most social institutions, not least in office cultures (Goffman 1959, Louwoud 1956). The 1965 service adheres to strict rules governing the size of room and the amount and quality of furniture which an employee in each grade may use. GCPS Handbook 1968. The view held by Simon, that social and organizational orders serve similar functions, seems directly applicable to the office situation (Goffman 1959 Ch. 3) and a quick glance at the social services regulations of room size confirms this.

The last point arising from the interview example concerns the occupant’s behaviour while his room was being measured and photographed. It may have been quite coincidental that he had a document to read and a brief visit to make during this time. However, both of these acts could be construed as attempts by the occupant to set a new scene, and to show direct intention to the observer’s activities. (Goffman 1963 Ch. 9) While photographing and measuring the room, the observer was transgressing all the conventional and social interactional boundaries mentioned above, and by recording photographically his room

![FIG. 4](image)

The main objective in the analysis of the occupant’s seating orientation was to determine what parts of their rooms they could see or be aware of in a brief glance from their work. The parts of the rooms considered in this analysis, were the windows and the doors, and for each room they were given a number according to which segment they fell into when the protractor (Fig. 4) was placed over the occupant’s chair on the plan.
of the room in segments 4, 5, and 6 are outside the occupant's field of peripheral vision (assuming no head movement) and those within segments 7, 8, 9, and 10 are within his field of peripheral vision. Objects or parts of the room within segments 8, 9, and 10 were considered to be within the occupant's direct fixing direction, when he lifted his head from his work. In this way the place of the object could be classified according to working position-window relationships, and working position-door relationships.

The description of rating established for this study is related to the position and orientation of the desk in the room, which determines the degree of definition between the private and public zones, and the openness or closure of the spatial pattern which possibly influence the degree of formality of expected interaction. The planes of all the offices could be conveniently divided into six distinct groups. Fig. 5 shows the characteristic desk arrangement in each group, and a definitive description of the furniture pattern to be expected in each. Group 1 arrangements have the highest degree of zone definition, and group 6 arrangements the least. Groups 1 to 4 provide for what is called formal interaction, where discussions are carried out over the desk top, with the occupant seated in his private zone, and the visitor seated in the public zone. Groups 5 and 6 do not provide for this kind of formal interaction, and although during interviews and discussions, the occupant may still remain in his private zone, there is no clear physical barrier separating the two.

In most of the offices examined, furniture was arranged so that occupants could see their doors and their windows from their working positions at their desks. (Table 1a) Being able to see the door from one's working position implies a readiness for interaction, and that a large proportion of the sample adopted this kind of sitting position, suggests that to be able to see who is coming into the room, and to be instantly prepared for them - that is, to have one's front correctly displayed, is possibly more important than to be able to glance out of the window.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1a</th>
<th>ISK - DOOR RELATIONSHIPS</th>
<th>General sample of 150 offices.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. with door visible from working position (door in 78.1%)</td>
<td>119</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. with door not visible from working position (doors in 42 only)</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>141</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Binomial test: Z = 5.9, p < 0.0005**

Although furniture arrangements predominantly allowed occupants to see their doors easily from their working positions, there were significant cultural variations in this. Tables 2a-2c compare occupants' seat-door relationships between academic, commercial, and government cultural groups. Nearly one third of the academic cultural group cannot see their doors, whereas all of the government group were sitting so that they could see their doors. Most of the commercial and government occupants were actually sitting facing their doors, but only one quarter of the academics had this arrangement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2a</th>
<th>ISK - DOOR RELATIONSHIPS COMPARED BY CULTURAL GROUPS.</th>
<th>Numbers with all or part of door in area of peripheral vision.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. with door visible from working position (door in 78.1%)</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. with door not visible from working position (doors in 42 only)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**$x^2 = 15.65, df = 2, p < 0.001$**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2b</th>
<th>ISK - DOOR RELATIONSHIPS COMPARED BY CULTURAL GROUPS.</th>
<th>Numbers with all or part of door in general facing direction.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. seeing facing door (door in 42 only)</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. not seeing facing door (doors not in 42)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTALS</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**$x^2 = 25.78, df = 2, p < 0.001$**
These results show that the academics generally sat sideways to their doors, and adopted more open, and less defined desk formations than did the commercial and government occupants who predominantly sat facing their doors. In other words, academic occupants spend a lot of time in their rooms talking with groups of students or organizing their rooms in such a way as to maximize their social distance and to play down their role in these discussions as leaders. Conversely, commercial and government occupants had arranged their rooms so that during discussions, their dominant role was sustained by maintaining social distance across their desk tops.

Comparisons of seating orientation and desk formation of occupants who have shown in the academic institution, status seems to have very little to do with how an occupant arranges his room. In both the commercial and government offices, however, the status level of an occupant was seen to have a considerable influence on the way in which he arranged his room. Tables 4b-4c compare seat-door relationships found in commercial offices occupied by staff of managerial and higher status, with those found in commercial offices occupied by clerical and administrative staff grades. High proportions of both groups could see their doors peripherally, but significantly more of the higher status group than of the lower one sat facing their doors directly. Side-to-side arrangements were more predominant among the lower status group. A comparison of these findings suggest that the choice of desk formation was also very much contingent upon occupancy status within this cultural group.

In commercial and government organizations, senior staff are often receiving visitors from people outside of their organizations, and often have to interview people to whom they are not known personally, or may not want to be known personally. In the conduct of business agreements, and the organization and management of commercial or government concerns, it is therefore probably essential to be able to maintain dominance and control over discussions in one's office and to be ready for all kinds of interaction with a clear and well-organized front, whether that be presentation of self, job, or organization. The junior, commercial and government staff occupants were shown to have less clearly defined zones in their offices. If social factors do influence room layout, then this would be a reasonable result, because junior staff tend to have fewer visitors than outside of their organizations, and closer working relationships with their colleagues, both of which does depend upon the presentation of a clearly ordered front. Probably academics of all status groups have similar attitudes towards their discussions with visitors, who are mainly students and other staff and colleagues. In this sort of institution where close working relationships are fostered, the presentation of a clearly defined working front, and the maintenance of social distance and barriers through room arrangement and clearly defined zones would be irrelevant. In academic offices, the front adopted is a non-front. It is probable that academics do not rely very heavily upon physical appearance, their surroundings, or formalized social interaction for the presentation of status and prestige. Prestige is gained through academic achievement and is displayed through the formal expressions of this achievement such as the publishing of papers, and the widely used system of titles such as Dean, Professor, Reader, etc. For anyone about to engage in interaction with an academic, a knowledge of the work he has published, and the title 'Professor' on his door will provide a guide to the interaction considered to be appropriate.

The results presented in this paper have been interpreted as indicating, at least tentatively, that where the physical environment is sufficiently adequate, socio-cultural forces have a strong influence over the way that office spaces are organized, and that many of the physical room elements take on a significance related to the expected social interaction of the occupant. This study has attempted to show that the location and orientation of the desk in an office has an important influence, and the study could probably be useful in elucidating many more aspects of the room. The responses to semi-structured interviews with many of the office occupants have provided the basis for some interesting specializations. For example, it seems possible that a window and a view may be important to an occupant not merely because it provides momentary relief from work and eyestrain, but its real value for many executives may be in its status value, and the way that it forms part of his display of status imagery. What better place for the managing director's or the permanent departmental secretary's office than on the 34th floor with a splendid view of London, if this is the case?
The introduction of personal elements of display in the office might also provide the basis for worthwhile study. Even in the bureau bureaucracy-type offices visited, where the placing up of pictures and postcards was officially forbidden, they were still appearing. It is likely that in a bureau bureaucracy office where there are no walls to mark out home rafts and territories, these small symbolic spatial markers may be of utmost importance. Position, distance and noting are probably of special significance in these situations, and it appears that importance is attached to various parts of the space. For example, corner positions are of high status value and are generally occupied by senior staff. Fig. 6 shows such a corner position in a Swedish example. All of the symbols of display associated with a managing director are present, in the form of the curtains, the world map, the generous space allocation, and so on. The locating of his secretary on the main circulation route provides the director with an effective barrier to intrusion, and a wall substituting.

The combination of spatial layout and the use and choice of objects of display can contribute to an overall ambiance in offices which varies from one culture to the next, and seems to be stereotyped within each. Fig. 7 shows equivalent single rooms in commercial, government, and academic organisations to illustrate this cultural difference. The academic has an open seating arrangement, an antique bookcase and an antique and rather unity desk - the stereotype academic image. The governmental office has all the standard government allocation equipment for the occupant's grade, and could be used by an civil servant of the same grade. The commercial office has territories furnished, a tidy desk, and pictures on the walls, and would live up to the expectations of any visitor from another company.

ANDREY, R.,
ANGLYE, M.,
BLAKE, R. et al,
DUFFY, P.,
Role and Status in the Office, Architectural Association Quarterly, October 1966, 4-13.
GOFFMAN, E.,
GOLDFMAN, E.,
GULLARSON, J.T.,
HALL, E.T.,
BELL, E.T.,
C.P.S. HANDBOOK,
The Institution of Professional Civil Servants, 1968.
LIPMAN, A.,
LIPMAN, A.,
LITTLE, K.,
LICHTEN, D.,
The Black Coated Worker, George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1958.
RAPPORT, A.,
RAPPORT, A.,
SOMMER, R.,
Studies in Personal Space, Sociometry 8, No. 3 (ID) 1955, 247-259.
SOMMER, R.,
SPRATT, W.J.H.,
THE ARCHITECT'S JOURNAL,
THE ARCHITECTS JOURNAL,
School Hostel at Dunoon, Scotland. 20th May, 1969. 1441-1445.
van der RYN, S. and SILVERSTEIN, M.,
WILSON, S.,