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Chapter 4

Placemaking through Learner-based Design

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About the Author

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Abstract

The field of education has begun offering research-based evidence for what makes learning spaces optimal. Most of that research, however, focuses on classrooms, omitting learning spaces associated with academic support programs. Although our home disciplines frequently theorize the relationship between space and learning, we simply lack empirical evidence. To unite evidence with theory in this chapter, I review space literature writ large, starting with theories of space proposed across the disciplines. I explore the relationship between material and metaphorical space, place, thirdspace, and non-place before considering the more menacing aspects of the ways built space in higher education can communicate *not-your-place* to some students. To promote equity-based learning spaces, I propose adapting invitational learning theory as a basis for learner-based, anti-colonial and anti-racist design. Finally, I counteract practitioners' tendencies to first consider logistics ("How many square feet do we need?") and aesthetics ("What's the best chair?") by proposing a principled approach to identifying learning goals and equity-based signature pedagogies before designing inclusive spaces that facilitate those pedagogies. The appendices include practical design resources used in designing the Hacherl Research & Writing Studio.

Keywords: Space, place, non-place, thirdspace, inclusion, invitational learning theory, learning environments, space design

> *I walk up the library stairs, steeling myself to make it through four hours*
> *of dense readings and discussion posts. I'd rather be home, I avoid the*
> *library building (haven't visited in months), but here I am. As dread*
> *mounts with each step, I notice to my right several dozen people bobbing*
> *in an ocean of blue and green furniture, some on couches gazing at*
> *textbooks, some scribbling on whiteboards, a group pushing together a*
> *series of moon shaped tables. Wait, what happened to the old-timey*
> *cubicles with the back-eating chairs? Just what space* is *this?*
>   —Composite reflections of Studio *Accidental Tourists*[1]

I admit it: watching design shows is one of my guilty TV pleasures. I'm both shocked and mesmerized by provocative design features that homeowners either love or hate. I know I'm dating myself, but am I the only one who remembers when one *Trading Spaces* designer glued hay to a wall? What was *that* about? Yet surprisingly, when it came time to design the donor-funded Hacherl Research & Writing Studio, the architects were like HGTV designers—they were more interested in choosing signature colors and design features than in our program's function. Instinctively we knew this approach would end badly, maybe because the writing center lived through too many years of location, space, and affordance challenges that worked against learning. Since we wanted not aesthetics but optimal learning to drive design and since we wanted a design process that matched our students-first program ethos, the Studio design team[2] fired them. In search of a democratic and principled design process, we reviewed the literature in our home disciplines, library studies (LIS), writing center studies (WCS),

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[1] *Accidental tourist* is our term for visitors who are initially unaware they are in the Studio. The vignettes sprinkled throughout this chapter are composites based on actual visitor experiences as told to Studio Assistants.

[2] The Studio design team comprised the Associate Dean of Libraries, the Head of Research, the Director and Assistant Director of the Writing Center, the Libraries' Facilities Manager, and in later stages, Western's interior designer. The Dean of Libraries made the final determination to proceed without external architects.

and writing studios (WS), and we also branched out to other disciplines for theories of space and their connection to learning. While we found strategies in each field, we couldn't help but notice a decided penchant for the HGTV mentality: we saw floor plans, gizmo reviews, color talk, a little theory, and way too much how-we-do-it-here advice. While many discussed the importance of doors, locks, and security, we were questioning whether we needed walls at all (short answer: we don't!). While some assert that space is pedagogically deterministic, we were looking for both physical and virtual space features that facilitated our desired outcomes and matching pedagogies. But first we placed our own learning environment decisions into the broader context of higher education, because let's face it, almost more than money, space is a limited campus resource. Although teaching and learning is the main mission of higher education institutions (HEIs), I was surprised by how much non-teaching priorities like institutional ethos, place in the community, and educational niche influence decisions about the built environment[3]. As was the case for the Hacherl Research & Writing Studio, buildings are often naming opportunities for private donors, so designs must reflect architectural triumphs worthy of naming. In addition to potential donors, built spaces reflect an obligation to state legislatures, regional accreditors, and local communities. In short, built space may be more about other stakeholders than it is about students. But campus spaces also support learning, typically in classrooms that encode the institution's teaching philosophy and expected learning behaviors. In other words, campus spaces can be read rhetorically (Acton, 2017; Kim & Carpenter, 2017) for larger messages

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[3] *Built environments* are human-made ones. They can be physical, virtual, or hybrid.

around teaching and learning theory, philosophy, and practices—what communication

professor Torin Monahan calls "built pedagogy." Monahan asserts that,

> a well-trained eye can read...spaces for the pedagogies they facilitate. A classroom
>
> with neat rows desks embodies pedagogies or "tacit curricula" of discipline and
>
> conformity, whereas spaces personifying the flexible properties...can be said to
>
> embody pedagogies of freedom and self-discovery. I call such architectural
>
> embodiments of educational philosophies *built pedagogy*. (2002, p. 5).

As Monahan claims, HEI environments most often reflect built pedagogies of "discipline

and conformity[4]." In reading the rhetoric of a lecture hall, for example, students

intuitively understand that a sage will be imparting knowledge while they listen and take

notes. Flexible classrooms may feature moveable desks, but they are typically arranged

in neat rows facing the instructor and the backs of other learners. Long socialized into

the built campus environment, students internalize a long list of expected behaviors: in

K-12: raise your hand, avoid side conversation, ask permission; in college: no gum, no

cell phones, no surfing. Virtual learning environments similarly imply a pedagogy built

around teachers, not learners. No matter how user friendly, the name says it all:

learning management systems are about teachers *managing* students' learning. If

learning environments are built for the system, so too are off-duty spaces. Health

centers, recreation facilities, dining halls, coffee shops, student unions, bookstores all

encode normed behaviors. Even in their own dorms, students control little beyond their

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[4] Thanks to my colleague Jill Reglin for pointing out how this discipline and conformity message is especially true in pandemic teaching, with distancing and plexiglass barriers in place.

wall decor. Because built HEI environments often cater to external stakeholders, enable dated pedagogies, and disinvite agency, students lack a sense of place in the academy[5].

Of course studios, writing centers, and libraries aspire to become spaces students claim as their own, so our Studio's design team became curious about principles for designing a space that enables our signature pedagogies, prompts our learning outcomes, and invites ownership among users. This inquiry triggered an iterative journey through the literature, starting with our home disciplines but expanding to cross-disciplinary scholarship theorizing space along with an assortment of attendant concepts: place, thirdspace, and non-place. Next, I overview what I call *not-your-place* aspects of spatial messaging that undergird education's current efforts to decolonize space and pedagogy. As a complication, I also overview why many scholars, particularly indigenous ones, call out the use of *decolonizing* language because it renders metaphorical a concept that should remain literal. Finally, I propose an inclusive process for space design. Rest assured that I also address the concerns of those leading so-called marginal programs who may lack agency over the space they're assigned. It's a lot. As always, skip what you don't need, and use what you will. You're invited!

Space, Place, Thirdspace, and Non-place

> *As I weave through tables looking for an ideal spot, I notice some high-rise tables overlooking the fountain, some study booths made of soft felt, and some mini rooms outfitted with glass sliders. Such variety! I finally choose a moon-shaped table, which I immediately move to the window and away from a small group formatting their research poster on a big screen. I notice several whiteboards, so I drag one over to create privacy.*

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[5] I recently interviewed an alumna and her roommate about the degree to which they identified agency in campus spaces. Overall, they both answered that they felt less than 5% agency. The Libraries and the Studio rated far better, with over 90% agency.

> *I've got my own pop-up office!*
>
> —Composite reflections of Studio Accidental Tourists

Since geographers, anthropologists, and urban planners routinely theorize space, I trust their work to define terms in use throughout the rest of this chapter. The term *space* obviously can't support a monolithic definition; space can be physical, psychological, metaphorical, virtual, temporal, liminal, personal, public, safe, open, racialized, and more. Realizing that space can't be reduced to mere materiality, geographers emphasize temporal and psychological elements. Interestingly, three main theorists, Ernst Cassirer (1940s), Henri Lefebvre (1990s) and David Harvey (2000s), propose three elements to space, although each proposes a slightly different three. Building on Cassirer, philosopher and sociologist Lefebvre suggests that space and time are inextricably mixed and that both are defined not by physical features but rather by how both are socially constructed (as cited in Harvey, 2006, p. 279). Anthropologist and geographer Harvey (2006, 2009) extends Lefebvre's theory by examining how power relationships embed social justice issues in any consideration of space. While it's beyond my scope to detail their Marxist-influenced philosophies, all three complicate the materiality of space in ways that illuminate symbolic, relational, and political aspects of what practitioners often reduce to square footage and cubicle design. These geographers illuminate the hegemonic intentions of space planners (yes, even library and writing center planners), but they also acknowledge the power of users to bypass intent and use space as they wish[6].

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[6] A 2020 example of the way users can redefine a space occurred during racial unrest in Seattle; protestors redefined a commercial zone adjacent to a police precinct to establish CHAZ, the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone.

These metaphorical abstractions prompted other theorists to consider notions of *place*, which emphasizes the complex history, memories, interactions, and relational aspects humans associate with a space, be it physical or virtual. For instance, your alma mater is material, but it holds a special *place* in your heart perhaps because it helped you discover your *place* in the world. Yet the relationship between space and place is also contested. Sociologist Richard Sennett (2018) challenges a rigid space/place binary, preferring just two domains: *built space* (how institutions construct space) and *lived space* (how people mold space through authentic use). Even materiality is contested: although sociologist Yi-Fu Tuan (2001) argues that since space can't be inhabited without introducing time and identity—in other words, space *is* place, others argue that place may be entirely symbolic. For instance, computer scientists Harrison and Dourish (1996) originally proposed that place (experiential) arose out of space (physical), but after an additional decade of experience with virtual place, Dourish (2006) reversed the direction of influence: place defines space.

Obviously, which comes first remains debatable, but it's irrefutable that space/place is socially defined. Yes, but not so fast; enter another concept: *non-place*. Not all spaces or places are conducive to social relationships, and in fact, some spaces may be specifically designed to prevent them. Anthropologist Marc Augé (1995) coined the term *non-place* to describe material spaces that encourage transience and anonymity. Increasingly the norm, airports, lobbies, waiting rooms, and supermarkets function as non-places because few of us develop any attachment to them. In fact, non-place deliberately disinvites attachment; otherwise, the space can't function optimally. HEIs, for instance, may function better as non-place because they cannot successfully

meet their missions unless each class of students makes way for the next. HEIs send strong messages that students are more guests than residents in classrooms, dining halls, and even in dorms. One anonymous former writing center assistant got the message: "In grade school, I had a homeroom; in high school, I had a locker; in college, I have nothing but my writing center mailbox."

Despite a non-place campus context, libraries and writing centers aspire to create place, or possibly *thirdspace*[7]. Emerging from postcolonial space thinking, scholars apply the concept of thirdspace across contexts as diverse as linguistics, urban studies, and composition (Grego & Thompson, 2008; Miley, 2013; Soja, 1996). Thirdspaces are a hybrid, a synthesis, a both/and. Some first space/second space binaries include physical/virtual, professional/domestic, public/private; thirdspaces disrupt these binaries[8]. At the time of the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, thirdspaces can be easily understood by tele-educators who are now blurring boundaries between home and work, physical and virtual. Since academic support programs typically embrace both learning and leisure behaviors, scholars frequently draw on thirdspace concepts in writing centers, studios, and libraries.

Space Theory in Writing Centers

Two space/place themes dominate writing center studies: as metaphorical place, they are on the margins; as physical space, they are cozy homes. In terms of institutional place, the dominant WCS narrative bemoans marginality, a concept that folds into a

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[7] *Thirdspace* theory is most closely associated with urban planner Edward Soja (1996), but note that the New London Group (1996) applies the concept to genre theory, particularly multiliteracies involving multimodal genres.
[8] Another hybrid notion of space includes Foucault's *heterotopia*, which makes an appearance in writing studio scholarship (see for example Kim & Carpenter, 2017). Although the term brings new complexities to the table, heterotopia also centers the hybrid aspects of thirdspace theory.

larger story of "iconoclasm" (Grutsch McKinney, 2013a, p. 36). Grutsch McKinney suggests WCS literature holds three main reactions to marginal place—*denial*: we have always been mission central and should reject marginal victimhood (Gardner & Ramsey, 2005; Harris, 2000; Simpson et al., 1994); *relevance*: we used to be peripheral but are now mission central (Macauley & Mauriello, 2007); or *subversive*: we can use the borderlands to escape institutional unpleasantness or challenge institutional inequities (Denny, 2008, 2010; Engler, 2013; Geller et al., 2007; Grimm, 1999, 2011; McNamee & Miley, 2017). Grutsch McKinney asserts that all three of these responses oversimplify, but the fact that they are still storied suggests that writing centers' place within institutions is less imposed from without than constructed from within. Yes, institutions impose their valuing of writing center program placements in the ways they allocate (or withhold) scarce resources like money and space. Faculty and administration may view writing centers as unfortunate remedial necessities, cost centers (see Chapter 6) that syphon contested resources away from departments. Yes, there's a reason writing centers have so often inhabited windowless, poorly equipped, back-of-beyond hovels rejected by those further up the institutional food chain. No doubt students and faculty alike read the rhetoric of these spaces, internalizing unspoken messaging about these programs' place as peripheral to institutional mission and to learning. But WCS staff all too often proclaim marginality themselves to the point that some tutors claim them as "anti-classrooms" (Engler, 2013, p. 1). Perhaps marginality offers relief from ethical dilemmas inherent in the institutional mainstream (grading, for instance), exempts us from the same level of institutional scrutiny and program evaluation, and allows professionals to be the underdog hero, equally adored by peer tutors and writers. As

long as students think we wear capes, we're good, and the stories we tell ourselves and

each other (lore) offer enough evidence that we're using the margins to good effect.

Iconoclasm is also a likely cause of the prominent *cozy home* space replete with

ugly couches, period kitsch, and lava lamps[9]. Yet cozy as a space ethos receives just

criticisms as feminized rather than professional (McNamee & Miley, 2017), safe rather

than brave (Brugman, 2019), and comfortable rather than needfully dissonant

(Camarillo, 2019; García, 2017; Grimm, 1999, 2011). If couches, coffee and tea, and

snacks remain required affordances, writing centers will not be read rhetorically as

serious places of teaching and learning. Beyond the search for a space to "envy"

(Ambrose, 2015) or to achieve a design "ideal" (Hadfield et al., 2003), WCS has done

little to articulate theories, philosophies, and learner-based practices of space and

design. For instance, the *WCenter* listserv often buzzes with questions about space and

design, particularly early in the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic when many were struggling to

invent a virtual space. In non-pandemic times, the threat of being merged into a

learning commons prompts threads seeking strategies for planting a spatial flag[10]. And

when professionals encounter design/redesign opportunities, the threads seldom pose

philosophical questions about attending to social justice in built space or even about

establishing an equity-based design process. Instead, the field seems content with lore

and pragmatics based around program needs: How many square feet per client? Is the

director's office central or peripheral? If you had X dollars, what would you buy?

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[9] As an extreme, Kevin Davis triumphantly suggests we "get creative" in making "slum into haven" (1995, p. 7). Apparently, I'm not the only director to have become irrationally attached to affordances that don't serve learning.
[10] See for example "Sad News" (Moussu, 2016).

Although lore-based approaches prevail in WCS, Ann Gardiner (2017) invokes space theory. Referencing Lefebvre's theories of space as social relationship, Gardiner looks holistically at Franklin University Switzerland's academic context to identify programmatic relationships involving the writing center, both current and potential. Noting fragmented academic support, she aligns several programs to leverage collectively a higher-profile space than any single program could garner. Once those alliances translated to a new physical space, Gardiner considered the essential functions of each program and revised the evolving design to ensure that sometimes conflicting initiatives received the dedicated space and affordances each function needed. In the process, Gardiner found ways to avoid unintentionally excluding students, saying "we have gone from being a clubhouse for the select few to a democratized space for the Franklin community at large."

The clubhouse mentality Gardiner (2017) noticed receives attention elsewhere in WCS, especially from Singh-Corcoran and Emika (2012), who note the prevalence of both *cozy home* and *safe harbor* themes. In line with relationships-define-space philosophers reviewed early in this chapter, these authors pose two inquiries: (1) How does the writing center space affect social practice? and (2) How does social practice shape the writing center space? Although their answers make the entire article worth reading, I particularly value their method: cross-disciplinary inquiry. Leaving WCS to call on broader scholarship, the authors summarize Augé's concept of non-place, concluding that,

> [f]or many students, the writing center may have qualities of a nonplace,
> particularly for those students who just pass through as they fulfill their

university writing requirement...students do not develop lasting relationships

with others in the center, and they develop no attachment to the space.

Echoing Grutsch McKinney's (2013b) claim that writing centers function as *home* only

to staff and not to learners themselves, Singh-Corcoran and Emika suggest that writing

centers are place to tutors but non-place to students, and they go on to suggest further

research to identify how being non-place affects program outcomes.

Space Theory in Writing Studios

In tandem with WCS, writing studio (WS) scholars critique institutional

space/place from the margins, in this case, studios associated with first-year

composition programs in English departments. In their seminal volume,

Teaching/Writing in Thirdspaces, Grego and Thompson theorize metaphorical place:

they propose leveraging an "outside but alongside position" (2008, p. 70) to challenge

the place of composition in English, the place of thirdspace in traditional learning

environments, and the place (or non-place) of students in shaping institutional culture.

Recent WS scholarship, especially *The Writing Studio Sampler: Stories about Change*

(Sutton & Chandler, 2018), explores exploiting marginal power. In the first chapter, the

editors describe the collection as "narratives told by individuals...who used their studio's

outside-alongside position to challenge and transform the institutional structures which

framed it" (Chandler & Sutton, 2018, p. 3). Several of the volume's authors

demonstrated leveraging studios bi-directionally; that is, they prompted change in

institutional built space and pedagogy, and in doing so, elevated the place of writing and

writing instruction in the English department.

Although WCS and WS share much the same metaphorical marginality, physical space themes diverge; WS scholarship more deeply theorizes material space, both physical and virtual, mainly because these theorists are typically grappling with how to operationalize an innovative studio pedagogy within the constraints of traditional classrooms. There are no cozy home references in WS scholarship; instead there's attention to how to undo the rhetoric of a classroom. In Chapter 2, I mentioned that WS scholars distressingly conflate space and pedagogy, and I called out one edited volume featuring the term *pedagogy* in the title but space in the content. Perhaps since writing studios are typically inhabiting classrooms, this conflation can be forgiven; these authors are merely noticing the deep connection between built space and built pedagogy (Kim & Carpenter, 2017; Monahan, 2002). That said, I'm puzzled about why so little classroom-oriented education scholarship is referenced in WS scholarship. Instead, WS literature forges a deep connection to multiliteracy genre theory (Balester et al., 2012; Inman, 2010; New London Group, 1996; Selfe, 1986; Sheridan & Inman, 2010) while largely ignoring learning environment scholarship published in *EDUCAUSE Review* or the *Journal of Learning Spaces*. Both journals offer quality evidence for how classroom spaces causally affect learning, and they both inform space planning. It's as if WS scholars can't make up their minds which is more pedagogically deterministic: the content taught or the space it's taught in.

Space Theory in Education Studies

While both WS and WCS scholars come from space-is-scarce disciplines, education and library scholars operate more from a space-is-secure mindset. This relative security seemingly enables more empirical themes in this scholarship, as

evidenced by publications like *EDUCAUSE Review*. Education researchers have long assumed that space affects pedagogy, but few scholars have offered empirical evidence until recently. In a series of quasi-experimental research projects (Brooks, 2011, 2012; Brooks et al., 2014; Brooks & Solheim, 2014), D. Christopher Brooks investigated the influence of space on learning, concluding that while space is not pedagogically deterministic, classroom design certainly "constrains and/or facilitates the manner in which individuals relate to or experience a space" (Brooks et al., 2014, p. 3). In "Space Matters," Brooks (2011) suggests a causal relationship between space and learning, whereas his subsequent research "Pedagogy Matters, Too" (Brooks & Solheim, 2014) suggests the same about pedagogy. In "Space and Consequences," Brooks (2012) investigates the effect of both space and pedagogy on learning. These studies were variations on a theme: one instructor teaches the same introductory biology course, one section featuring traditional lecture methods in a traditional classroom and the other featuring active learning pedagogy in an active learning classroom (ALC). Despite no significant initial differences between participants, students in the ALC earned significantly higher final grades and participated more in discussions, leading Brooks and colleagues to conclude that "space does not *determine* behavior, but *influences* how we act and relate within it..." (Brooks et al., 2014, p. 2). Brooks and his collaborators, then, offer empirical evidence that both space and pedagogy affect learning, regardless of the content being learned.

Space Theory in Libraries

Like educators with plenteous classrooms, libraries, too, traditionally enjoy a large campus footprint, although with the digital age, some question the need for this

footprint. Historically, academic libraries "have generally been designed first and foremost as places to collect, access, and preserve print collections" (Freeman, 2005, p. 1), not as places of teaching and learning. Collection-oriented buildings are almost deliberately intimidating, often sending messages to the unwashed masses not to touch rare and precious stuff. But as information made the transition from scarce to abundant and from physical to digital, libraries have faced an existential crisis forcing a pivot from preserving materials to serving people. This transition has led to lively discussions about competing needs for collection space and people space. Once purchased, collections are perceived as cost-neutral, but in fact ongoing collections maintenance is not cheap; worse, collections displace people.

Owning a new identity as sites of teaching and learning, libraries have overcome the threat of irrelevance, so much so that faculty see libraries as extensions of the classroom, a kind of laboratory for learning (Bennett, 2005, 2007; Freeman, 2005). In fact, "[n]o other building can so symbolically and physically represent the academic heart of an institution" (Freeman, 2005, p. 9). Given this clarity of mission, libraries have been intentional about theorizing space, place, and thirdspace (Bennett, 2005, 2007; Council on Library and Information Resources, 2005; Elmborg, 2011; Elmborg et al., 2015; Freeman, 2005). Thirdspace is a good-fit metaphor for libraries because they are purposed for serious scholarship, but they are designed with creature comforts that may not be available at home. Flexible furniture, including coffee shops, ample power sources, and a continuum of noisy-to-quiet zones all offer the kind of tailored learning environment inviting users to manipulate built space. Among the physical spaces to choose from on campus, libraries are a destination. In metaphorical ways, too, libraries

enjoy prominence of place in ways that WCS and WS do not. Often considered the intellectual crossroads of HEIs, the inclusion of computer labs, learning commons, and zones for collaborative groups amply demonstrate how libraries have leveraged their metaphorical centrality to augment materiality. Although there will always be students who avoid library buildings, libraries are more likely to be place than non-place, as most students form strong bonds with a particular floor or spot—few carry warm fuzzies about a classroom or academic program[11], but many alumni can recall for years after graduation a favorite library window, chair, or nook.

In addition to being a campus destination, libraries enjoy exponentially more real estate than other academic support programs; both factors almost certainly explain why LIS scholarship features richer considerations of principle-based design. In fact, when it comes to theorizing and designing physical space, LIS offers much evidence-based practice that could guide other academic support programs. Library literature contains everything from a one-page guide to design principles (Sens, 2009) to an over 1000-page definitive tome that includes recommendations on everything from hiring an architect to planning acoustics and lighting. *The Practical Handbook of Library Architecture: Creating Building Spaces that Work* (Schlipf & Moorman, 2018b) comes complete with a chapter called "More Than 200 Snappy Rules for Good and Evil in Library Architecture" (2018a, pp. 9–22) that includes both principled and pragmatic advice:

> 2. A badly designed and constructed building is a pain forever. Or until it falls down, whichever comes first. Never cut planning time short (p. 9).

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[11] In the NSSE survey, for example, students place a lack of importance on support services (National Survey of Student Engagement, 2020).

67. "Design first, program second" is an easy recipe for a seriously bad building (p. 13).

75. The number of architects who understand libraries is exceeded by several thousand percent by the number of architects who don't understand libraries but are confident that they do (p. 13).

185. A bargain building in a bad location is a bad building. A beautiful building in a bad location is also a bad building (p. 19).

While reading these rules may make you laugh out loud (I did), the principles prevail: planning takes time, program design precedes physical design, users should reign, and location trumps space. Libraries also lead the way with data-driven design. For instance, the Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL) publishes a web resource called "[Academic Library Building Design: Resources for Planning, User Studies & Precedents](#)." Not only does this resource curate a variety of published user studies, it also suggests methods for designing local user surveys. Among ACRL's offerings are ample resources for universal design, including the principles offered by the North Carolina State, summarized in Appendix A, p. 41. Given this wealth of these contributions to space planning scholarship, LIS space scholarship deserves an audience with all who plan spaces at HEIs.

Not Your Place

So far, I've focused on a deliberately depoliticized, white-normed discussion of space, which unfortunately mirrors the tone of WCS, WS, and LIS scholarship itself. But depoliticized spaces do not exist, so it's past time to introduce a truth only privilege can ignore: all spaces are racialized. Note that I am self-conscious about authoring this

section[12] because, as I mention in Chapter 1, my *whiteliness*[13] is far less visible to me than I would like. Given that I'm very much a "first-generation equity practitioner" (Gray as cited in Brown McNair et al., 2020, p. 107), I urge readers to check my claims with those more experienced in the BIPOC experience or in equity practices. But with humility and caution, I invite you to join me in engaging with the limitations of space theory. No matter how the academy sees space, place, thirdspace, or non-place, for many from minoritized identities, HEIs are simply not their place.

Because his own identity has such deep geographical connections to the colonized Lower Rio Grande Valley, writing center scholar Romeo García (2017) talks a lot about place in his critique of WCS anti-racism scholarship. Asserting that the brown identity has been elided from white/black binary discussions of anti-racism, García engages "decolonizing" metaphorical place as he recounts feeling like he has "no place" in the academy or in writing centers. As he says "For me, the writing center is neither my safe space nor my home" (2017, p. 48). García's narrative introduces yet another kind of place, akin to Augé's physical non-place but much more sinister. While Augé describes anonymous physical non-place, García references a dangerous metaphorical non-place. For García, features of the academy, including writing centers, send a menacing message: it's not-a-place-for-you-and-your-kind. Whatever evidence-based space planning principles libraries, writing centers, and studios articulate, principles to avoid not-your-place messages must be thoroughly and carefully engaged. Yet these messages remain deeply imprinted in HEI spaces and pedagogies.

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[12] I invite readers to communicate with the editors about white-normed assumptions that need to be challenged.
[13] Race scholar Dr. Frances Condon defines *whiteliness* as a racialized epistemology or way of being in the world (as cited in D.-J. Kim & Olson, 2013, p. 1).

In part as a response to gaps in critical pedagogy in educational theory, "decolonizing pedagogy" is a theoretical lens through which to analyze not-your-place messages (McCoy et al., 2016; Robertson, 2016). The decolonizing movement features equity-oriented pedagogies that seek the undoing of a myriad of social injustices associated with colonizing. Historically, *colonizing* meant land-grabbing by settlers, but over time, it has been conflated with other insidious by-products of colonialism: racism, sexism, militarism, capitalism, and the like. Tuck and Yang (2012) argue that by calling for "decolonizing pedagogy," scholars have made a metaphor out of something that ought to be literal: decolonizing literally means repatriating land, period. They ask for a return to that meaning. Tuck and Yang naturally embrace undoing all of colonialisms' by-products, suggesting such pedagogies be called *anti-colonial*[14].

Given that colonizing is only about space, I find it disheartening to see so little literature using an anti-colonial, anti-oppression, or equity lens in critiquing learning spaces. Searching journals like *EDUCAUSE Review* and the *Journal of Learning Spaces* disappointingly revealed little or no attention to equity. Since institutions typically design spaces primarily with power stakeholders in mind, I carefully propose that the degree to which the student voice has been excluded from planning makes all HEI built environments somewhat colonial and certainly not anti-colonial. And the degree to which only white stakeholders are consulted makes all HEI spaces white spaces. Libraries, studios, and writing center scholars do engage anti-oppressive pedagogy, but

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[14] Honoring the literal meaning of *decolonizing* caused me difficulty in referencing scholars who use the term metaphorically; I use quotation marks to indicate when the original literature references metaphorical "decolonizing." There is no perfect term. Using the term *decolonizing* erases the indigenous identity from scholarship. *Post-colonial* must be rejected given that settlers still occupy indigenous lands, and *anti-colonial* remains problematic given that settlers are not restoring them. Nevertheless, *anti-colonial* or *anti-oppressive* are the terms I'll use.

they too omit space/place from this discussion. Instead, libraries emphasize
"decolonizing" knowledge (Rosenblum, 2015), studios emphasize "decolonizing"
classroom power structures (Sutton & Chandler, 2018), and writing centers emphasize
"decolonizing" language (Greenfield, 2011; Grimm, 2011). Of course, these
considerations should move forward, but our home disciplines must more deeply
consider our spatial rhetoric to ensure it doesn't merely replicate same hierarchies and
not-your-place messages as our wider contexts. Doing so means practitioners must find
a way to ensure planning principles and processes include anti-colonial practices that
challenge white space.

Equity-based Space Planning Using Invitational Education

If we trust that academic support program planners have every desire to avoid
creating not-your-place environments, then we must recognize that HEI spaces should
always be owned by and for students. The extent to which colonial by-products like
capitalism and power hierarchies have made space about institutional interests is the
extent to which students of all identities feel the academy is not their place. Although
the theory and practice of invitational education (IE) was not developed with anti-racist
intent, I believe the theory provides a promising lens for restoring students to primacy
of place in HEIs. Yet, restoring primacy of place is itself problematic. As my colleague
Pippa Hemsley writes,

> [I]nvitation alone does not "decolonize" when colonizers invite colonized parties
> back into space or practices that are rightfully theirs to begin with. [We] are
> representatives of an institution that has squashed creativity and agency out of
> students, and now we're inviting them back...on our own terms. [The invitation]

counters how the academy has done things before but isn't a "decolonizing"

practice (personal communication, August 24, 2020).

With Hemsley's cautions in mind, I do not suggest that invitational education

alone addresses not-your-place equity concerns—or that the theory was invented or

intended to be used this way. But if enhanced with a cultural competence overlay, I

think IE may hold promise as one do-able anti-colonial practice. IE was proposed by

educational theorist William Purkey (Novak & Purkey, 2001; Purkey, 1991; Purkey &

Novak, 2008, 2015) and is now promoted by the International Alliance for Invitational

Education (IAIE). With the goal of inviting students into their full learning potential, IE

offers several heuristics for students to assess how well educational structures and

teacherly behaviors invite that potential. Not exclusively a space theory, IE suggests all

educational programs comprise three foundations, five elements, five domains, five

levels, and four dimensions, which is confusing to explain in text but far easier to

comprehend through the IAIE's sea star diagram. Purkey and Novak (2015) see space as

just one of five interrelated domains (people, places, policies, processes, and programs)

and urge decision-makers to treat the entire web as a unified whole before, during, and

after planning space. In other words, space planning *is* program planning (Gardiner,

2017; Purkey & Novak, 2015; Schlipf & Moorman, 2018a).

In planning an anti-oppressive educational programs, IE theory alone is not

enough. In fact, critical pedagogists (see for example McLaren, 1986) justly complains

that IE foregrounds individualism and denies oppressive societal structures. Though

Novak and Purkey's space values seem based on white norms, their heuristic has equity

potential in that space is evaluated from the perspective of the student user, not the

faculty or administration. Practitioners can augment the anti-colonial potential of invitational theory by pairing it with principles of a critically aware cultural competence (see for example Brown McNair et al., 2020). The IE heuristic to help program planners create inviting spaces calls for asking student users to assess them. If the consulted students are all white, IE succeeds in disrupting institution-student power dynamics but fails as an anti-racist change practice. However, if the consulted students represent across identities, IE becomes both anti-colonial and anti-racist by promoting what Brown McNair, Bensimon, and Malcolm-Piqueux (2020, p. xvi) call *engaged inclusivity*[15]. To my knowledge, libraries, writing studios, and writing centers have not systematically assessed the invitingness and engaged inclusivity of their programs as perceived by users from across identities.

In the space design process for the Hacherl Studio, the team succeeded in implementing principles of IE but failed in holistically "walking our equity talk" (Brown McNair et al., 2020). First, our success: our process was anti-colonial. As suggested by IE, our design team assessed using a 2x2 heuristic of invitingness: intentionally/unintentionally inviting; intentionally/unintentionally uninviting (see Appendix C, p. 44). We assembled mixed teams of professional, faculty, and student staff from across Learning Commons' partners to observe users at each service point across the Libraries. Not only did these observations helped us analyze the inviting/uninviting aspects of each space but they also helped us develop locally relevant objectives for designing the most intentionally inviting new space. For instance, all the teams identified walls and other barriers as intentionally uninviting. Since we wanted to

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[15] See Chapter 1 for a more thorough discussion of this term.

invite students to use the space with or without staff present during all library hours, these observations helped us decide to forego walls, doors, and locks; once we made a decision based on principle, we later chose logistics to match. We made many other principled decisions that centered local student voices but also matched scholarly recommendations: flexible, adaptable layouts (Gee, 2006; Van Note Chism, 2006), adjustable, ergonomic furniture inclusive to body type (Gee, 2006), zones to support learning functions (Gee, 2006; Sens, 2009; Sheridan & Inman, 2010) and accommodate learner preferences/neurodiversities (Anderson, 2016), barrier-free, natural light sources, easy access to power sources (Gee, 2006), and affordances that support collaboration (Berry & Dieterle, 2016).

And now our failure: our process was not anti-racist. Western Washington University reports that, during the year of our studio planning, students of color comprised 23% of enrolled undergraduates (Office of Institutional Effectiveness n.d.). But the Hacherl Studio space planning team, the contracted architects, the University's interior design team, and the University's facilities personnel, in other words, all those with decision-making authority, were all white or white-passing. Other non-dominant groups were represented, but this fact was serendipitous. Despite anti-oppressive intentions, our collective equity practices had not evolved enough to recruit all identities to our design team. Western is exceptionally white, Western Libraries is exceptionally white, and the Studio was—and distressingly still is—exceptionally white. As a result of our failure, we can't be sure the degree to which our current space is invitational to visitors of color, and we are not remotely comforted by statistics indicating BIPOC students use Studio services at disproportionately higher rates. For all we know,

students of color may use the Studio more because they feel compelled rather than invited. Let our failure be your caution.

<div align="center">

Principles, Processes, Practices for Space Planning

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I don't pretend to offer a complete set of definitive principles, processes, and practices for space planning. Unlike Schlipf and Moorman, I offer neither 1000 pages (2018b) nor 200 rules (2018a), snappy or otherwise. But in an interdisciplinary-informed effort to counter the pragmatic and pursue principles, I offer this section of planning strategies[16]. I can hear some readers murmuring: "But look at you: you got to make decisions from the beginning. What about us?" Some are in the renovation process but with little agency like my colleague Jill Reglin who says: "[D]irectors hardly know what is going on with renovations until the project is complete; the "big reveal" happens, and [I am] left thinking, 'Oh, gee. . . how nice,' much like I would think if someone else picked out my clothes" (personal communication, December 8, 2020). Others get hand-me-downs, whatever built space and affordances prior tenants left behind. It may seem like the Hacherl team had the ultimate in design agency, but all spaces have limitations, be they physical (like immovable walls) or political (like immovable power structures).

1. **Identify the limits and opportunities of your planning agency; then act as if you have all the agency you need.**

   Academic support professionals get so used to inhabiting marginal places in the hierarchy that they begin to act marginal. But agency can't be granted, only taken. For example, the Hacherl Studio was originally destined for a different floorplate. But the design team was troubled by the lack of access to daylight, one of students' top

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[16] Note that many of these principles reference a white paper developed before beginning the Hacherl Studio design process (Kjesrud & Helms, 2014, see Appendix B, pp. 42-43).

priorities, so we informally sketched alternate plans. But contracts had been signed based on the initial plan; the deal was done. One Monday morning after a sleepless weekend, I decided to act as if change were still possible. I determined to float our alternate proposal up the chain of command until someone said no. It's a testament to our organization that nobody did. By day's end, the Dean of Libraries notified Facilities that we'd be requesting work on the same floor but in a different spot[17]. Not every request prevailed, of course, but the point here is pretense: start by assuming you have agency, not by assuming you don't.

2. **Assemble a broadly representative planning group inclusive of all identities, including race.**

Whether old or new, no space will be inclusive without deliberately including non-dominant voices. No matter how sophisticated their equity practices, dominant voices cannot channel non-dominant perspectives. Include students, both staff and users, from across identities. Avoid exploiting non-dominant stakeholders by offering adequate compensation for their input. When minoritized stakeholders offer observations, listen deeply and do your own emotion work in processing white bias. I speak from experience when I say it's difficult to reverse a lack of inclusivity, so just do it from the start. No excuses.

3. **Develop a heuristic; map space planning to program objectives.**

Design your own heuristic or adapt one or more of these promising options: the Invitational Education heuristics (Purkey & Novak, 2015), the EDUCAUSE *Learning Space Rating System: Version 2* (Brown et al., 2017), the *Proposed Planning*

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[17] Pictures are available in Appendix D, pp. 45-48.

Principles: Linking Pedagogy and Space (Fisher, 2005) and the *Principles of Universal Design* (Connell et al., 1997). Our heuristic results may be found in Appendix C, p. 44.

4. **Articulate your space/place philosophy; use it to guide decisions before considering logistical challenges.**

Our philosophy included enabling an ad hoc learning community created and chosen by students, in other words, a heart place for learning. Achieving this goal means inviting students to manipulate space and affordances for their own purposes. Since students express a decided preference for collaborating (fully one-third of our visitors work collaboratively with one or more others), we maximized our collaborative zone to enable group learning in ways that were previously unavailable at the writing center or reference desk. Our philosophy also means imposing no boundaries on learning, so our space doesn't close when the staff leaves. Seemingly insurmountable in the planning stages, dreaded logistical challenges have proved entirely trivial. I'm so glad we weren't limited conceptually by what seemed impossible to implement logistically.

5. **Articulate outcomes first; then choose matching evidence-based, innovative pedagogies.**

Much of the literature reviewed earlier in this chapter suggests that if you get the space right, you'll automatically get the pedagogy right, too. Based on Brooks and colleagues (2012, 2014), I argue that space influences but does not determine pedagogy. Therefore, we recommend backward design—decide learning outcomes, innovate signature pedagogies to achieve those outcomes, and only then build or alter a space that facilitates your innovations. Keep in mind that traditional library and writing center pedagogies are some 40 years old, so space recommendations based on those traditions

will inhibit rather than forward innovative practices. New babies really do need fresh bathwater.

6. **Avoid design based on aesthetic; instead, facilitate representational design charrettes[18] to optimize function.**

Our original architectural firm wanted to design something to remember, something they could claim in their marketing, something worthy of the donors. I get it: I was entirely enamored with having a water feature (come on, it would be so cool!). But just because you can doesn't mean you should, and often the lowest tech stuff is the most popular. The resources students wanted turned out to be more affordable: windows (the compelling reason we re-sited the whole studio at the 11th hour), lots of seating choices, moveable everything, and whiteboards aplenty. One of the best moves we made was hosting a chair party. We put out ten sample chairs, invited everyone passing through to sit in them, and put them to a vote. When we didn't consult users, we made mistakes; for example, our fancy display screens rarely get used, and our entrance seating boasts a shows-all-the-dirt fabric. Oops. But that brings up the next rule.

7. **Avoid casting in stone so you can revise as you go.**

Predicting how a space will get used is impossible; it's akin to building sidewalks before finding out where people naturally walk. For some things, we got the principle right but the implementation wrong. For instance, we chose furniture for the focus zone that signaled total quiet, an expectation we couldn't fulfill in a highly collaborative space. We also hoped pods could provide accommodation for those who need less stimuli to concentrate in consultations. Neither worked well. When post-

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[18] Design charrettes are used regularly in architecture and design. Charrettes involve assembling stakeholders for rapid assessment so designers can revise plans based on immediate feedback.

implementation space problems arise, keep hosting design charrettes to understand the problem and test solutions. Fortunately, we knew to reserve 10-15% of our initial resources, because when these and other problems arose, we were able to alter our initial design to resolve them.

8. **Attend to all material space, including virtual.**

Planning virtual space at the same time as physical space helps ensure all material spaces remain congruent in terms of philosophy and pedagogy. We didn't learn this rule till much later; worse, we lack total control of our web space. Our lack of holistic planning shows. For instance, a consultant recently asked me how to answer a visitor who asked: "If I can drop off my draft online, why can't I drop it off in person?" Other visitors have asked if they can get line editing online since they can't get it in person. These legitimate questions highlight the need to unite all material space under the same outcomes, the same philosophy, and the same pedagogies.

9. **Attend not just to material space but also to metaphorical place.**

As mentioned in [Chapter 6](#), merging the writing center with other units much improved our metaphorical place within the institution. Originally enjoying a more secure metaphorical place, even the Libraries has secured a much higher profile among powerholders by creating the Studio, yet the Studio would never have happened without a consolidation that initially seemed threatening to our institutional place. Not all consolidations or realignments benefit student learning, but with intentional work, they can; ours does. As a result, we not only have more material space, but we also inhabit a larger institutional place. Collaborating across literacies, disciplines, and organizational

cultures will never be easy, but it will always be worthwhile for students. Because that's who space/place is for.

> *Settling into my pop-up office, I slap on my headphones and begin the study marathon when I notice my laptop is just about out of juice. About then, someone sits down at my table, saying, "Welcome to the Studio! What are you working on today?" After a short exchange, she brings me a portable power pack and invites me to make use of anything and anyone I need. Hunh, so this is the Studio, eh? Cool*!
>
> —Composite reflections of Studio Accidental Tourists

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Appendix A

Principles of Universal Design

Universal Design (UD) is defined as "the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design." In the late 1990s a team of UD experts at North Carolina State University developed this set of seven principles still in general use (Center for Universal Design, 1997).

1. Equitable Use - The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.

2. Flexibility in Use - The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.

3. Simple and Intuitive Use - Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.

4. Perceptible Information - The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.

5. Tolerance for Error - The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.

6. Low Physical Effort - The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.

7. Size and Space for Approach and Use - Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.

Appendix B

Space Planning White Paper[19]

Overarching Goal: To design Western Libraries' Research & Writing Studio as a context-specific teaching and learning space that facilitates our signature pedagogies and furthers our learning outcomes. Our signature pedagogies include studio-based learning (including peer-based inquiry, scaffolded strategies) and integrated literacies (researching, reading, and writing as a literacy ecosystem). Our learning outcomes include cognitive and affective growth in inquiry, collaboration, and agency.

Principles of Design: To achieve the overall goal, the design and design process should follow these recommendations.

1. Design should exploit "third space" liminality by offering affordances that invite users to transform space into place (Keppell & Riddle, 2012; Kirkwood et al., 2012; Sellers & Souter, 2012; Souter et al., 2011).

    a. The design should offer features associated with formal learning (power sources, blending of technologies, lighting).

    b. In addition, the design should offer stimulating amenities commonly associated with personal learning spaces (creature comforts, playful elements).

    c. Affordances should be intuitive and invite users to supply and use their own furnishings and configure those supplied, creating a sense of place.

2. Design should be adaptive, flexible, and future proof (Souter et al., 2011; Van Note Chism, 2006; Weaver, 2009).

    a. In addition to accommodating current learning activities, the design should anticipate future learning activities and the accoutrements (including technology) to support them.

    b. Space should be easily reconfigured and repurposed to meet the full range of learning activities.

    c. Up to 15% of the total budget should be reserved for adaptations that cannot be anticipated until users actually use the space.

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[19] Adapted from the white paper originally submitted to the Dean of Western Libraries, Mark Greenberg, by Kjesrud & Helms, 2014.

3. Design should be safe, healthful, and inclusive (Grummon, 2009; Grutsch McKinney, 2013a; Oliver, 2009).

    a. Maximize inviting and minimize uninviting messages as interpreted by the broadest range of diverse users.

    b. Ensure access to all visitors and to all features of the space and to all learning activities.

    c. Support not just institutionally sponsored learning but also student-initiated learning.

4. Design process should be recursive and participatory, equitably including the broadest range of stakeholders (Grummon, 2009; Oliver, 2009; Reushle, 2012; Weaver, 2009).

    a. Start the design process with a small group of priority stakeholders meeting with designers.

    b. Vet emerging plans by casting an ever-wider net of campus stakeholders; honor equally the voices of institutional stakeholders and the voices of students (both users and staff).

    c. Before finalizing plans, bring all end-users, campus/community stakeholders, and design experts together in a "design charrette," thereby ensuring the widest-scale ownership of the final space/program.

Appendix C

Invitational Education Heuristic[20]

Intentionally Inviting	Intentionally Uninviting
• Smiling people • Eye contact • Usage is intuitive • Windows, natural daylight • Comfortable furniture • Flexible furniture	• Closed, locked, "keep out" • Barriers, blocking access • Non-intuitive technology, furniture, practices • Practices for convenience of staff, not visitors
Unintentionally Inviting	**Unintentionally Uninviting**
• Finding friends in the space serendipitously • Staff member has taken same class/assignment as Visitor • Supplies sitting out for all to use taken on purpose or accident	• Appointments • Imposing desks/visual barriers • Staff inattention: glued to devices, deep in conversation with each other • Discussing a Visitor, even in favorable terms • Unresponsive or reluctant staff ("I've got homework, could you help them?") • Trip hazards, lack of accommodation, no power • Non-inclusive visuals • White norms

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[20] Based on Purkey's theory of Invitational Education (Novak & Purkey, 2001; Purkey, 1991; Purkey & Novak, 2008, 2015).
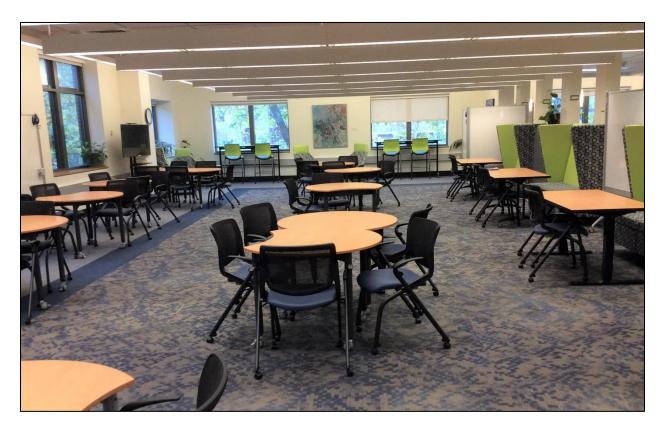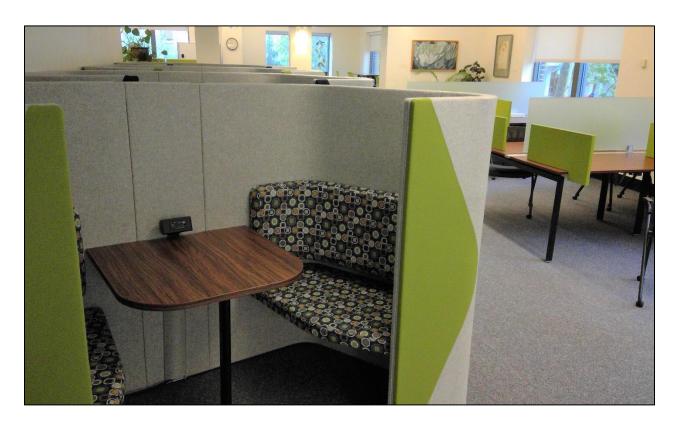
Appendix D

Pictures: The Living Room Zone

Pictures: The Collaborative Zone

Learning Enhanced: Studio Practices for Engaged Inclusivity

Pictures: The Focus Zone

Pictures: The Classroom Zone

Learning Enhanced: Studio Practices for Engaged Inclusivity