

CALL FOR PAPERS:
Spring 2008 Voices

What's in the room? The consulting office space & therapy process

Guest coeditor: Penelope L. Norton

We all have our attitudes about the space in which we work – notions, conscious or not, that are conveyed by the room we do therapy in, how we use it, how we move in it, how we care for it. We may even have a transference-like relationship with the therapy space – at times idealizing it, making it look better than it really is. At other times, we might de-idealize or neglect the surround of our consultation rooms. Maybe we create a feel or an ambience from our past or intentionally create something that offsets the past – with orderliness or clutter, icons representing missing pieces of who we want to be or deny, perhaps with smiling Buddha's, or austere, modern furniture. What is interior to you that is revealed in the exterior that is your office?

Have you created a space that reflects or obscures who you are? What do clients see about you from your room? What do you want them to see—not to see—fear they see anyway? What do clients say or ask about your room or its contents? Why did you choose your room or the things in it? Have particular forms of transference or counter transference been triggered by things in the office that are especially charged for you or your clients? How has your office developed with your own development?

Consider these questions in relation to specific therapy cases or your own therapy experiences:

Have clients discovered a *transitional object* in the consultation room—perhaps a pillow, or an aroma, or something in how you position yourself—that represents a continuity of experience that they need or want and may insist on? How has that shaped your relationship and your work with such a client?

What sits on the surfaces in your office? Odd scraps of paper, books, half-empty cups of cold coffee or tea, laptops, file folders, pencils and pens, family photos?

Do clients touch those objects, notice, or comment on them?

Does your desk or work table reflect the scramble of your mind? Or your lucidity?

What embarrasses or shames you about your office? Or fills you with pride?

What items might deserve to be expelled or exiled from your office?

What are the staples of your consulting room? Food, toys, refreshments, materials for drawing – for example. How do these affect the work?

Does your office contain objects that suggest antiquity or myth, wealth or the working-class, male or female?

Is your office ornamented in a way that reflects something else about your values or religious beliefs?

What specific rituals do you engage in—when alone in your room? Prayer, meditation, naps, playing or listening to music, singing, reading, eating?

What room from your past does your consultation room resemble most closely? How and why have you replicated it?

What favored or difficult memories does your office hold? How did the space affect what happened and what was experienced?

We encourage your exploration of these questions & related issues by submitting a manuscript for publication in the spring 2008 issue of *Voices*.

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION: February 8, 2008

Please send your manuscript (formatted in Word as an attachment) to psynorton@aol.com, burnsvoices@yahoo.com, and jonfarber@aol.com