Communication through Content:

Student Perceptions of

Faculty Offices

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Abstract

The messages that are communicated nonverbally by the objects present in and general status of a professor's office space were investigated. Students viewed photographs of male and female faculty owned offices with varying degrees of clutter, and rated office attractiveness and professor personality. In addition, these same faculty rated their own personality and comparisons between student perceptions of faculty personality and faculty self-ratings were made. Cluttered offices were rated as less attractive than clean offices. Professors rated themselves high on extroversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness, whereas students rated professors significantly low on these traits; students were able to accurately rate openness traits. Male raters were more accurate at guessing the sex of the office owner than female raters.

INTRODUCTION

Most students at some point during their university education will encounter a student-faculty conference. Students often visit their professors outside of class and seek clarification, counseling, or academic information. Chambers (1973) notes that the single greatest contributor to student creativity was encouragement outside of the classroom. Even though these interactions with professors are important, many students dread them. Why are student-faculty conferences feared? Students may avoid conferences because of the immense amount of uncertainty associated with personally interacting with professors. Students become vulnerable because they express their emotions of frustration, anxiety, anger, embarrassment, and excitement (Zweigenhaft, 1976, p. 529). Uncertainty and perceived vulnerability can cause avoidance, miscommunication, and misperceptions. Most students who leave a conference feel uncomfortable and create a negative evaluation of the professor. One possible explanation for this could be caused by the professor's office environment. McElroy et al. (1983) suggest "interior office design acts as a form of nonverbal communication, sending messages to potential visitors and thus affecting their impressions of the occupant" (p. 541). Perhaps the nonverbal components and design of the office space attribute to students' fear of the conference and negative perceptions of professors.

Purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to address the nonverbal communication within an office space and its effects on students' perceptions. This topic is significant because environment is a first impression that visiting students notice. The faculty

office serves to “enhance or diminish the student’s sense of ease and thus, the nature of the faculty-student interaction” (Zweigenhaft, 1976, p. 529). Nonverbal communication influences perceptions of the environment, visitor mood, perceptions of the owner of the office, and relational interaction. Researchers have become interested in professors’ office environments because “a good deal of educational activity takes place within the confines of faculty office” (Campbell, 1979, p. 648). Faculty members seeking better relationships with students have to first be aware of what students are looking for in order to adapt to their needs (Bruschke & Gartner, 1991, p. 210).

Scope: The first chapter of this thesis will focus on background concepts and literature of perceptions, interpersonal communication, nonverbal communication, personality, credibility, and environmental dimensions related to the behavioral sciences of communication and psychology. This research will serve as the basis of Chapter 2, which will focus on a research study investigating nonverbal communication within faculty offices and student perceptions. A discussion of the research study will be highlighted in Chapter 3 with the limitations of the research project being the primary focus in Chapter 4. Office design suggestions will be given in Chapter 5. The appendix features the questionnaire used in the study, as well a collection of faculty offices photographed on campus to show the diversity of faculty offices and the unique expression inherent in all environments.

CHAPTER 1

Background Concepts and Literature

This thesis focuses on nonverbal communication within faculty office environments and its effect of student perceptions. Before nonverbal communication can be analyzed within the confines of an office space, the key terms of perception, interpersonal communication, nonverbal communication, personality, credibility, and dimensions of environment will need to be defined. Following each concept will be a brief review of past literature.

Perceptions

The communication process begins with perceptions: the "way we look at things through sensation, recognition of the sensation and interpretation" (Hickson, Stacks, & Moore, 2004, p. 482). Sensation is derived from the five senses: tactile sense (touch), visual sense (sight), aural sense (hearing), olfactory sense (smell), and the gustatory sense (taste). Once one or more of these senses are triggered, the brain recognizes and interprets the stimulus. The interpretation, the meaning, can then be collected and stored into memory for future access. This process of creating perceptions becomes the foundation of acquiring knowledge and creating a worldview.

Influences: Perception affects how we interpret messages (Hickson et al., 2004, p. 23). Humans are constantly trying to reduce uncertainty in different situations. Perceptions help reduce uncertainty because they provide past experiences and knowledge, which aides in interpreting new situations. Individuals rely on perceptions to interpret the world around them. Perceptions can be beneficial and provide stability, however, things can be perceived inaccurately. This may cause misperceptions or miscommunication.

Interpersonal Communication

The communication process begins with a sender, a receiver, and a message. The sender forms a message (verbal or nonverbal), which is retrieved by the receiver, who then attaches meaning to the message. According to Joseph A. DeVito (2001), interpersonal communication is slightly more complex than general communication, because it "takes place between two persons who have an established relationship; the people are in some way 'connected'" (p. 4). Interpersonal communication is slightly more complex than basic communication because there must be more than one person involved. This creates a relationship of some type between the two interactants: father and son, coworker to coworker, or teacher to student. Another distinct feature of interpersonal communication is that the interaction between persons influences the relationship.

Immediacy

There is a general consensus that immediate behaviors create effective interpersonal relationships. The perception of immediacy can be best articulated as togetherness. Immediate qualities “foster meaningful, honest and satisfying interactions” (DeVito, 2001, p. 137). It is similar to supportiveness, which also involves a sense of personal value. Immediacy conveys a sense of attention, interest, and attraction (DeVito, 2001, p. 145). Behaviors for maintaining this psychological and perceived closeness generally involve attentive listening, openness, and eye contact. Immediacy is often associated with homophily, which is a feeling of similarity between two interactants. Homophily affects attraction and immediacy (Powell, Hamilton, Hickson, & Stuckey, 2001, p. 219). Immediacy is an important component in developing positive, meaningful interpersonal communication. Openness, self-disclosure, and equality are the main ways to create immediacy.

Openness: This aspect of immediacy is important to developing positive relationships. Openness occurs on the part of the sender, who endures uncertainty and vulnerability in order to gain acceptance and trust from the receiver of the message. Openness can be achieved by verbal and nonverbal means. The best way to become open is to effectively self-disclose. Montgomery (1986) observed that individuals who employ open behaviors (topic intimacy, verbal immediacy) and open styles of communication (emotional and receptive) are seen as more attractive.

Self-disclosure: This aspect is very important to developing relationships. Self-disclosure reveals information about yourself that is generally kept hidden. Appropriately revealing personal information "helps to increase self-knowledge, communication and relationship effectiveness, and physiological well-being" (DeVito, 2001, p.71). The reasons for self-disclosure include sharing one's feelings, releasing one's feelings, seeking advice and reassurance (Schmidt & Cornelius, 1987, p. 370). Self-disclosure creates a sense of equality, where one party voluntarily gives information in order to receive information. Pearce and Cronen (1980) describe that self-disclosure is contextualized by the episode in which the interaction occurs. Self-disclosure begins and ends in situations with verbal or nonverbal interaction. Individuals are influenced by their surroundings, which ultimately influences the act of self-disclosure. Schmidt and Cornelius suggest that "one may be more likely to disclose to another in intimate surroundings than while waiting to have one's tax return audited" (1987, p. 366). Obviously, intimate surroundings influence communication and self-disclosure.

Equality: This aspect of interpersonal effectiveness is probably the most difficult perception to create. In many situations, it is near impossible to reach perceived equality. Individuals rarely appear similar and, to greater extent, equal. Yet "interpersonal communication is generally considered more effective when the atmosphere is one of equality" (DeVito, 2001, p. 143). For equality to exist, interactants should feel warmth and a lack of status differences.

Outcomes of Immediacy: Openness, self-disclosure, and equality – the foundations of immediacy – create positive outcomes. Individuals who employ immediate behaviors are seen as more friendly, more supportive, more responsive, more outgoing, more likeable, warm, and caring than those who exhibit few immediacy behaviors. Immediacy not only affects individual attributes, but also creates a more positive climate. There is a high level of anxiety in the initial stage of meeting someone (acquaintance phase). Immediate behaviors can relieve anxiety and relieve the tensions and uncertainties associated with developing a new relationship. Immediacy lowers perceived social distances because it creates a sense of closeness.

Immediacy in the Classroom: The role of immediacy has an impact on interpersonal attractiveness of the instructor and the similarity between the professor and the student (Rocca & McCroskey, 1999). Most immediate nonverbal behaviors, such as smiling, moving close to one another, making eye contact, facing each other, and leaning toward the other person, encourage or improve interpersonal interaction (Powell et al., 2001, p. 218). These behaviors imply a psychological warmth and closeness between individuals.

Nonverbal Communication

Inside every environment is nonverbal communication. This is the process of sending and receiving messages through senses other than sound, such as sight, smell, or touch. Messages sent through visuals influence communication, behavior, and

attitudes. The effect of the nonverbal messages on perception, which will now be discussed, will be the primary focus of the research study in chapter 2.

Functions of Nonverbal Communication

Nonverbal communication performs several functions. Hickson and colleagues identified several functions that are used to examine nonverbal communication: identification, control of interaction, and relationship of interactants (2004, pp. 21-22). Each function will be simplified and defined in the context of nonverbal communication.

Identification: This function of nonverbal communication tells others what we represent and who we are. People represent things, such as attitudes, beliefs, or values. Nonverbal cues represent what is important to certain individuals, such as achievements, fashion, politics, and religion. For example, an individual may want to show that he or she values education by displaying a certificate of achievement or a diploma on the wall. These artifacts may serve as signals and nonverbally identify the individual as intelligent or well-educated. We are also identified by who we are – what makes us unique. This refers to our personality, which will be more fully discussed momentarily. Previous literature suggests that nonverbal identification is significant. Bruschke and Gartner (1991) found that the image of an instructor is communicated through nonverbals (p. 210). Social identities and extroversion are also communicated nonverbally (McElroy et al., 1983).

Control: This function of nonverbal communication is used during interaction. Gesturing, artifacts, and spatial distance are methods of controlling interaction nonverbally. Gesturing (body movement) is commonly used to control interaction between individuals, which could involve raising a hand to indicate a desire to talk in the classroom or nodding one's head to indicate more talk.

Control tactics: Another common control device is a physical object placed in-between two interactants. Often when there is a barrier between interactants, the tone of the communication is altered and control is more stringent. For example, a secretary usually sits behind a desk or bar. These artifacts (desk or bar) nonverbally set a more formal and controlled interaction tone. In more informal interactions, such as two colleagues meeting in the hallway, there is often a lack of barriers. In this case the communication between the two interactants becomes less controlled and more personable.

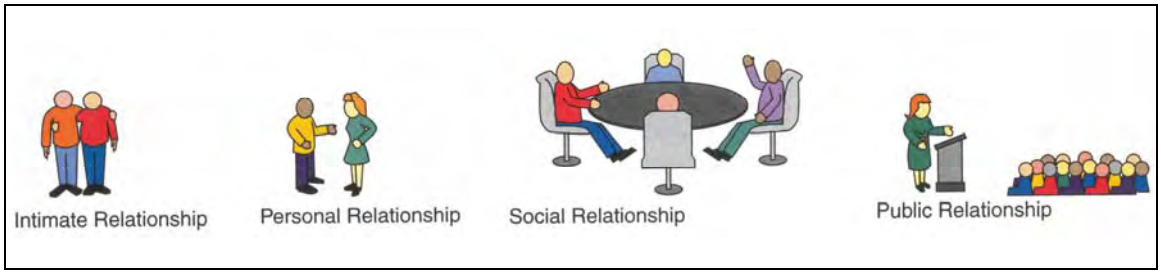
Desk barriers: Darby and Judson (1987) looked at various desk placements as control devices. They found that students rated offices that appeared less controlled by faculty more favorably than offices that appeared more faculty controlled (through desk placement). Darby and Judson (1987) also reported that "students are responsive to office arrangements in ways that suggest they are aware of the power relationship inherent in teacher-student interactions and recognize that certain office environments are more conducive than others to equal status for both interactants" (p. 512). Cleary barriers nonverbally control interaction.

Distance barriers: Spatial distance describes how much distance is between two interactants. Edney (1975) found that territorial claims are related to passive forms of control; Creating distance between interactants create control. According to Edney (1975), territory owners (residents) who were instructed to control another individual created distance between themselves and visitors. The owners had experienced more passive and resistive control than visitors. When comparing the views of owners and visitors, owners saw their territories as more pleasant and private, whereas visitors did not.

Relationship of Interactants: Nonverbal communication often describes the intimacy level of a relationship between interactants. “Our relationships determine our proxemic distances; intimate relationships create intimate distances and public relationships create public distances” (DeVito, 2001, p. 213). The use of personal space, as shown on the following page in Figure 1, identifies what type of relationship the interactants are involved in. DeVito (2001) describes an intimate relationship as a spatial distance of actual touching to 18 inches. A personal relationship is determined by 18 inches to about 4 feet. In this space, there is a protective bubble of privacy as well as a possible opening for interpersonal closeness. There is a loss of interpersonal closeness at the social relationship distance. Business interactions with a formal tone are usually conducted in this space ranging from 4 to 12 feet. Lastly, public relationships, ranging from 12 to 25 feet, are more likely used with strangers. Space, according to DeVito (2001), is an important factor in nonverbal communication

because these spaces distinguish the “major types of relationships: intimate, personal, social, and public” (2001, p. 213).

Figure 1: Relationship Type Defined by Spatial Distance



Note. From “The Interpersonal Communication Book,” by J. A. DeVito, 2001, New York: Longman.

Personality

People are identified by their personality. Gordon Allport defines personality as the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his characteristic behavior and thought (Friedman and Schustack, 2006, p. 48). Research contends that there are different fields of thought or perspectives to study and examine personality. For the purposes of this study, the main perspective that will be applied to personality will be the Trait Approach.

Trait Approach to Personality

According to Friedman and Schustack (2006), “[A] vast body of research has converged on the idea that most common trait approaches to personality can be captured by five dimensions” (p. 287). The trait approach focuses on a small number of core dimensions that summarize a person’s consistent patterns of responding (p. 312). Allport argues that “[m]ost people have some important foci of

development…and these would be… central traits" (Evans, 1970, p. 27). These central traits are within each individual and are driven by motivations. Allport suggests that motives are "[w]hat drives the individual" from the past to the present (Evans, 1970, p. 33). If analyzed, personality can predict behavior.

The Big Five: Contemporary research contends that there are five key dimensions or traits that individuals possess at varying levels: extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. An individual's personality is constructed with different levels of these dimensions commonly known as the *Big Five*. Although there has been disagreement on the number of possible personality traits (Cattell's 16 PF and Eysenck's Big Three), the *Big Five* dimensions "represent personality at the broadest level of abstraction, and each dimension summarizes a large number of distinct, more specific personality characteristics (Pervin & John, 1999, p. 105). Certainly more than just five traits are needed to characterize an individual, however, most personality researchers agree that these five traits capture core personality characteristics. Each trait is unique in its own way because it is based on different motivations and associated with different descriptive adjectives.

Extroversion: Individuals who seem talkative, energetic, assertive, dominant, enthusiastic, and sociable are considered high on the extroversion trait. These individuals are motivated by external means. Individuals exhibiting little to no extroversion are known as being introverted. These individuals tend to be quiet, submissive, and shy. Introverts are internally motivated, meaning that they are

content being alone and do not depend on others in order to gain happiness. Valencic and McCroskey (2003) found that teachers with high ratings of extroversion have higher overall student evaluations.

Agreeableness: Friendly, cooperative, warm, trusting, and modest individuals tend to exhibit this trait. They often interact well with others and are often motivated to forfeit their own needs to accompany others' needs. Individuals low on this trait appear cold, quarrelsome, and unkind (Friedman & Schustack, 2006, pp. 287-288).

Conscientiousness: Individuals who seem more conscientious than others are generally cautious, competent, dependable, persistent, organized, and responsible. Individuals who exhibit few conscientious attributes are considered impulsive and are careless, undependable, unorganized, and disorderly (Friedman & Schustack, 2006, pp. 287-288).

Neuroticism (Emotional Instability): Neurotic individuals seem to be emotionally instable and tend to be nervous, tense, worrisome, hostile, depressed, and vulnerable. Individuals who are low on neuroticism are more emotionally stable, calm, and content (Friedman & Schustack, 2006, pp. 287-288).

Openness: The last trait of the *Big Five* is openness. Individuals who have many openness traits appear cultured, imaginative, witty, original, artistic, tolerant, and intelligent. Those low on openness appear shallow, intolerant, plain, and simple (Friedman & Schustack, 2006, pp. 287-288).

Trait Consensus: Trait theorists believe that each trait can be found in everyone, even cross-culturally, along a continuum. Individuals may exhibit a dominant trait and often exhibit those certain adjectives associated with that trait, whereas individuals may exhibit little to none of that trait, or exhibit a mixture of traits. This approach to personality is widely accepted and one of the most researched personality schools-of-thought (Friedman & Shustack, 2006, p. 287).

Credibility

Those who are identified as credible exert more influence and gain more success (Hackman and Johnson, 2004, p. 154). Credibility is an important identifier. There are three dimensions of credibility: competence, trustworthiness, and dynamism.

Competence: This dimension focuses on what is *known*. This dimension of credibility identifies one as knowledgeable, intelligent, skilled, or having expertise (Hackman & Johnson, 2004, p. 155). Bruschke and Gartner (1991) claim that "presenting a competent image is of special importance to instructors who are offered as experts on the subject matter they are to teach" (p. 210). Competent individuals appear more credible.

Trustworthiness (Character): This dimension refers to a person's *worth*. Honesty, consistency, and trust are considered the most influential qualities. Individuals who are perceived as untrustworthy lose perceived credibility.

Dynamism: The last dimension of credibility, which is dynamism, focuses on a *presentation*. A source's confidence, activity, assertiveness, sacrifice, and charisma are all key features of this dimension.

Instructor Credibility: Generally, perceived instructor credibility is positively associated with perceived teaching effectiveness (Meyers, 2004, p. 129). Beatty and Zahn (1990) found that students who viewed their instructor as credible rated the course more positively (despite their grade in the course), would be more likely to take another class from the same instructor, and recommended the instructor to fellow students. Valencic and McCroskey (2003) found credibility and extroversion were positively related.

Dimensions of Environment

Visual stimuli are within every environment and work together to create an overall atmosphere. These dimensions are each unique in their own respects. Mehrabian and Russel (1954) reasoned, "The basic concerns in environmental psychology may be conveniently summarized as (1) the direct impact of physical stimuli [in environments] on human emotions and (2) the effect of the physical stimuli [in environments] on a variety of behaviors, such as work performance or social

interactions" (p. 4). All environments influence emotions, mood, interaction, and behavior. The effects of the following environmental dimensions of architecture, lighting and color, artifacts, and furniture arrangement will be discussed.

Architecture: This dimension of environment refers to the structural design of an environment: makeup of the walls, window design, flooring, and ceiling design. This dimension is the most concrete area of environment and cannot be easily manipulated. Chaiken, Derlega, and Miller (1976) define two distinct kinds of architecture.

Hard architecture: This type of architecture is characterized by an overall sense of unalteration: inorganic, impersonal, and untouched. In this condition, the walls remain bare and fluorescent lights (lack of windows and natural light) dominate the atmosphere. Artifacts further attributing to this environmental condition include a lack of personal artifacts, rectangular tables, straight-backed chairs for visitors, and upholstered owners' chairs. Environments with hard architecture, according to Chaiken et al. (1976), produce negative visitor responses, such as a lack of control, increased isolation, and a loss of interaction.

Intimate room (soft architecture) characteristics: This environment appears more intimate when compared to hard architecture because there is an attempt to create a more open and inviting atmosphere. These environments include: pictures or other artifacts hanging on walls, indirect lighting (floor lamps, table lamps, or natural light),

upholstered chairs for both the owner and the visitor, rugs, round tables, additional seating (benches and couches), and small artifacts, including magazines, newspapers, and plants. Chaiken et al. (1976) observed that intimate rooms received higher ratings of warmth and intimacy (coziness) than did rooms with hard architecture (p. 481). Subjects observably self-disclosed more in these environments, probably due to being in a more relaxed environment. Chaiken et al. (1976) emphasize that "counselors and therapists, especially those in institutional settings (colleges, clinics, hospitals, and prisons) should concern themselves with the physical environment of their counseling rooms" (p. 481). It appears that architecture (together with lighting and artifacts) affects visitors' mood and behavior.

Lighting: This dimension of environment is simple in concept. Lighting in a room is necessary for obvious reasons, yet, if used appropriately, can create a significant ambience to an environment. Lighting consists of different sources, ranging from fluorescent lighting to natural sunlight through windows. Windows "provide natural lighting, contact with the outside world, and orientation to time, place and weather" (Farrenkopf & Roth, 1980, p. 474). Windows were found to be a major factor in professors' satisfaction with their offices (Farrenkopf & Roth, 1980, p. 474).

Color: The use of color in a room is significant and can range from dominant colors on the walls to small splurges of color from artifacts. Interaction is affected by dominant colors in the room because color affects the emotions of the interactants. Wexner (1954) identified that certain colors are associated with positive moods.

Colors that produce the most positive moods are blues, greens, and yellows (cool hues). These colors evoke comfort, security, and cheerfulness. With these colors present in an office setting, the interactants may interact positively. In a study by Maslow and Mintz (1956), three rooms hosted three levels of visual estheticism: beautiful, average, and ugly. The beautiful room was described as pleasant, attractive, and comfortable and was the host to beige-colored walls, a clean, large window, and overhead lights. The ugly room evoked horrible, repulsive, and disgusting emotions and was host to two small windows, gray walls, and an overhead light with a dirty shade. The average room was an office with three windows, gray walls, and overhead light. The beautiful room received significantly higher ratings of positive feelings compared to the ugly and average rooms.

Artifacts: A very important dimension of environment is the use of artifacts. These are tactile elements within the environment, such as pictures, technical and electronic devices, furniture, and bookshelves. Each artifact in a room is significant, yet certain artifacts have been shown to be more influential than others within an office environment, such as plants, aesthetic items, tidiness, and furniture arrangement.

Plants and aesthetic items: Campbell (1979) found that the presence of living things (plants and aquariums) and aesthetic objects (posters and artwork) produced positive visitor moods. Students surveyed responded with feeling more welcome and comfortable within these office conditions. The owner of the office was also viewed as more friendly and unhurried. “Intuitively, most people perceive plants as

enhancements to the office environment" (Larsen, Adams, Deal, Byoung-Suk, & Tyler, 1998, p. 263). Larsen and colleagues (1998) also observed that plants within office work spaces significantly influence assessments of attractiveness (p.272). Plants even influenced visitors' comfort, performance, attractiveness, and mood (Larsen et al., 1998, p. 273).

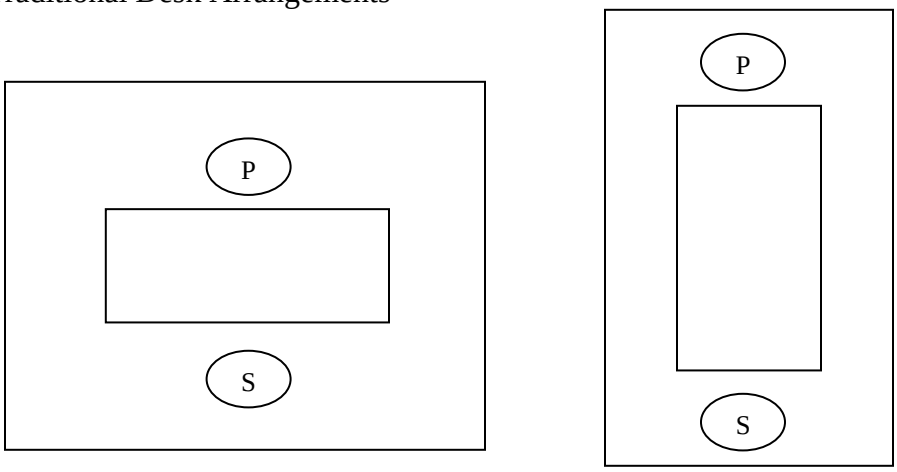
Tidiness: This dimension of an office environment is difficult to define, yet can be differentiated in terms of low, moderate, and high clutter. Low clutter would describe an environment with large clean working surfaces, clear desktop, little to no stacks of papers, and a sense of organization. Moderate clutter would describe an environment with some working spaces with few surface artifacts, such as papers and books. However, there could also be some stacks of paper and some sense of organization. High clutter would describe an environment where the working spaces are confined by artifacts: Many stacks or piles of papers, objects strewn around the office, and no apparent visual organization. Morrow and McElroy (1981) observed paper stacks in offices and found that organized stacks were viewed as less tidy than a lack of stacks, yet the offices were found more tidy than messy (p. 647). Campbell (1979) claims that professors appear busier and rushed in messy offices than in tidy offices (p. 651). Campbell (1979) also found that tidiness was the most powerful environment-based influence (p. 651). Students feel uncomfortable, less welcome, and not at ease in a messy, unorganized offices. However, if a room possesses plants or art, the impact of clutter is slightly lessened.

Seating: Chair selection is an important factor in an environment because of its high use. Chair selection can range in size, comfort, and shape. The chair size can be a small stool to a large armchair. The comfort level of the chair can range from wooden and hard to soft and cushioned. Lastly, the shape can be decorative or plain, and functional.

Furniture arrangement: This dimension of environment is a primary focus in the evaluation of nonverbal communication. The most important furniture pieces within an office space are the desk, the professor's chair, and the students' chair. The arrangement of the furniture is one of the most important aspects in environment. There are numerous ways to arrange the desk and surrounding chairs.

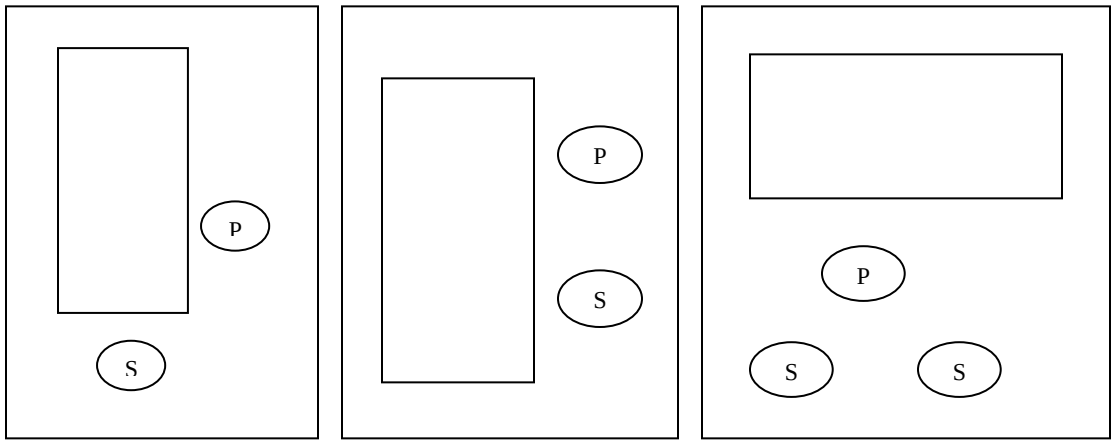
Traditional vs. non-traditional arrangements: Furniture arrangement focuses on the placement of the desk relative to the chairs. As illustrated in Figure 2, on the following page, traditional desk arrangement, or desk-between arrangement, puts the two chairs (circles indicating "P" for professor's chair and "S" for student's chair) at opposing ends of the table (box). Non-traditional desk arrangement, or desk-not-between arrangement, places the professor's chair adjacent to the student's chair or directly to the side of the student's chair. Figure 3 on the following page illustrates two variations of desk-not-between arrangements that includes a third variation with an extra student's chair to accommodate a student dyad.

Figure 2: Traditional Desk Arrangements



Note. From "Students' Perceptions of Faculty's Office Arrangements," by B. Darby & N. Judson, 1983, *Perceptual & Motor Skills, 65,* p. 22.

Figure 3 : Non-traditional Desk Arrangements



Note. From "Students' Perceptions of Faculty's Office Arrangements," by B. Darby & N. Judson, 1983, *Perceptual & Motor Skills, 65,* p. 22.

Open desk arrangement: McElroy et al. (1983) discuss three types of desk placement that affect the visitors' response: Open desk, intermediate, and closed desk placement. Open desk placement is identified by the desk against the wall with the owner's chair facing the wall. This arrangement creates more open walking and interacting space.

Closed desk placement occurs when the owner's chair is facing the door with the desk serving as a barrier. Morrow and McElroy (1981) observed that owners who employ an open desk arrangement were perceived as more extroverted and friendlier than owners who employ closed desk arrangements. Campbell (1979) found little support for differences in ratings between open desk arrangement and closed desk arrangement. However, in a replication study, Morrow and McElroy (1981) found that open desk placement is significantly more favorable to visitors' feelings than closed placement, and negatively impacted students' feeling of comfort and welcomeness (pp. 647-648).

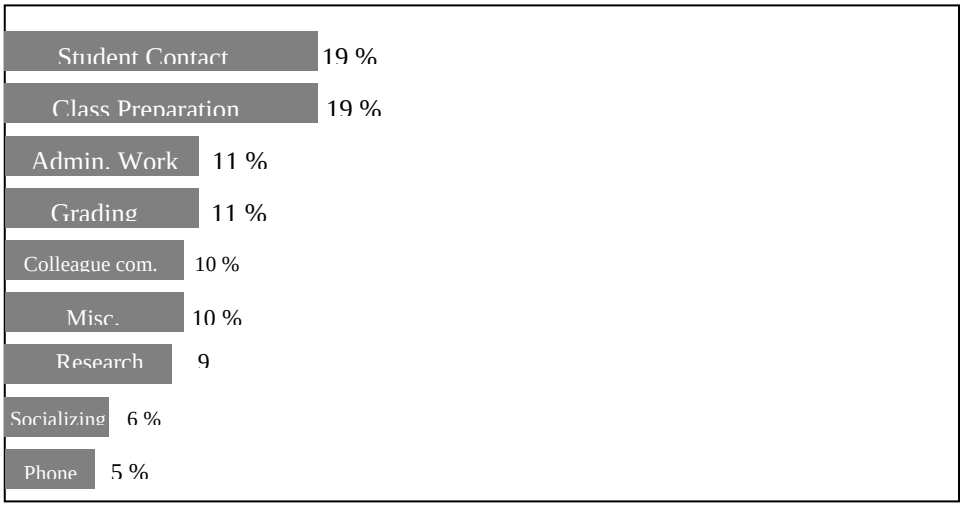
Effects of furniture placement: Desk placement is found "to affect visitor impressions of the office occupant" (Morrow & McElroy, 1981, p. 648). Sommer (1969) found that individuals in competitive situations tend to sit opposite from one another, whereas individuals in cooperative situations sit adjacent to one another. Zweigenhaft (1976) investigated desk placement in faculty offices and found that faculty who used traditional desk arrangements were rated less positively on student end-of-the-semester evaluations than faculty who used non-traditional desk arrangements. Morrow and McElroy (1981) found that non-traditional desk placements produce "higher reported feelings of comfort and welcomeness and higher rating of office occupant's interest in service, interest in students, confidence in dealing with others, friendliness, and extroversion" (p. 648). Morrow and McElroy (1981) also state that previous research indicates that "office design can induce systematic reactions by visitors (e.g., perceptions of welcomeness) and elicit predictable inferences about the

office occupant" (p. 646). Professors who had informal sitting arrangement (sitting around a round conference table) were viewed as having more nurturing human relation skills (Becker, Gield, and Froggatt, 1983, p. 257). Sitting around a small conference table "appears to communicate a greater sensitivity to a subordinates needs and feelings than does interacting with a subordinate across a desk" (Becker, et al., 1983, p. 259).

Implications

Why should a faculty office environment be studied? In a study conducted by Farrenkopf and Roth (1980), faculty members at a California state university described their business in the faculty office. In this study, out of an average of 35 hours spent each week at school, 60% of that time was spent in the office. Out of this large percentage in an enclosed space, at least one third of their time in the office was spent in face-to-face or interpersonal interaction with others. These activities show that social interaction "emerged as a major component of the academic profile in terms of collaboration, environmental priorities…, satisfaction, and reasons for movement" (Farrenkopf & Roth, 1980, p. 469). On the following page, Figure 4 shows how much time faculty members devote to various tasks in their offices.

Figure 3: Office Activities and Percentage of Total Office Time



Note. From "The University Faculty Office as an Environment," by T. Farrenkopf & V. Roth, 1980, *Environment & Behavior, 12,* p 469.

In the above figure, a considerable amount of time focused on contacting students and preparing for class. Table 1 shows what qualities in an environment is most important to professors (A rank of 1 is the most important). From this study, office location is the most important quality of an office, with visual artifacts ranking last.

Table 1: Order of Importance in the Faculty Office Environment

Office Environment Dimensions	(Mean Rank)
Location (privacy, quiet)	2.8
Space (Amount and Type)	4.0
HVAC (heating, cooling)	4.2
Equipment (furniture)	4.3
Lighting	4.3
Windows and Views	4.7
Aesthetics (appearance, decorations)	4.9

Note. From "The University Faculty Office as an Environment," by T. Farrenkopf & V. Roth, 1980, *Environment & Behavior, 12,* p 469.

Implications: This study illustrates two important findings. One is that the majority of professors' time is spent interacting with students. The second important finding is that the appearance (decorations and physical contents) of the office are ranked very low on importance. These findings are relevant, because the first thing students notice – the physical contents of an office – are not viewed important to many professors. By reviewing this study, it is clear that the many faculty offices are utilized to fit professors' needs or privacy and comfort. This poses a problem since students also spend a considerable amount of time in faculty offices. Do students sense this problem, which ultimately leads to a fear of student-faculty conferences and negative evaluations of professors? Farrenkopf and Roth (1980) contend that faculty have little or no input into designing or controlling their office environment (p. 475). However, Darby and Judson (1987) argue that "[f]aculty have become aware of the effect of their offices on the quality of faculty-student interactions" and that "[m]any faculty have consciously designed their offices to reflect certain orientation toward students" (p. 507). Furthermore, Morrow and McElroy (1981) confirm that "it is apparent that office occupants do convey nonverbal messages to their visitors through office design" (p. 650). The influence of office design on student visitor perceptions will be investigated in the following study.

CHAPTER 2

Research Investigation

Students at some point during their college education will likely engage in a faculty conference. Campbell (1979) found that about 85% of students surveyed visit a professor's office once a week. The student opens the door to the faculty office and enters, yet before the verbal interaction begins, cues from the environment are influencing the student's views. These cues will influence the student's perceptions of the attractiveness of the office, mood, faculty credibility, personality characteristics, and the potential for future relationship.

Previous Literature

Office attractiveness: Previous literature has illustrated the powerful effect of environment on perceptions. Research on office design has shown that the arrangement of an office (e.g., desk placement, status symbols, aesthetics, tidiness) leads to impressions of the officeholder in the minds of potential visitors (Campbell, 1979; Morrow & McElroy, 1981, McElroy et al. 1983; Zweigenhaft, 1976). Campbell (1979) explored the impact of office arrangement, the presence of plants, artwork, and neatness and found that furniture arrangement had little impact on student-ratings. Students rated offices with plants and artwork more positively. Morrow and McElroy (1981) studied the effects of desk placement, status symbols, and tidiness on students' ratings of comfort, welcomeness, and attributions of the office occupant. Ultimately, the presence of clutter was found to be the most powerful nonverbal signifier, which led to strong negative ratings. Overall, office attractiveness positively

increases participants' well–being ratings (Larsen et al., 1998; Kaplan, 1993). To better understand the impact of clutter, the following hypothesis is posed:

H1: Male and female students observing photographs of cluttered offices will rate the offices as less attractive than photographs of clean offices.

Personality comparisons: Personality traits of individuals can be accurately judged by close acquaintances, and to a lesser degree strangers with zero acquaintance, when compared to individuals' self-judgments (Albright, Kenny, & Malloy, 1988; Funder & Colvin, 1988; Funder & Dobroth, 1987; Paunonen, 1989). Despite these findings, Morstain (1977) contends that there was little correlation between student evaluations and teacher self-evaluations. Hickson et al. (2004) propose that one function of nonverbal communication is identification, which includes personal dispositions. McElroy et al. (1981) claim that "research has already indicated that office design variables create impressions on individuals" (p. 544). These researchers also noted that "office design serves as a nonverbal cue for individuals as they attempt to learn more about the office occupants" and that the "attributions about the occupants elicited by office design (i.e., perceived reality) do have some basis in fact" (p. 544). Given that research has demonstrated accuracy between self-ratings and strangers when judging personality, and that research has shown the power of nonverbal communication, the following hypotheses was made:

H2: Student observers' ratings of cluttered office owners' personality characteristics will differ significantly from faculty self-ratings.

Sex identification: Hickson et al. (2004) claim that identification is one important function of nonverbal communication. Although identification can be related to personality, the sex of the communicator may also be an important identifier because it has an important influence on the interactions due to social cues associated with sex (Hickson et al., 2004). However Becker et al. (1983) found that no significant effects in attitudes where found for sex of a professor. They also found that "an ascribed personal characteristic such as sex is a less important determinant of impressions of the degree to which a supervisor possesses human relations skills and characteristics than are situational factors such as seating position" (p.259). Yet the possibility cannot be eliminated that sex can influence interaction. Few research studies have investigated whether the visitor of an environment can accurately identify the owner's sex based solely on nonverbal cues. To investigate the accuracy of viewers, the following research question is posed:

RQ: Can the sex of the faculty office owner be accurately determined by students?

Implications: This study seeks to investigate the power of nonverbal communication in general, and, more importantly, in the faculty office.

Method

Instruments: A four-page questionnaire that investigated the impact of nonverbal communication and its effect on student perceptions was designed (see Appendix C). The questionnaire has four major sections that rate visitor/rater mood, room

attractiveness, professor attributions and personality, and the possible relationships between the owner of the office and students.

Visitor mood: A 10-item mood inventory was given, which was adapted from a similar scale arranged by Campbell (1979).

Room attractiveness: The second section of the questionnaire assesses visitors' ratings of office attractiveness, based on Knapp's (1978) environmental dimensions.

Professor attributions and personality: The third section of the questionnaire focuses on rating the owner of the office in terms of perceived personal attributions and personality traits. The credibility of the professor can be measured using a credibility scale adapted from Berlo, Lemert and Mertz (1969), and McCroskey and Young (1981). Personality characteristics of an individual can be measured using a modified version of the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), will be used to measure the variables associated with personality traits of extroversion (enthusiasm, energy, persistence, dominance, openness/expressiveness, sociability), agreeableness (friendliness, trustworthiness), conscientiousness (organization, dependability, supportiveness), neuroticism (emotional instability, tension, worrisome), and openness (drama, openness/expressiveness, imagination).

Faculty-student relations: This 7 item-inventory was adapted from a similar questionnaire used by Zweigenhaft (1976) and items from the Least Preferred Coworker (LPC) self assessment by Fiedler, Chemers and Mahar (1976).

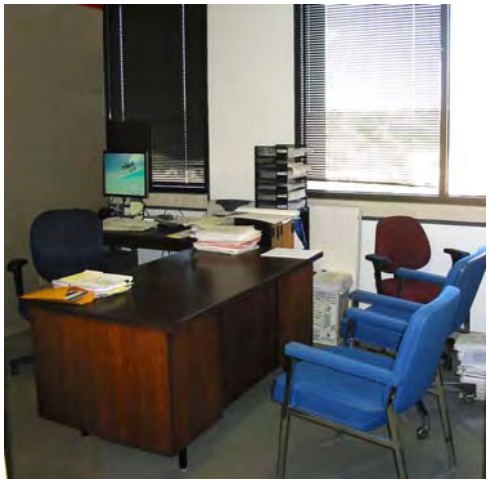
Photograph collection: The investigator chose a recently renovated building on the Texas State campus to collect photographs of professors' offices. The main building hosted two distinctly different academic departments. The offices in this building were architecturally similar to one another. The photographs were taken on the last two class days of the Fall 2005 semester. This time was chosen for two reasons. The first reason was that professors are encouraged to remain on campus during the last days of the semester to assist students with any last-minute concerns; students are also encouraged to come and visit their professors before finals begin. The second reason that time was chosen was that professors are extremely busy during this time: recording grades, preparing final examinations, and finishing their responsibilities for the semester. With all these distractions, professors would hardly be concerned about attractiveness of their office.

Faculty participants: The investigator walked through the hallways of the building, and if a professor was present in their office, he or she was asked participate in this study. The professors were told any photographs taken could be used in a research study investigating desk arrangement in faculty office and its effect on visiting students. Faculty were also told that if one's office were chosen for the study, that they would be required to fill out a personality inventory to be compared with

students' views. Twenty-one professors volunteered to have their office photographed with one faculty member declining (to view these office photographs, see Appendix A).

Photographs: A panel of ten student judges rated the collected photographs (without knowing the sex of the faculty member) on a cleanliness scale, with 1 being clean and 7 being cluttered. Initially two male-owned offices were chosen, with one receiving a 2 and the other receiving a rating of 6.4. The male owner of the clean office would not participate, and a second office was chosen that received a rating of 2.5. Two offices owned by female faculty were initially chosen, with one office receiving a 3.3 and the other given a rating of 6.4. The female office owner who had a clean office was later unable to participate, in which case the only other female owned office with a low score (2.3) was chosen to fill this space. Figure 5, on the following page, illustrates the four photographs that were chosen for this study.

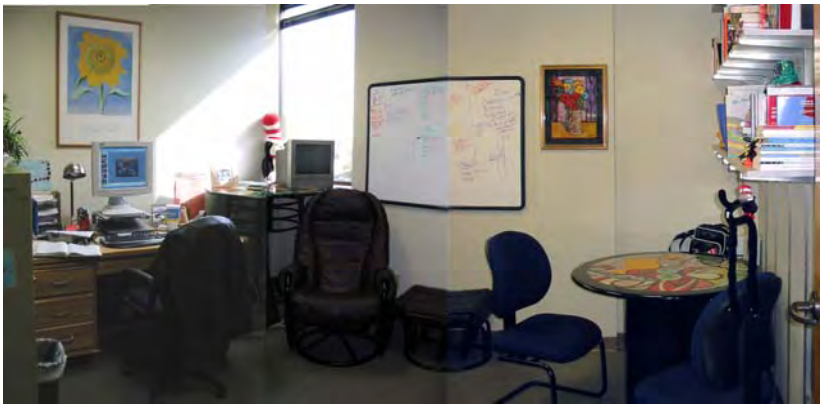
Figure 5: Rated Offices



Office 1: Male professor, clean

Office 2: Male professor, cluttered

Office 3: Female professor, clean



Office 4: Female professor, cluttered

Faculty follow-up: These four faculty members were given a personality inventory (see Appendix B). Faculty were informed of their anonymous involvement in this study and the intention of the study. Faculty were advised to finish the questionnaire outside of their office and return the questionnaire via campus mail.

Student participants: To evaluate the photographs, students enrolled in four sections of Psychology 1300 were asked to participate in this research study. During class sessions, the investigator passed around a sign-up sheet, and students voluntarily signed-up for a 15 minute time-slot during the course of the two-week investigation. The 217 (94 male and 123 female) students who completed questionnaire received extra credit in their course.

Photograph analysis: Students came to the research room and were given a packet that included: an informed consent form, which described the purpose of the study and the parameters of student involvement, directions, a random photograph of one of the four office photographs, and a four-page questionnaire (See Appendix C). Students were advised that if they had recognized the photograph (previously seen or knew the identity of the office owner) that was randomly given to them that they immediately tell the investigator and receive another photograph. No students reported recognizing the photographs.

Student questionnaires: Students rated the office on physical attractiveness, their mood while looking at the office, a list of personality characteristics of the professor who owns the office (which was identical to the ones given to faculty participants), and a relationship inventory of the possible relationships between the professor and his or her students. Questionnaires were administered by the same investigator for all study sessions. All participants completed questionnaires within a two week time between the first quarter of the semester and the week following midterms.

Results

Office attractiveness: The first research question inquired about the impact of clutter on perceived office attractiveness and visitor welcomeness. With regards to office attractiveness, there was a strong significant difference between the male-owned clean office and the male-owned cluttered office ($r = .86$, $p < .001$) and between the female-owned clean office and the female-owned cluttered office ($r = 3.51$, $p < .001$). The presence of clutter has a very significant impact on perceived office attractiveness, which can be observed in the table below.

Table 2: Comparisons of Office Attractiveness

Attractiveness - Attractive	1	2	.86*	.242	.000
		3	-2.50*	.242	.000
		4	1.01*	.243	.000
	2	1	-.86*	.242	.000
		3	-3.36*	.240	.000
		4	.15	.241	.533
	3	1	2.50*	.242	.000
		2	3.36*	.240	.000
		4	3.51*	.241	.000
	4	1	-1.01*	.243	.000
		2	-.15	.241	.533
		3	-3.51*	.241	.000

Based on observed means.

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Personality comparisons: The second hypothesis posed that student observers' ratings of cluttered office owners' personality characteristics will differ significantly from faculty self-ratings. These five traits - extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness - each yielded different relationships.

Extroversion: Significant differences exist between the Office 1 owner and student raters. The office owner rated himself a 5 on extraversion, however, students gave an average rating of 3.40 ($p < .001$). Students rating office 2, 3, and 4 were accurate in determining the trait of extroversion when compared to faculty self-ratings (Office 2, self-rating 5.5, student-rating 3.77, $p > .05$; Office 3, self-rating 5.67, student-rating 5.31, $p > .05$; Office 4, self-rating 5.17, student-rating 4.06, $p > .05$).

Agreeableness: With the exception of Office 4, significant differences exist between faculty self-ratings of agreeableness and average student ratings (Office 1, self-rating 6.33, student-rating 4.03, $p < .001$; Office 2, self-rating 6, student-rating 3.93, $p < .05$; Office 3, self-rating 7, student-rating 5.5, $p < .05$). The exception is Office 4, in which the owner gave a self-rating of 5.33 and received a student-rating of 3.96 ($p > .05$).

Conscientiousness: All faculty office owners rated themselves higher on conscientiousness than students rated them; there is a significant difference between faculty self-ratings and student-ratings (Office 1, self-rating 5.33, student-rating 4.55, $p < .05$; Office 2, self-rating 6, student-rating 2.70, $p < .001$; Office 3, self-rating 7, student-rating 5.28, $p < .05$; Office 4, self-rating 5.33, student-rating 2.61, $p < .001$).

Neuroticism: There were no significant difference in female office owners self-ratings and student-ratings of neuroticism (Office 3, self-rating 6, student-rating 5.44, $p > .05$; Office 4, self-rating 4, student-rating 3.74, $p > .05$). Therefore, neuroticism among female faculty was accurately perceived by students. In contrast, male neurotic traits were rated significantly different between faculty and students (Office 1, self-rating 5.33, student-rating 3.99, $p < .05$; Office 2, self-rating 7, student-rating 3.19, $p < .001$).

Openness: There were no significant differences found between faculty self-ratings of openness and student-ratings (Office 1, self-rating 3.67, student-rating 3.36, $p > .05$; Office 2, self-rating 4.67, student-rating 4.23, $p > .05$; Office 3, self-rating 4, student-rating 4.93, $p > .05$, Office 4, self-rating 5.33, student-rating 4.2, $p > .05$). Students were accurate in determining openness traits in faculty.

Overall personality differences: H2 presumed that student observers' ratings of cluttered office owners' personality characteristics would differ significantly from faculty self-ratings. With the exception of the openness trait and neuroticism (only with female faculty subjects), there were significant differences between faculty self-ratings and student-ratings of personality. These differences between faculty self-ratings of personality traits and students' ratings of faculty personality are illustrated on the following page in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean Personality Scores Across Offices

	Office 1		Office 2		Office 3		Office 4	
Trait	Rating	Differenc	Rating	Differenc	Rating	Differenc	Rating	Differenc
Extroversio								
Faculty self-	5		5.5		5.67		5.17	
Male student	3.5	1.5	3.6	1.82	5.2	0.47	4.2	0.97
Female student	3.3	1.7	3.8	1.64	5.4	0.25	3.9	1.25
gender		0.2		0.18		0.22		0.28
Agreeablenes								
Faculty self-	6.3		6		7		5.3	
Male student	4.1	2.16	4.0	1.93	5.4	1.57	3.9	1.37
Female student	3.8	2.44	3.7	2.21	5.6	1.33	4.0	1.32
gender		0.28		0.28		0.24		0.05
Conscientiousnes								
Faculty self-	6.3		6		7		5.3	
Male student	4.5	1.82	2.8	3.31	5.0	1.96	2.7	2.58
Female student	4.5	1.74	2.5	3.46	5.5	1.48	2.4	2.86
gender		0.08		0.15		0.48		0.3
Neuroticis								
Faculty self-	5.3		7		6		4	
Male student	4.2	1.13	3.9	3.09	5.3	0.67	3.8	0.13
Female student	3.7	1.55	3.7	3.29	5.5	0.46	3.6	0.40
gender		0.42		0.2		0.21		0.27
Opennes								
Faculty self-	3.6		4.6		4		5.3	
Male student	3.3	0.35	4.2	0.40	5.1	1.10	4.3	0.98
Female student	3.3	0.28	4.1	0.48	4.76	0.76	4.0	1.28
gender		0.07		0.08		0.34		0.3

Sex identification: The research question asked if the sex of the faculty office owner could be accurately determined by students. To find out if students were accurate, a percentage was calculated by taking the total number of correct guesses from the total number of guesses. Figure 6 and Figure 7 on the following page shows the percentages of how correct students were at guessing the sex of the office owner.

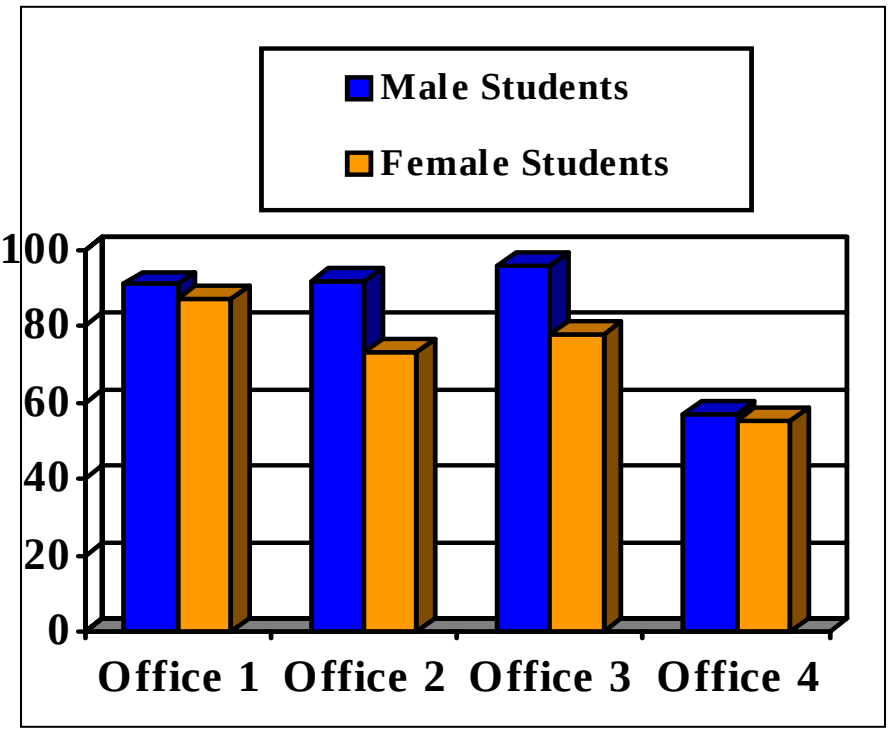


Figure 6: Student Accuracy in Guessing Office Owner Sex

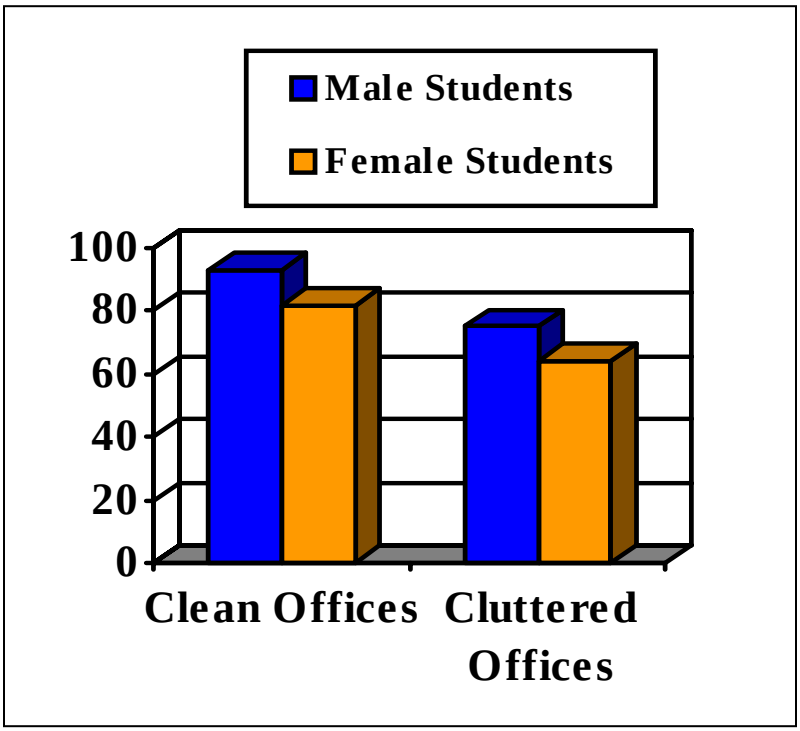


Figure 7: Total Student Accuracy in Guessing Office Owner Sex

Overall Sex Accuracy: Males were more accurate at guessing the sex of the office owner than females in all office photographs. Clean offices led to more accuracy in guessing the sex of the owner than did offices with cluttered conditions. Clean offices, despite owner sex, yielded accuracy 82% to 93% of the time, whereas cluttered offices yielded accuracy 64% to 75% of the time.

Other Relevant Findings

Visitor mood: There were many accidental, yet interesting, findings in this research study. The presence of clutter not only affects perceived attractiveness, but also impacts visitors' moods, as shown below in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Visitors' Mood across Office Conditions

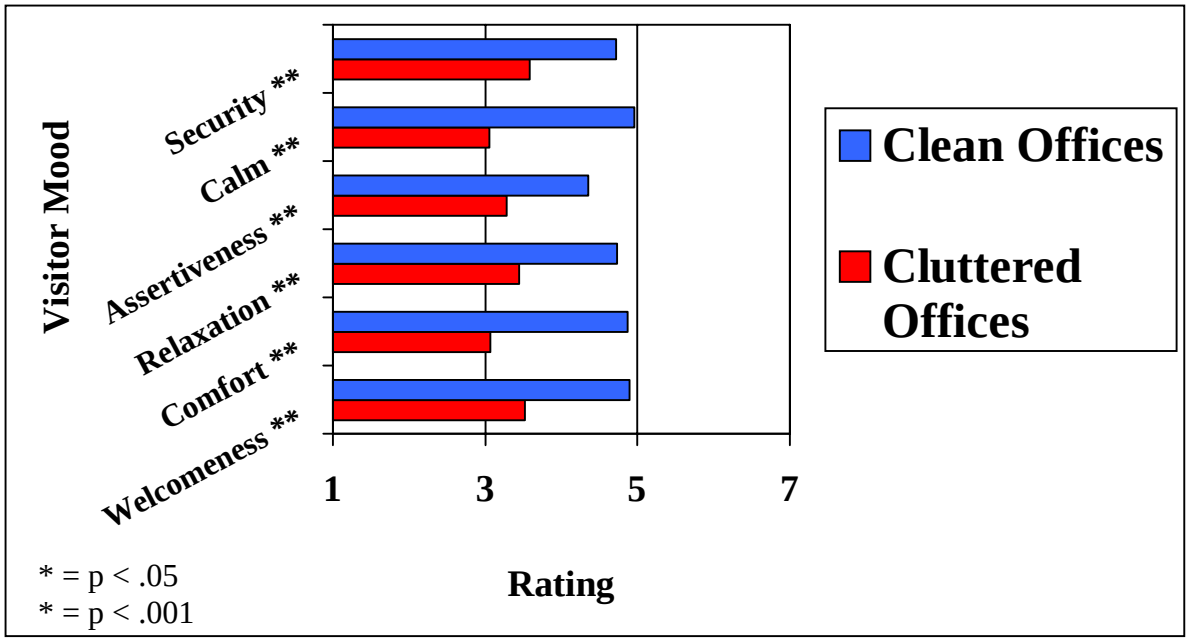


Figure 8 on the previous page illustrates the powerful impact of clutter. Students were significantly impacted by clutter. When students viewed the photographs of cluttered offices, they felt significantly less secure (clean mean = 4.71, cluttered mean = 3.59, p = < .001), less calm (clean mean = 4.96, cluttered mean = 3.06, p < .001), less assertive (clean mean = 4.36, cluttered mean = 3.28, p < .001), less relaxed (clean mean = 4.73, cluttered mean = 3.44, p < .001), less comfortable (clean mean = 4.88, cluttered mean = 3.06, p < .001), and less welcome (clean mean = 4.90, cluttered mean = 3.52, p < .001). Therefore, students' moods were negatively influenced by the presence of clutter.

Professor attributions: Attributions other than personality traits were rated. When students rated professor attributions, the presence of clutter had a negative impact on these ratings, as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9: Perceived Attributions across Offices

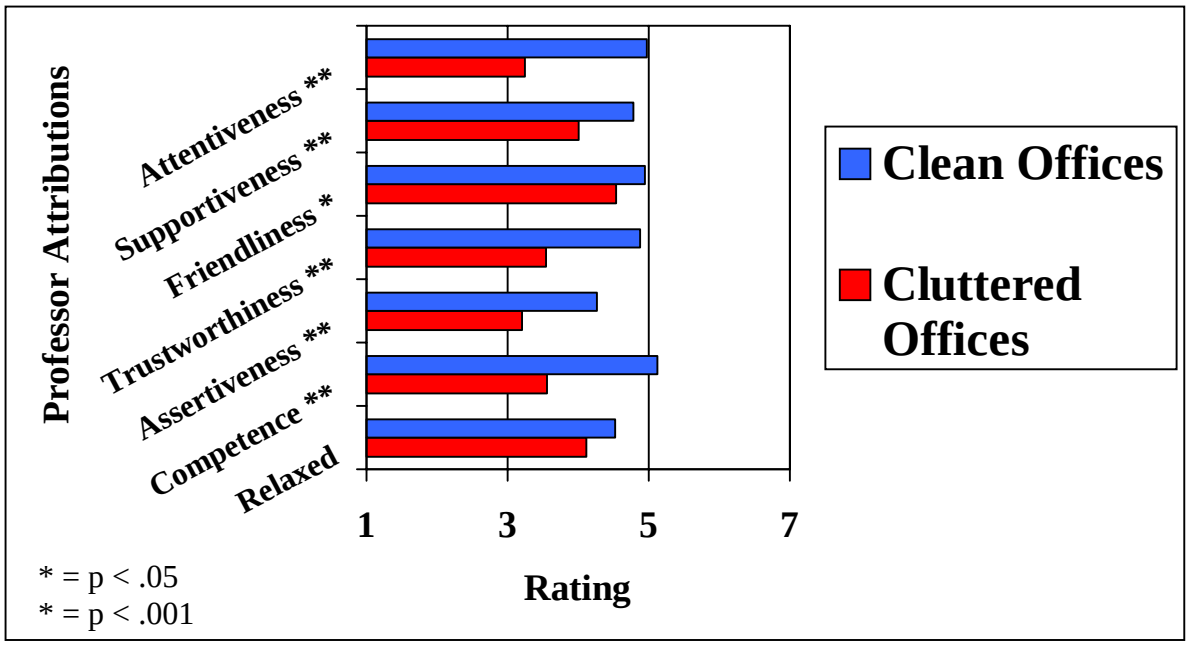
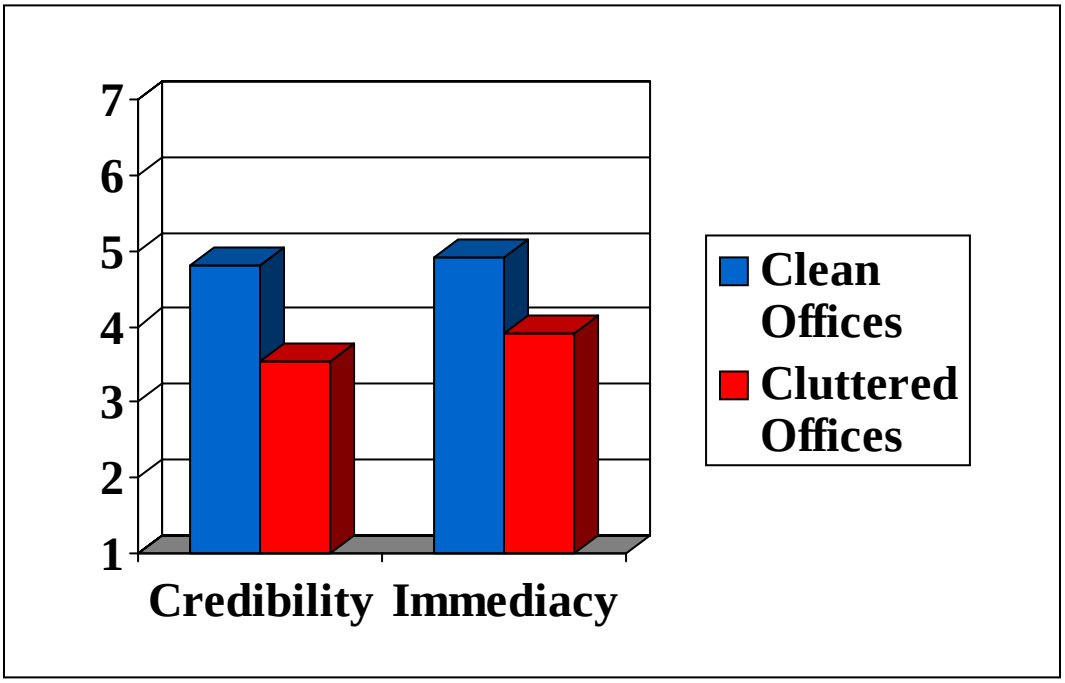


Figure 9 illustrates that clutter negatively impacts students' perceptions of professors' attentiveness (clean mean = 4.98, cluttered = 3.24, $p < .001$), supportiveness (clean mean = 4.79, cluttered = 4.01, $p < .001$), friendliness (clean mean = 4.94, cluttered mean = 4.53, $p = < .05$), trustworthiness (clean mean = 4.88, cluttered mean =3.55, $p < .001$), assertiveness (clean mean = 4.26, cluttered mean = 3.20, $p < .001$), and competence (clean mean = 5.12, cluttered mean = 3.56, $p < .001$). Students' perceptions of the professor being relaxed was not significantly impacted by the presence of clutter (clean mean = 4.52, cluttered mean = 4.12, $p = .11$). Overall, professors with cluttered offices were seen as less inattentive, unsupportive, untrustworthy, passive, incompetent, and tense when compared to professors who owned clean offices.

Credibility and immediacy: Another interesting finding in this study was that professors who owned cluttered offices were seen as less credible (clean mean = 4.81, cluttered mean = 3.54, $p < .001$) and less immediate (clean mean = 4.90, cluttered mean = 3.92, $p < .001$). These results are shown on the following page in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Mean Credibility and Immediacy Ratings



Professors with cluttered offices were seen as significantly less credible in terms of competence, trustworthiness, and dynamism (assertiveness) and less immediate (supportive, attentive, friendly).

CHAPTER 3

Discussion

Office attractiveness: Cluttered offices were rated low on attractiveness when compared to clean offices. Cluttered offices are disarrayed. Where there is clutter, there are negative impressions. Attractiveness may be linked to other variables, such as desk placement (Campbell, 1979). Office 3 was rated high on attractiveness, which may be caused by an interaction of a presence of plants, non-traditional desk placement, and artwork (Morrow & McElroy, 1981, McElroy et al., 1983).

Personality Comparisons: There was a significant discrepancy between faculty self-ratings of personality traits and students' ratings of the professors' personality traits. The nonverbal cues faculty advertise through their offices have an impact on students.

Extroversion: There were significant differences between student-ratings of extroversion and professor self-ratings for Office 1. One possible reason for this could be due to a possible social stigma on introversion. Professors working alone in an office would seem to be more introverted. It would appear that professors are internally driven and motivated. They tend to work in solitude: Researching, grading, emailing, writing. Perhaps students stereotypically consider professors to be more introverted. Perhaps this stereotypical image of professors influenced students' ratings on the extroversion trait. The owner of Office 1 could have considered himself more extrovert than he really is. This, again, could be due to a stigma that

extroversion is more socially appealing than introversion. The best possible reason to explain why students rated him as introverted is due to the fact that Office 1 is devoid of nonverbal self-disclosure. There are no decorations, no paintings, no photographs, and no personal, intimate items. The office photograph shows no cues about any of the professors hobbies or interests (except the screensaver, which could be considered art). Due to this lack of personal accessories, students may have stereotyped him as the typical introverted professor who just doesn't get out in the world much. This professor, even though he may be extroverted, appears unsocial by the lack of personal displays of social activities (group photographs) and interests in his office. There would probably be more agreement if students rated clean or cluttered classrooms that the instructors lecture in. In this area, students would expect professors to be more outgoing and extroverted.

Agreeableness: The data does not suggest that agreeableness can be determined by nonverbal messages. Agreeableness and argumentativeness would best be judged after interaction. A reason why professors were rated low on agreeableness could be do to the negative stereotypes of professors being more argumentative, headstrong, and opinionated. Perhaps the student participants experienced argumentative and dominating professors that did not easily yield on their decisions.

Conscientiousness: All faculty office owners rated themselves higher on conscientiousness than students rated them. The conscientiousness trait comprises of how much an individual considers others' needs and adapts to those needs.

Conscientious individuals tend to be organized, supportive, and dependable; they are fully aware of their responsibilities and how their activities affect others. Students consistently rated professors low on conscientiousness, even though professors rated themselves high on conscientiousness (mean = 5.91). There are several reasons why professors are viewed as unconscientious. A possible reason for this may be based again on the recurring stereotypes of professors. Professors are often stereotyped as uncaring and unsupportive because they cannot meet the needs of every student. Yet a more powerful explanation lies in the nonverbals messages of control and organization in the office. There is little space for student visitors within the office for interaction, and students may feel that professors (who "own" more territory in the office) may be too controlling in terms of personality and interaction. This explains why Office 3, who has the most student- controlled space (ample visitor seating and working space) was rated the highest on conscientiousness. With more space, students may perceive equality and feel that their needs were considered. Cleaner offices were rated higher on conscientiousness when compared to cluttered offices. The presence of clutter affects perceptions of conscientiousness because it may be easier to lose something (tests, papers, essays, grade sheets) in a room with no apparent organization. One comment made by a student viewer states, "The desk is cluttered and the floors have stacks all over. I feel that this [professor] isn't well organized and I would be worried about work getting lost." It appears that students sense organization, and go further to attribute unorganization as a lack of regard.

Neuroticism: Students were accurate in rating neurotic traits in females. This finding is difficult to explain. By looking at students' ratings of neuroticism, each office owner is rated with a mid-range rating (with the exception of Office 3). Office 4 had a self-rating of 4. It appears that students were accurate, yet Office 3 and 4 were rated the same. Perhaps the ratings of neuroticism were so varied that the means rested in the middle. Office 3 had higher student-ratings overall. Her self-rating (6) ended up near the student-ratings (mean = 5.44). This finding may have been a coincidence, and thus uninterruptible.

Openness: Each office owner was accurately rated on the openness trait. This trait, based on these results, can be easily observable by the content in office environments. Office 1 rated himself low on openness (self-rating 3.67, student-rating mean, 3.36). By looking closely at his office, he has very little personal artifacts, such as pictures or photographs. His hobbies and interests are not visually expressed, therefore, he appears to not be an expressive, open individual. There are also no bold colors in his office, which make the owner appear plain and ordinary (less open). Office 2 (self-rating 4.67, student-rating 4.23) has one visible photograph. The pictures on the wall have a lot of text and few pictures. Perhaps students considered the professor in the mid range on openness due to the presence of a colorful photograph and various displays of interests. Students rated Office 3 higher on openness than her self-rating (4, student-ratings 4.93). The owner of Office 3 has no photographs, yet expresses herself through artifacts, such as the Cat in the Hat dolls and the floral prints. She appears expressive by the bright, colorful artifacts. Office 4 (self-rating 5.33, student-

rating 4.2). She appears expressive by the many small photographs of people. She also has many bright colors throughout, such as reds, greens, and blues. According to these results, students are able to accurately judge openness by the personal artifacts and colors in the office environments.

Sex Identification: Females were expected to be more accurate at identifying owner sex. Previous literature suggests that "gender is a significant predictor of knowledge of nonverbal cues" and that females were accurate at interpreting nonverbal cues (Rosip & Hall, 2004, p. 277). The current investigation found contradictory results. Males were more accurate at determining sex in all office conditions. A possible reason for these findings lies in our data pool. The student participants in this study were from Introduction to Psychology classes. We assume that many of these students were freshman and perhaps never set foot in a faculty office. Since males still outnumber females in this occupation, perhaps the students initially chose a male professor. It is safe to assume that, on average, more male students have experienced more student-faculty conferences, and thus, seen more professors' offices on which to base their judgments. Females, on average, would appear more likely to interact with professors via email. The female participants may not have seen many faculty offices, and thus had nothing on which to base their judgment.

Future Investigations: This study is groundbreaking, in that it incorporates a wide variety of past literature in communication and psychological research into one integrated investigation. This study is a honors thesis; due to time and financial constraints, the researchers had to focus primarily on the effect of clutter on student perceptions. Future research is needed to fully understand the powerful impact of all nonverbal communication within the faculty offices. It would be interesting for students to rate photographs of faculty offices and afterwards interact with the professor and complete the same questionnaire. It would also be interesting to survey faculty across departments and investigate whether perceived personality traits differ departmentally. Would communication studies professors be perceived as more extroverted than math professors? Only future data can make that determination. In the previous study, students guessed the sex of the office owners. In future investigations, perhaps students (especially males) would be accurate in guessing the professors' academic field of expertise. Lastly, it would be interesting for professors who own cluttered, non-immediate offices to undertake a student-centered approach to office design. If these faculty members changed their environments, would they be comfortable in their self-made environments? Would students rate them differently? Future studies investigating professors' office environments, even offices outside of academia, should provide a more in-dept understanding of nonverbal communication.

CHAPTER 4

Limitations

Methodology

Study Control: In Campbell's (1979) study there was a significant amount of control. The photographed offices used in his study were artificial; they were created in a research room, and the variables of cleanliness and clutter were manipulated. There was no manipulation of the office conditions in the current study. Each photograph was a picture of a randomly chosen, *actual* office on campus. The investigators could not control the extraneous variables in each office condition. The researchers could have replicated Campbell's (1979) study and run a controlled experiment, in which the same office was used and photographed, with the only differences being cleanliness and messiness. The results of this study would have probably been more dramatic. However, the alternative method was chosen in order to investigate personality ratings and compare these ratings to an actual office owner.

Photograph comparability: When comparing the photographs of clean offices to cluttered offices, it becomes clear that each office is very different from one another. The photographs used in this study were not the first choices. The initial female faculty member of the clean condition was on administrative leave and could not complete the follow-up personality inventory. The initial male owner of the clean office condition chose not to complete the personality questionnaire. The researchers were forced to find alternative photographs out of the sample taken.

***Photograph quality*:** The photographs were taken by a digital camera. The investigator had to take several angle shots to include all the aspects of the office. These individual photographs were then merged together in Adobe Photoshop CS to create one panoramic view. To improve the photographic quality, a professional photographer with a panoramic camera may have been the best option.

Role Play: Students were given a photograph and instructed to describe how they *would* feel within this office. Analyzing the student's emotional state in a fictitious scenario causes problems. Students were asked to role play, or place themselves in the room and record their feelings. These results may contradict students' emotions in a real interaction in the faculty office. More accurate emotions would have been obtained had the students actually visited the office. Yet this role-play approach to mood is useful, despite it's reliability, because it attributes widely-felt emotional dispositions to specifically arranged rooms.

Faculty Office Limitations

Space limitations: One complaint of many professors in a study conducted by Farrenkopf and Roth (1980) was of the limited space in the office. The space in the office for professors is square footage, surface working space, and storage space. Due to the lack of space in many universities, "typical lived-in faculty [offices feature] to varying degrees, stacks and piles of material on desks and tables, on filing cabinets, on and under shelves, on the floor, and flowing out of boxes" (p. 473). It appears that these features are the result of department limitations. Clutter in the office may be an

inevitable feature of offices that professors must endure in order to work in their offices and access important documents.

Office and furniture appointment: In the same study by Farrenkopf and Roth (1980), more higher ranked, or senior faculty members owned offices with windows than did those of the lower ranks (pp. 474-475). Again, many offices were not chosen by faculty; faculty were given offices regardless of preferences. Faculty may not have any choice in the office they are given. Professors may also have no control over the furniture that is in their office. Some departments may equip offices only with a desk, two chairs, and one bookshelf. There may be a strict policy that these items remain in the office. Professors should not fully be blamed for the overall presentation of their offices because they may be using the only resources provided to them and using whatever they have access to.

Faculty concern: Professors may have messy offices because they don't expect students to come by. Many professors consider offices private and dislike intrusions. Professors may not have any reason to consider the needs of the student visitors. Some professors are just too busy in their profession and have little concern for student visitors. This may be a reason why faculty have unattractive and controlling office environments.

Questioning immediacy: Immediacy is vital in order to establish positive relationships. In the office space, nonverbal immediate cues are spatial closeness and similar chairs for faculty and students. These nonverbal cues create perceived interpersonal closeness. However, these cues can be easily misperceived and can negatively affect the relationship between students and professor.

Misreading Immediate Cues: Familiarity with interactants certainly comes with time. Most people who are in long standing relationships tend to be able to accurately read nonverbal cues. In new relationships, taking nonverbal cues and applying meaning to them is a daunting task because there is no history between the two parties to know if the cues are being read accurately. Is a smile fake or sincere? Immediacy is often misread as intimacy. A professor who places his or her chair too close to the students chair may be seen as inappropriate or too intimate. Determining whether the professor is physically inappropriate with students or attempting sincere immediacy can be easily misread. Due to misinterpretations, professors may want to avoid closeness altogether.

Creating More Anxiety: People are who apprehensive about communicating, especially with strangers, may be more anxious and apprehensive in an immediate environment. People who avoid communication want more spatial distance. Using immediate behaviors with an avoidant student may cause the student to feel more anxious and avoid any further interaction. Some individuals are more relaxed with immediacy than others.

Increased Communication: One of the positive aspects of immediacy is that it breaks down communication barriers, which promote more communication between people. More communication is not always desirable, because communication takes time. Some faculty may purposely create a non-immediate environment. Many professors are just too busy with the requirements of their jobs: Grading papers, researching, planning lectures, etc. Many professors must manage their time efficiently, and interacting with students may not be seen as important, relative to the other job requirements. When the author of this thesis was discussing this topic of immediacy with a professor, the professor replied that there is not enough time to interact with students. When students begin casually stopping by after office hours, the professor consciously withdraws immediacy cues by moving the chairs to a corner and leaving books on the visitors' chairs. Professors do not have the luxury of a secretary to serve as a social gatekeeper. They must manage students on their own. Setting office hours is one way to manage interaction, however, another way could be barring immediacy so that students will only come when it is important.

Student Participants

The freshman factor: The data pool used in this investigation included students in introductory psychology classes. It is safe to say that a majority of these students were freshman. Some of these students may have never had a student-faculty conference. The students may have rated the offices negatively because they may have compared these faculty offices with offices from other professions.

Student Anxiety: Merely the thought of interacting with faculty distresses some students. Fearing the professor is a common feeling, and students, in turn, feel hesitant in the room regardless of the environment or office design. Even the most immediate and student-centered office environment would be unwelcoming and discomforting to apprehensive student visitors. Many students would rather avoid interpersonal interaction with professors at all costs and therefore, due to their own anxiety, rate the offices more negatively than rating the office based on the actual content. Students may feel anxiety and hesitation is any type of environment.

Personality of the visitor: Samuelson and Lindauer (1976) found that students who scored high on the Zuckerman Sensation Seeking Scale were more likely to rate a messy room more positively than low sensation seekers. This shows that there is probably an interaction effect between the observer's own dispositions and perceptions of clutter.

CHAPTER 5

Student-Centered Approach to Office Design

There is a term used in the study of communication. When an individual sends a communication message, it is important that this message be structured and adapted to meet the needs of the receiver of the message. Being audience-centered is an approach to communication that discourages miscommunication, misunderstanding, and misperceptions. If messages are audience-centered, meaning that they are constructed to meet the needs of the receiver, than the communication between interactants will be more effective. This same concept can be applied to the office environment. The sender of the message (office owner) should adapt the nonverbal messages in his or her office to meet the needs of students receiving them. If professors consciously create a student-centered office, then visitors to the office will feel more at ease, more attentive to the professor, and more likely to receive more accurate perceptions. In a student-centered environment, the fear of the student-faculty conference will subside and more positive, effective communication can take place. Even though many professors lack the financial and departmental capabilities to arrange “the perfect office,” there are simple design techniques than can be implemented to create an inviting office. By applying past and current research, office owners can easily adapt and design their offices to fit the needs of students.

Lighting: One student commented in our research study, “I’m feeling more towards unconstrained because of the light from the window.” Many students commented that when the window blinds are up they tend to feel less constrained, more comfortable, and more secure. One suggestion would be to open the window blinds, especially at designated office hours. Students will notice this, and based on our research, respond positively to it. Even if the sight outside is unattractive, allowing natural light to filter through seems to create positive reactions. If there are no windows in an office, a good substitute would be incorporating floor or desk lamps in the room. Another student comments, “The light coming in through the window is welcoming and would make me feel safe.”

Color: Wexner (1954) found that cool hues (blues, greens, purples) elicited more positive, calming moods than did warm colors (reds, oranges, yellows). By incorporating cool hues like blues and greens in an office, students may be positively impacted by these color cues. Color can be applied to any room through objects, such as a picture with certain color hues, posters, or rugs. Guilford and Smith (1959) reported that there is a positive relationship between brightness and pleasure. A positive environment should incorporate cool hues and bright colors.

Plants: Larsen et al. (1998), found that the presence of plants in an environment positively influenced visitors’ comfort, performance, and mood. A simple technique to make visitors to an office more comfortable is bringing plants into a room. Live or fake plants have a positive impact and can be placed anywhere: on top of a bookcase,

on top of a filing cabinet, or on the floor in a corner. This is a simple way to create a lasting impression.

Seating: "The office [has a] real comfortable atmosphere. I believe the seats are the things that make me feel this way." This student comments that the chairs are the most identifiable nonverbal cue that makes a room inviting. Providing comfortable, upholstered visitors' chairs is one way to make an owner appear more immediate. If wooden chairs are the only available chairs, then a pillow or a pad can be easily attached to the chair. Chairs can also be perceived as a status symbol, especially if there is a major difference between the owner's chair and the visitor's chair. It is important for chairs to appear equally comfortable, so that the owner isn't perceived as being too controlling. One student viewer noticed the chairs as status symbols and wrote, "The guests chair looks to be in a worse condition than the owners chair."

Furniture arrangement: The most positive furniture arrangement is nontraditional (Becker et. al, 1983; Morrow & McElroy, 1981; Sommer, 1969; . Zweigenhaft, 1976). This arrangement places the owner's chair and the visitor's chair next to each other. This arrangement makes the owner look more immediate and creates positive moods in visitors. Open-desk arrangement (placing the desk against a wall) may also be a good option, especially when space is so often limited in the office environment. In our study, Office 3 had a separate working station away from her desk. It is important that office owners and visitors can both communicate within a close proximity to one another. Office 3, which has a nontraditional and open desk

arrangement received this comment, “The office looks very relaxed and welcoming. The presence of the study desk and chairs assures me that the professor is willing to work with students outside of class.”

Self-disclosure: Personal items in an office is a form of self-disclosure because the owner is nonverbally cueing the visitor as to their interests, hobbies, and interpersonal relationships. Self-disclosure is reciprocal; if the owner self-discloses, then the visitor will likely self-disclose. An easy way to disclose is to clearly show personal photographs, trinkets, favorite posters, and mementos. These personal objects may appear small and obtrusive, but they will yield satisfying outcomes. Office 1 had no self-disclosing objects visible, and several students commented, “There are no pictures up anywhere. The room needs life and color.” “There are no pictures or posters anywhere in the office which make the room feel very serious and a bit unwelcoming.” and “It’s just very plain and dull. Doesn’t make a student feel comfortable. Needs more visuals.”

Tidiness: The current study investigated the effect of clutter in offices. Our results strongly confirm that clutter has negative impact on visitors. Campbell (1979) found that moderately cluttered offices were rated similarly to clean offices. Organized stacks of paper are acceptable, as long as they do not interfere with the visitors personal space and the desk (work) space. Clutter strongly impacts students’ mood and perceptions of the office owner. When looking at a photograph of a cluttered office, one student comments that, “The office is a disaster. It is unorganized and

really messy which would probably make me feel less comfortable and relaxed. The more organized my professor is, the more comfortable and assertive I'm going to be."

"Environments form the first line of communication, indicating how we should act and how we should view the inhabitants of the environment" (Hickson et al., 2001, p. 137). The environment is the first impression and the first thing visitors see when they open an office door. The nonverbals within an office space constantly communicate messages about the owner of the office, impact visitor moods, and influence interaction. There is no perfect office space where every visitor feels comfortable. Yet the above suggestions are what past and present research finds are the most noticeable elements in an office to which visitors respond. By taking the time to incorporate one or several of the suggestions into an office, the student-faculty interaction can be more influential and more effective.

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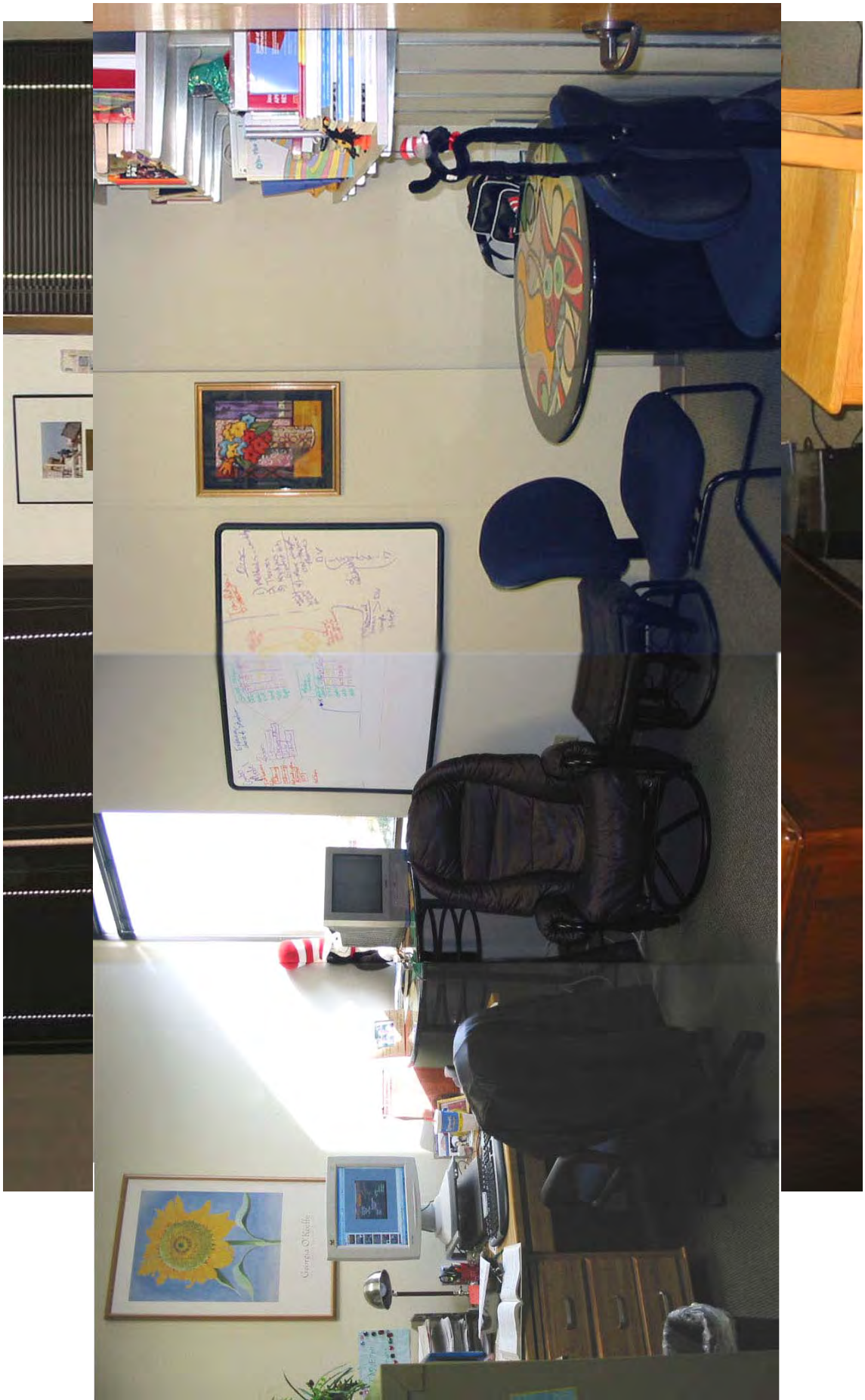

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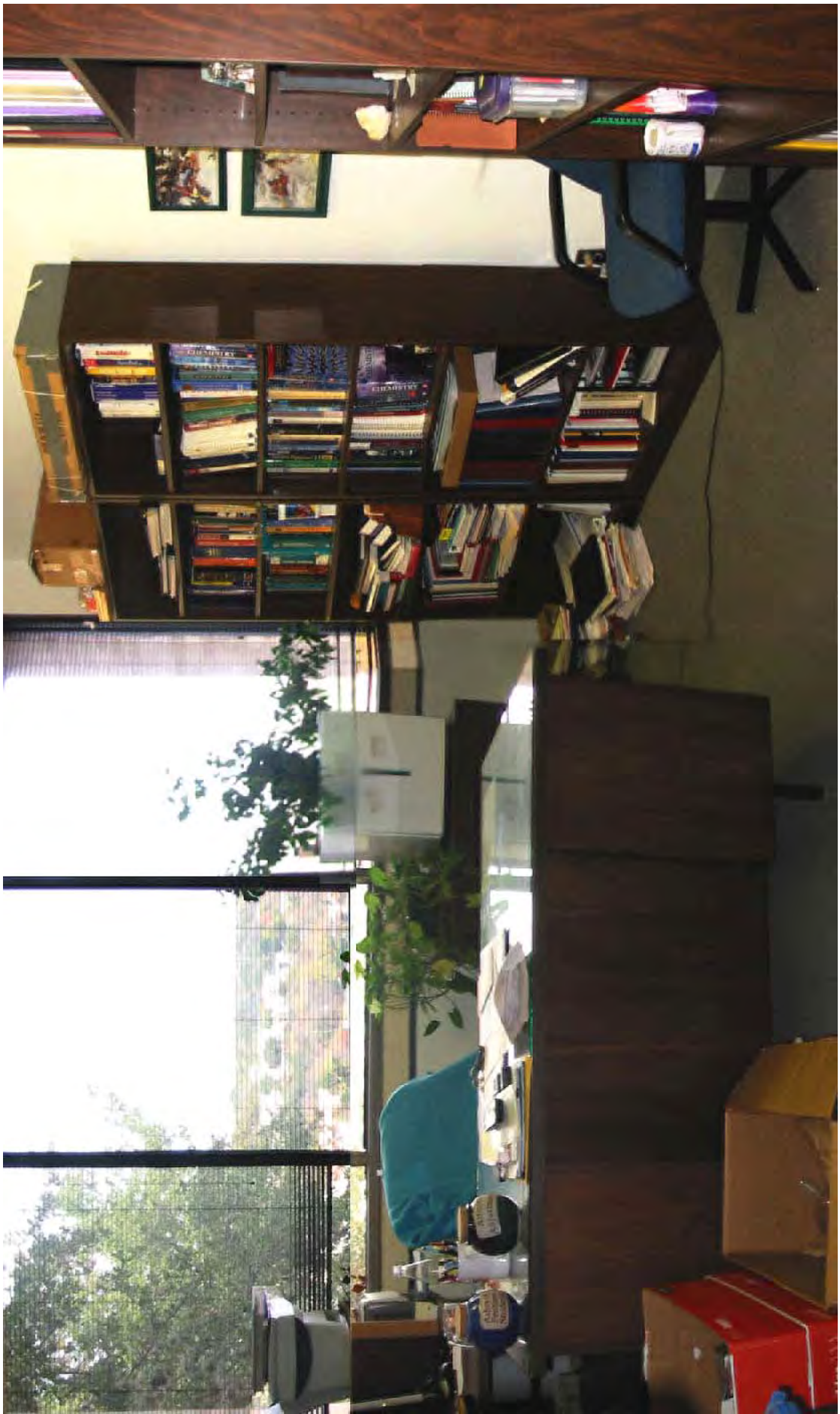

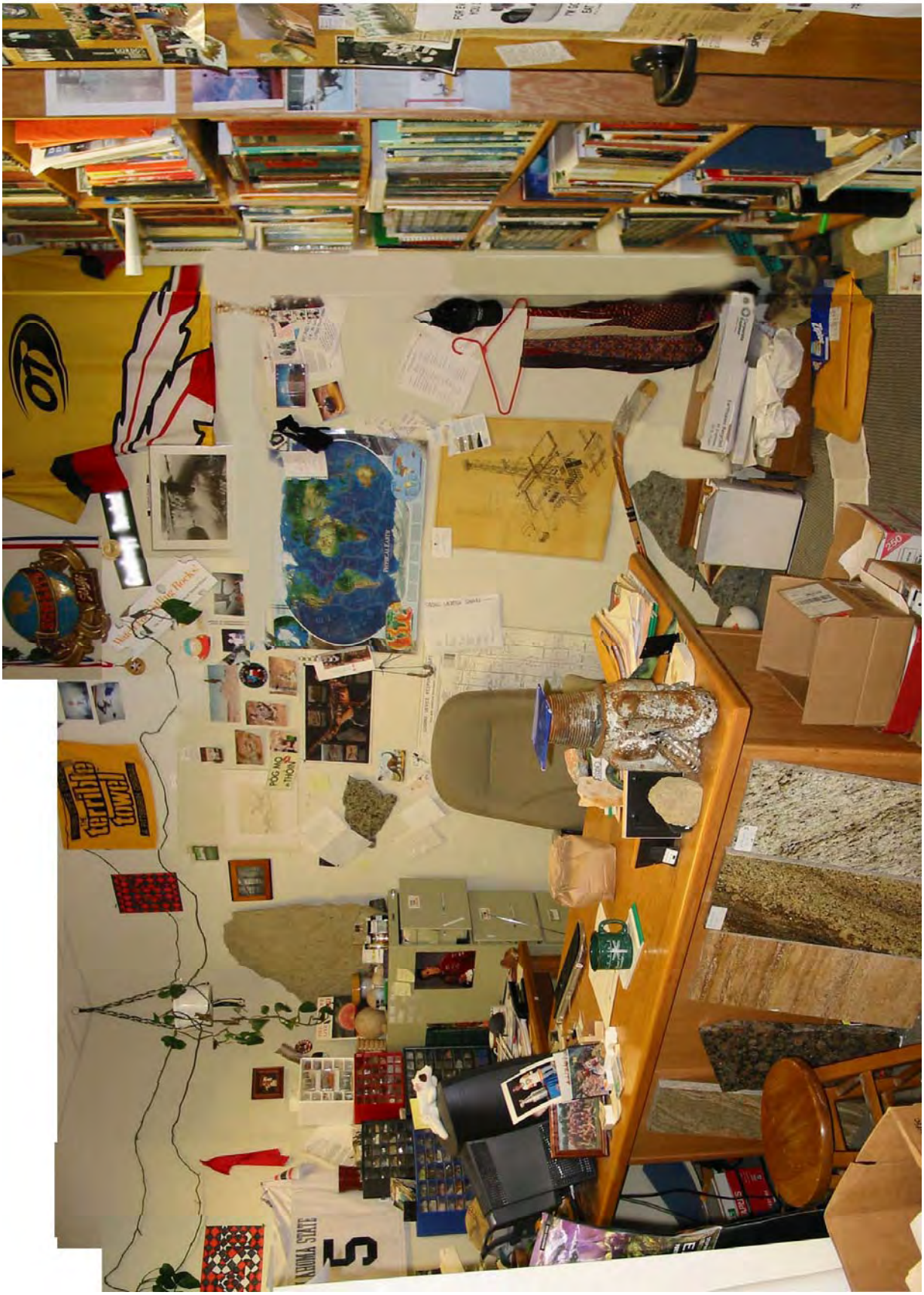
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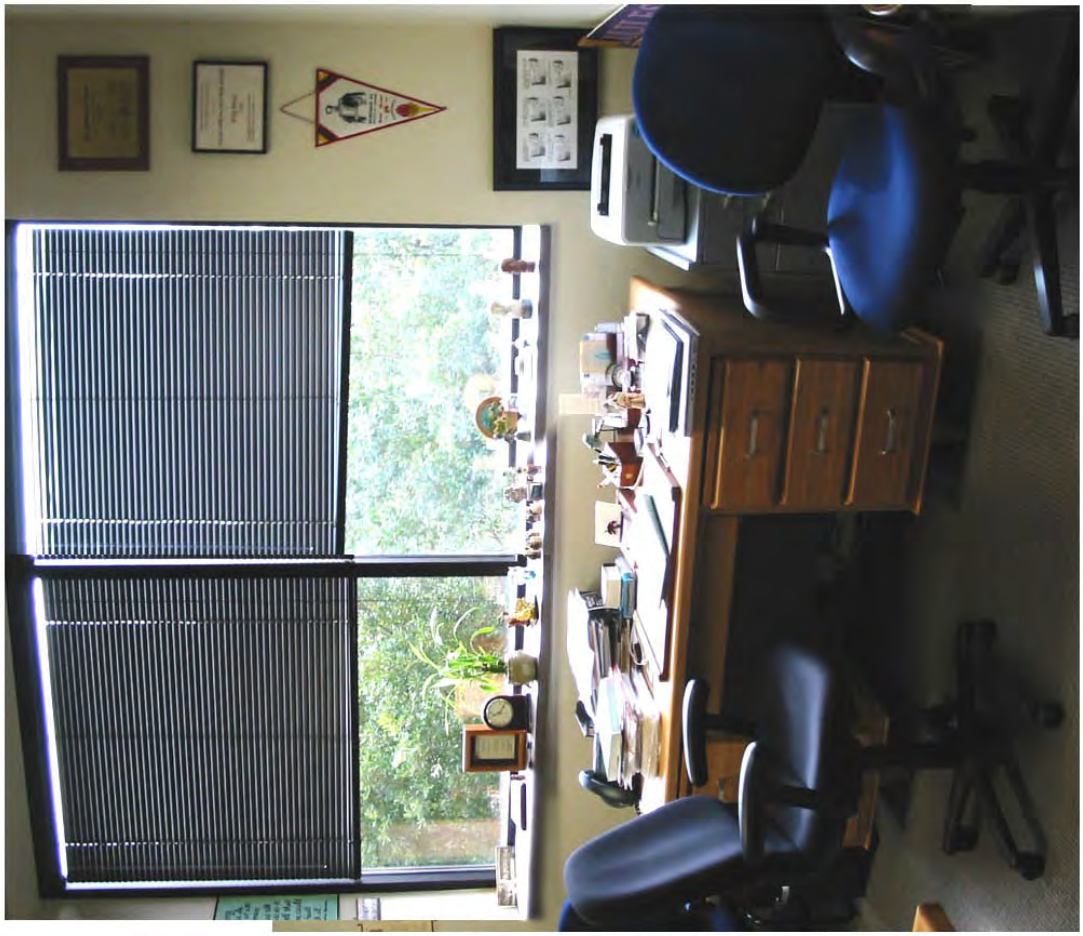

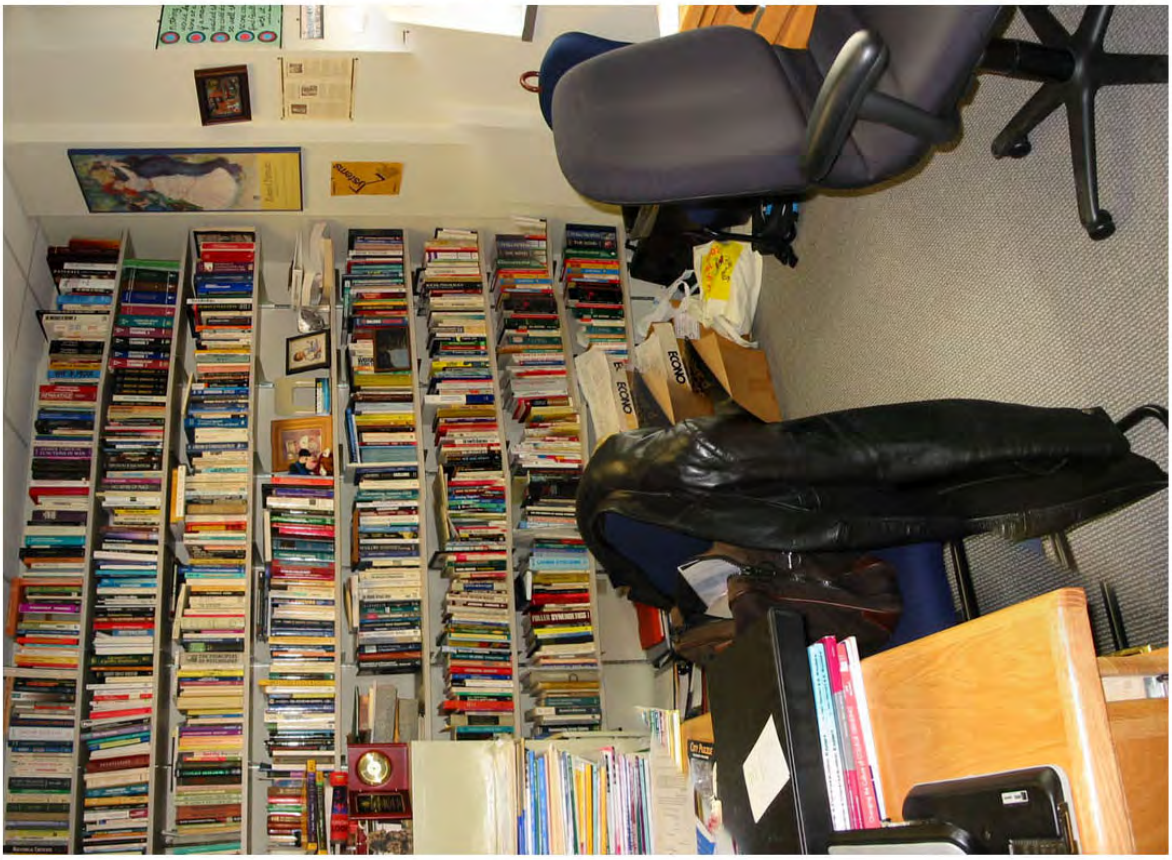

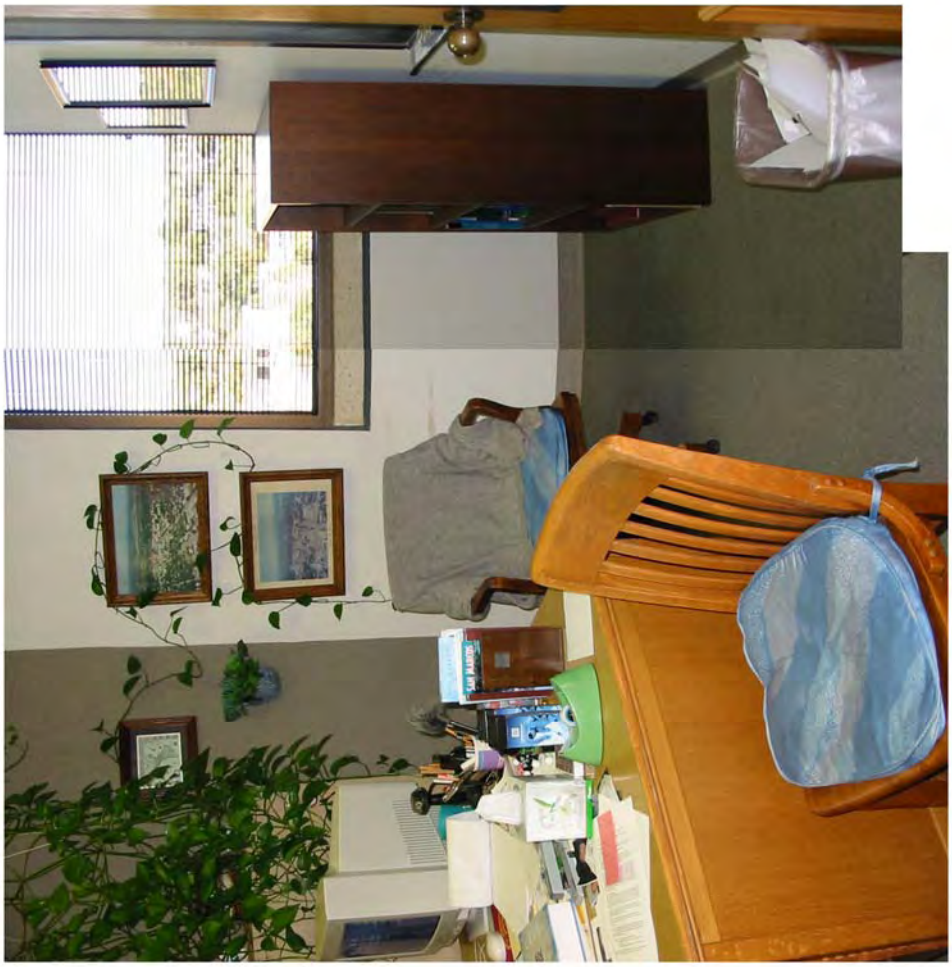

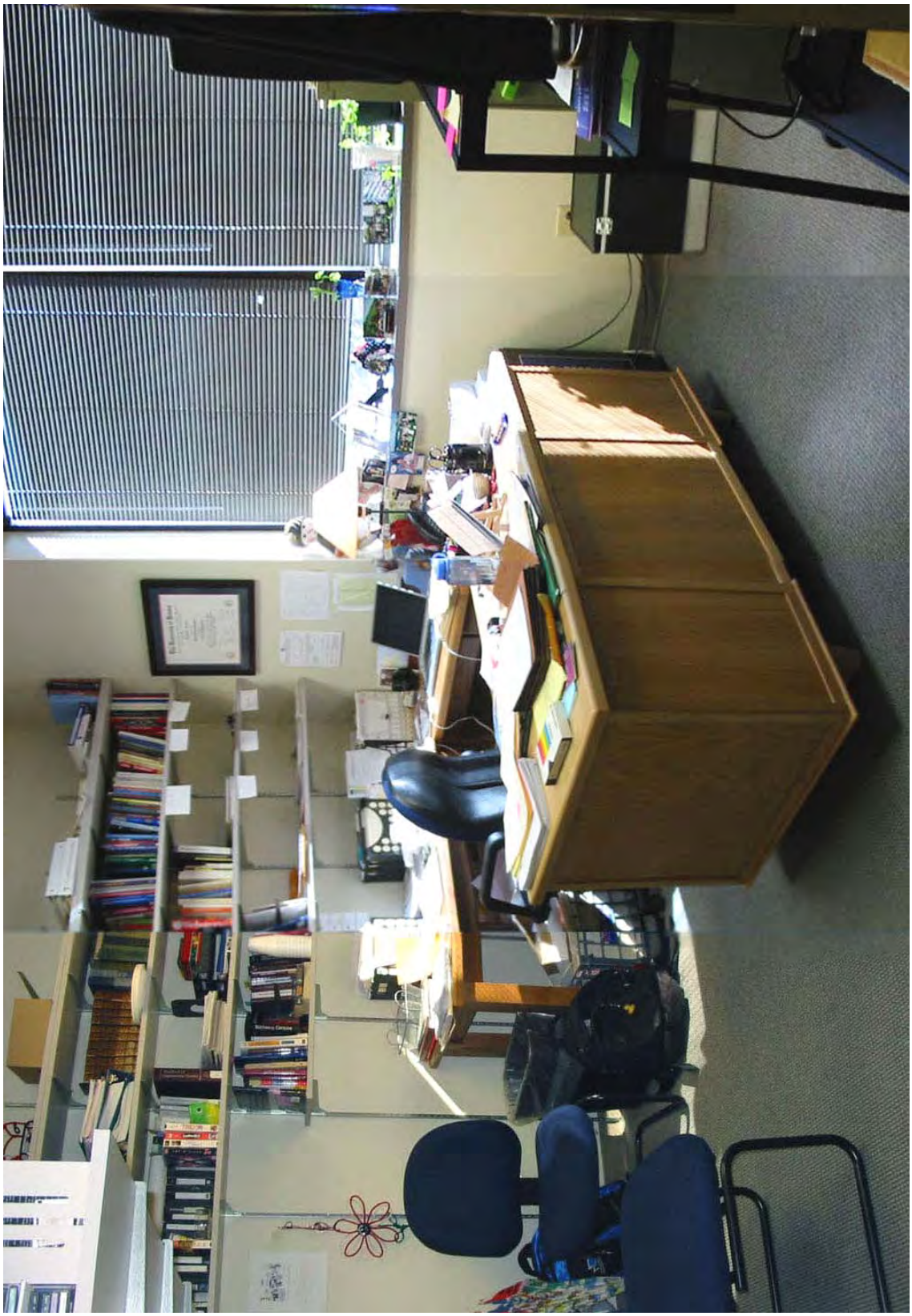

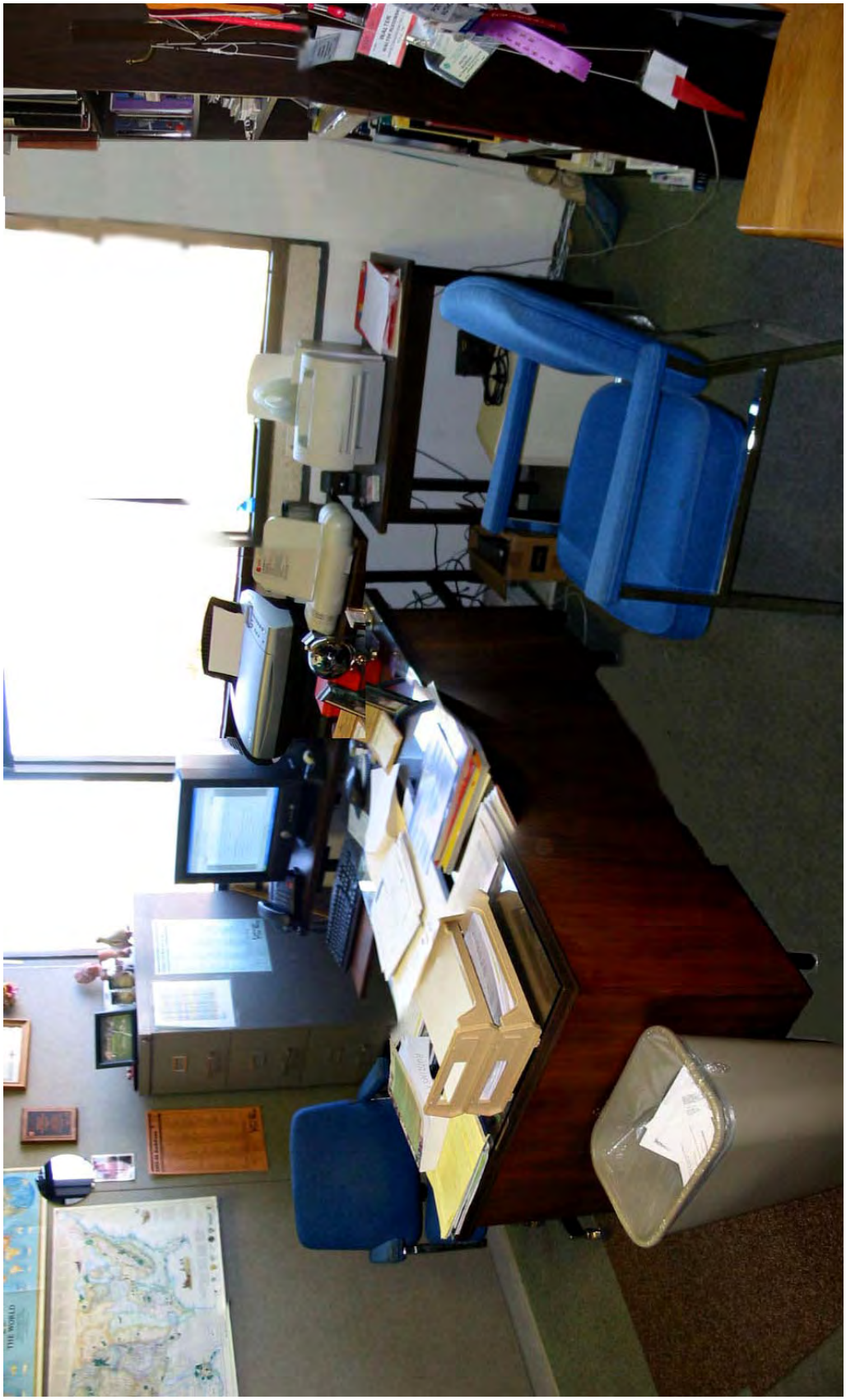

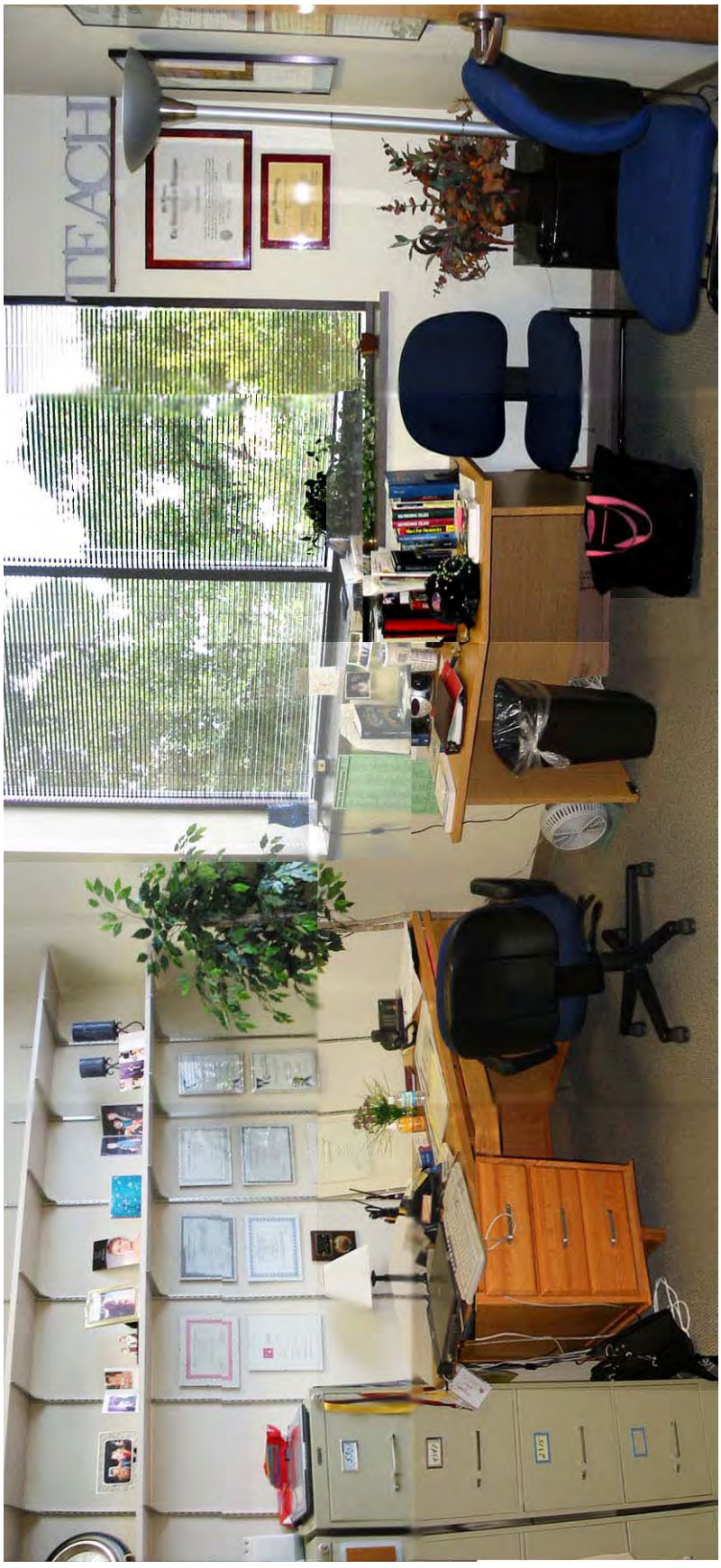
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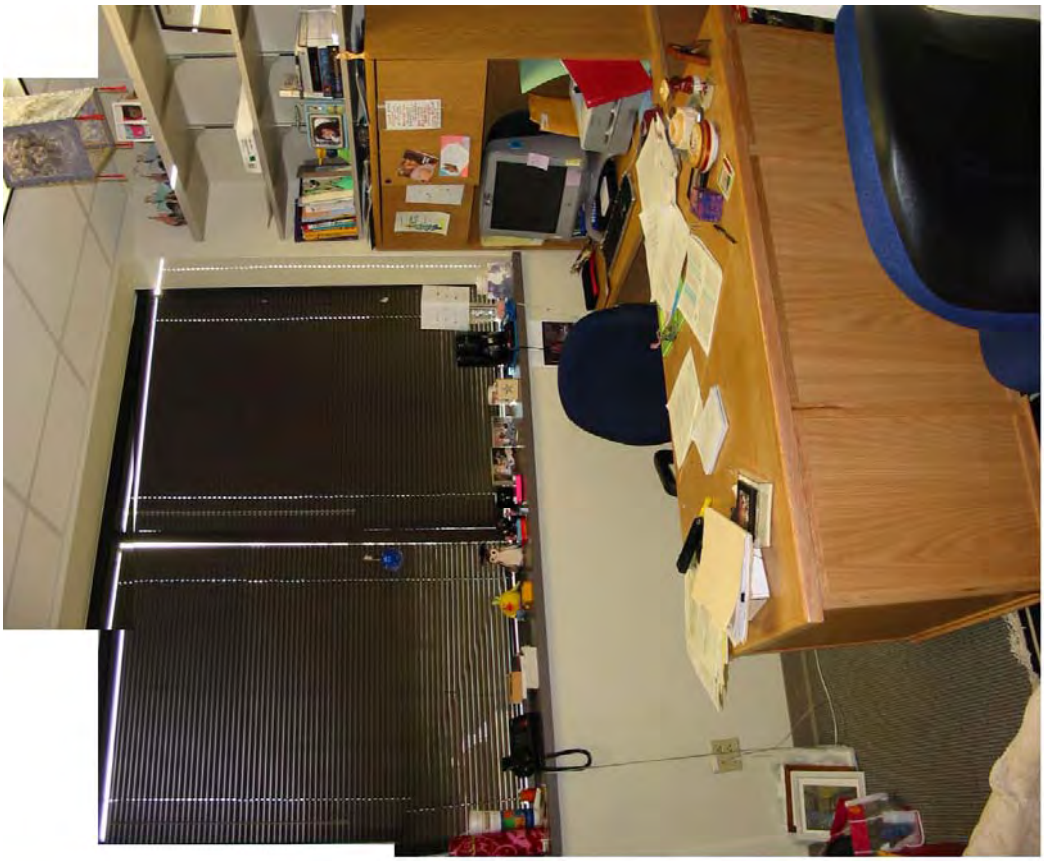

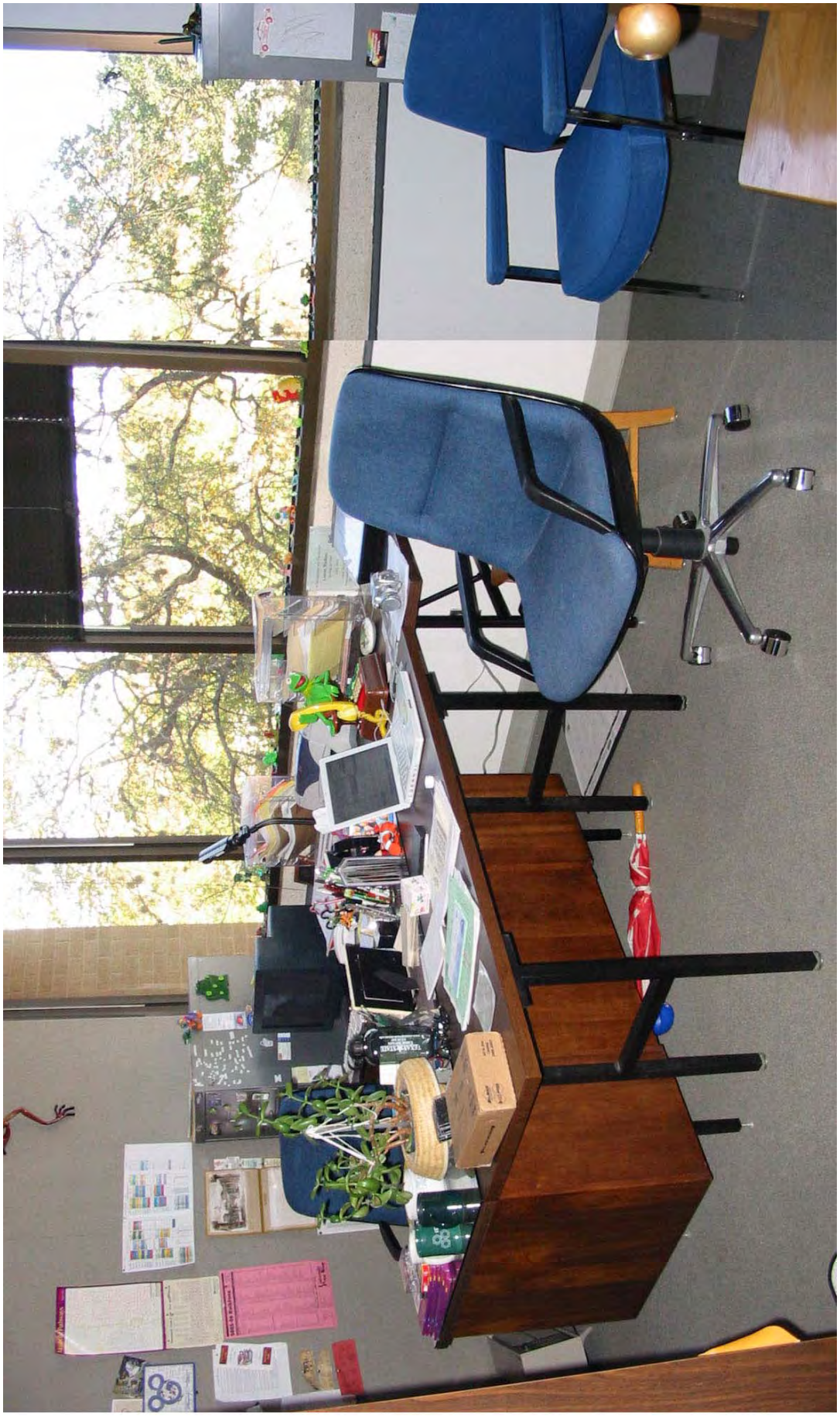

Appendix B

February 1, 2006

To: Dr. Gary Beall
Subject: Participation in an Honors Thesis

My name is Melissa Boettcher and I am currently conducting research on student perceptions of faculty based on the content and arrangement of faculty offices. This project is being supervised by Dr. Randall Osborne in the Psychology Department and is the basis for my undergraduate honors thesis. In December, I stopped by your office and took photographs of your office.

To further develop my study, I am seeking your individual views. To gain this insight, I have enclosed a questionnaire. If you could take the time to fill this out, it would give me a better sense of your individual views and help enhance this project. I have enclosed a consent form that explains your involvement in the study and directions on completing this part of the study. I have also enclosed a questionnaire that should take about 20 minutes to complete.

I would like to thank you again for allowing me to take pictures of your office and participating in this undergraduate research study. If you have any questions, please contact me or my supervisor.

Melissa Boettcher, Undergraduate, School of Fine Arts and Communication
mb1105@txstate.edu

Dr. Randall Osborne, Thesis Supervisor, Department of Psychology
ro10@txstate.edu

Enclosure: Participant Questionnaire
Enclosure (2): Consent Form

Texas State University

Informed Consent Form

You are being invited to participate in a research study investigating the nonverbal messages communicated through faculty members' offices. We feel that the office environment significantly impacts relationships between professors and students. We will be gathering information through a questionnaire that will evaluate your personality characteristics that might be reflected through the use of visual artifacts present in the office. We will compare these characteristics, then, to perceptions reported by student participants. We believe that furniture arrangement, visual accessories, and color together create certain moods and perceptions about the professor who owns the office.

This research study will take approximately 20 minutes to complete, and is entirely voluntary. Nonverbal communication is a powerful influence, so we ask that you honestly record your initial feelings and attitudes. The data collected in this study will be compared to perceptions and attitudes held by student participants to determine whether professors' personality can be perceived through the office space by student visitors.

By participating in this study, you will be helping us to gather important information for understanding how a student-faculty conference can be more effective and how to improve the relationship between students and faculty.

You will be asked to complete Personality Inventory, which consists of 22 personal dispositions. You will need to place a mark along the continuum that best describes you as a person. Please keep in mind that there are no "right" or "wrong" responses to these questions. Upon completion of this, you will need to write only your room number on the cover page of the inventory.

All informed consent forms will be kept completely separated from data response sheets. All data collected will also be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked research room. Once all data has been entered into the computer and analyses completed, all original data sheets will be destroyed.

Should you choose not to participate or to withdraw your participation at any time, there will be no penalty whatsoever to you, academic or otherwise.

If you have any questions about this study, contact the Principle Investigator, Dr. Randall E. Osborne, Dept. of Psychology, Texas State University-San Marcos, 512-245-8236 or by email at RO10@txstate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights in this study, you can contact the Office of Sponsored projects by calling 512-245-2314. If this study raises any personal questions or concerns for you, you may want to contact the Student Health Center at 245-2167 and/or the Counseling Center at 245-2208.

By signing below, you are giving your consent to participate in this research study.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

_____

Printed Name

_____ _____

Department Building and Room Number

Faculty Questionnaire

Office Location: _____

How would you describe yourself?

Social	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Unsocial
Imaginative	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Practical
Skilled	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Unskilled
Gloomy	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Cheerful
Assertive	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Passive
Unfriendly	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Friendly
Supportive	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Hostile
Boring	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Interesting
Trustworthy	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Untrustworthy

How would you describe yourself?

Competent	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Incompetent
Disorganized	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Organized
Enthusiastic	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Reserved
Dependable	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Careless
Stable	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Emotional
Energetic	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Tired
Agreeable	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Argumentative
Tense	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Relaxed
Persistent	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Lazy
Dominant	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Equal
Dramatic	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Ordinary
Open/Expressive	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Closed/Unexpressive

Texas State University

Informed Consent Form

You are being invited to participate in a research study investigating the nonverbal messages communicated through faculty members' offices. We will be gathering information through a series of questionnaires that will evaluate your perceptions, mood, and inferences about the professor that are influenced by the physical contents present in the office. We will compare these perceptions, then, to perceptions reported by other participants. We believe that furniture arrangement, visual accessories, and color together create certain moods and perceptions about the professor who owns the office.

This research study will take approximately 30 minutes to complete, and is entirely voluntary. Nonverbal communication is a powerful influence, so we ask that you honestly record your initial feelings and attitudes. Please keep in mind that there are no "right" or "wrong" responses to these questions. We will compare these perceptions and attitudes with other students', as well as compare them with the perceptions and attitudes held by the professor that owns the office. These findings will allow us to determine whether professors design their offices with the students' needs in mind.

By participating in this study, not only will you learn about research and the research process, you will also be helping us to gather important information for understanding how a student-faculty conference can be more effective and how to improve the relationship between students and faculty.

You will be asked to first complete a series of 4 evaluations, with the first being a 10-item evaluation about your feelings within the office space, a 11-item evaluation asking about the overall appearance of the office, a 5-item evaluation that will ask what elements are in the room, and lastly a 22-item evaluation that will ask about how you view the professor that owns the office. Finally, a 7-item questionnaire will ask questions about the possible relationship of the professor with students.

Although some questions involve your feelings and attitudes about the office environment and about the professor who owns the space, please be assured that we are **NOT** asking for any identifying information that could link you in any way to the data you provide. The professor will not be able to identify you in any way after the this research is conducted. All informed consent forms will be kept completely separated from data response sheets. All data collected will also be kept in a locked file cabinet in a locked research room. Once all data has been entered into the computer and analyses completed, all original data sheets will be destroyed.

Should you choose not to participate or to withdraw your participation at any time, there will be no penalty whatsoever to you, academic or otherwise.

If you have any questions about this study, contact the Principle Investigator, Dr. Randall E. Osborne, Dept. of Psychology, Texas State University-San Marcos, 512-245-8236 or by email at RO10@txstate.edu. If you have any questions about your rights in this or other study, you can contact the Office of Sponsored projects by calling 512-245-2314. If this study raises any personal questions or concerns for you, you may want to contact the Student Health Center at 245-2167 and/or the Counseling Center at 245-2208.

By signing below, you are giving your consent to participate in this research study.

_____ _____

Participant's Signature Date

_____

Printed Name

_____ _____

Professor & Course Class Days & Times

Directions:

You will be given a photograph of a professor's office. If you have seen this office before, you are asked to tell the researcher and take another. Please take a few moments to look at the contents in the office. Once you have done this, fill out this questionnaire while looking at the office.

How would you feel within this office?

Tense	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Relaxed
Secure	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Insecure
Constrained	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Unconstrained
Similar (to the professor)	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Different (to professor)
In Control	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Lacking Control
Threatened	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Safe
Welcome	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Unwelcome
Calm	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Agitated
Comfortable	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Uncomfortable
Assertive	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Hesitant

Is there anything present in this office that would lead you to experience these moods?

How would you describe the office space?

Pleasant	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Unpleasant
Organized	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Disorganized
Inviting	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Hostile
Individualized	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Anonymous
Stimulating	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Tranquilizing
Unusual	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Usual
Liberating	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Constraining
Formal	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Informal
Welcoming	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Unwelcoming
Cluttered	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Tidy
Attractive	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Unattractive

Are plants (live or imitation) visible in the room? ____ Yes ____ No

Is there an aquarium in the room? ____ Yes ____ No

Are there posters, pictures, photographs, or any types of visual art in the room?

____ Yes ____ No

Does the professor's chair and the visitor chair(s) appear similar in shape and size?

____ Yes ____ No

Does the visitor chair(s) in the room appear comfortable ____ Yes ____ No

How would you describe the owner of the office?

Social	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Unsocial
Imaginative	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Practical
Skilled	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Unskilled
Gloomy	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Cheerful
Assertive	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Passive
Unfriendly	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Friendly
Supportive	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Hostile
Boring	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Interesting
Attentive	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Inattentive
Trustworthy	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Untrustworthy
Competent	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Incompetent
Disorganized	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Organized
Enthusiastic	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Reserved
Dependable	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Careless
Stable	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Emotional
Energetic	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Tired
Agreeable	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Argumentative

How would you describe the owner of the office?

Tense	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Relaxed
Persistent	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Lazy
Dominant	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Equal
Dramatic	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Ordinary
Open/Expressive	___ 1	___ 2	___ 3	___ 4	___ 5	___ 6	___ 7	Closed/Unexpressive

I am a: _____ Male _____ Female

I think the owner of the office is a: _____ Male _____ Female _____ Undeterminable

Relationship Inventory

Directions: For each item below, indicate to what degree you would agree or disagree. Place a 5 in the blank if the question seems extremely likely, and a 1 if the example seems extremely unlikely.

5 – Extremely Likely 4 – Likely 3 – Maybe/Unsure 2 – Unlikely 1 – Extremely Unlikely

____ 1. How likely would it be for you to continue a relationship with the owner of the office outside of class?

____ 2. Do you think the owner of the office would show favoritism or prejudice when dealing with students?

____ 3. Would the owner of the office encourage the development and expression of different viewpoints by students?

____ 4. Would you seem disinterested in a conference with the owner of the office?

____ 5. Would the owner be confident in dealing with others?

____ 6. Do you consider the owner of the office to be a well liked co-worker?

____ 7. Would the owner be interested in students' affairs?

Office 1: Male Owner, Clean

Papers on the floor make me feel that they are slightly unorganized and therefore lacking control, in turn. I feel more assertive. It's not too welcoming but the chairs up close to the desk make me feel somewhat welcome. Feeling more towards unconstrained because of the light from the window.

The office is so structured and doesn't show any type of personality besides the screen saver on the computer.

The stack of papers on the desk and on the floor kind of show a more "human" side of a professor than when he would probably be teaching. A little disorganized, like myself.

The colors of the wall desk lead to a more threatening atmosphere. The blinds make me feel constraint.

The stacks of paper. Mismatching of furniture, to many papers unorganized.

All the straight lines and dark, solid colors.

Papers piled and sticking out everywhere.

It's so simple that it kind of makes you think you're in a small, unwelcome place.

No sense of life in the room. No personalization what so ever. Lack of color. Very plain and boring.

Seems a bit small but at the same time cozy. The blue chairs seem to mellow the mood. His desk seems organized which makes me feel welcomed and invited. The computer's screen saver gives me a more relaxed feeling. The open window blinds brings light into the room and makes it more appealing. However, just knowing it's a professors' office makes me hesitant and insecure.

Random stacks of paper.

The windows help the office be more relaxed and comfortable.

The neatness is overwhelming and might make me feel out of place-like I shouldn't be there. No frames or any personal items make it unwelcoming and extremely professional/ serious.

The open window makes me feel more comfortable and at ease. The cleared desk makes me feel that he's organized and might be more open to what I have to say.

It is drab in color.
Stacks of unorganized paper. No pictures/decorations.
The stacks of papers and general lack of organization lead me to feel as described.

I am scarcely affected by furniture.

The color of the chairs, the picture on the computer screen the open blinds.

The stacks of paper and clutter beside the chairs make the office seem more homely.

Clutter on the floor; lack of decorations.

Colors very bold and dark; set up is alright, but it reminds me of an interview style office; organized but too many stacks of papers; no personal touches.

The office is clean and well organized, but unwelcoming. I would be uncomfortable in the atmosphere of this office.
It is to organized and a bit boring. It seems to be the office of a very serious person. The colors are not very bright and it seem to much of a principles office. I am really unorganized and spontaneous and I would feel like if I messed with anything or moved anything out of place I'd be in trouble.

Some of the chairs have wheels which make me feel slightly more comfortable. It seems as if the three chairs on the right are nearest to the door in case I would need to run out of there for some reason. The more organized the desk, the more relaxed and safe I feel.

Set up neatly, very organized. Chairs set up in relation to desk and types of chairs. Windows and Blinds. Computer screen.

I would feel like they are in control, because of how clean the desk is. I feel more welcome with the windows open.

It doesn't seem very welcoming, I like offices that make you feel comfortable not intimidated.

The lack of things in the office would probably lead me to feel this way.

There are no pictures on the walls or on the desktop. His or her is neat everything is put in its little piles. Its very impersonal.

Just looks bare. No personality, and nothing shows of other interests besides work. No pictures.

Fairly clean – open spaces – places to sit.

The neatness and organization.

Everything is just very plain and dull. Walls make me uncomfortable.

There aren't many things on the wall which leads me to feel a bit pressured and tense. Blank white walls make me feel somewhat insecure.

Lacking color and enjoyable things to look at.

It's just very plain and dull. Doesn't make a student feel comfortable. Needs more visuals.

Everything seems to be neat and organized, however there are two stacks of papers on the right side of the room. No decorations, pictures, plants, or desk name-tag.

All the clutter makes it feel disorganized.

The office is confined which is a little nerve wrecking. There are no pictures or posters anywhere in the office which make the room feel very serious and a bit unwelcoming. There are lots of chairs taking up space, which would make me feel constrained.

The way the office is set up, how its all put into a small area, the lack of objects.

Uncomfortable chairs, closed-in space.

I like the windows, but there are no pictures up anywhere. The room needs life and color.

Everything is a little bland, there is no color. However, it is very organized.

Not much personality. Blank walls and desk.

Papers stacked on the floor make me feel as if I were in my own room.

The room has nothing on the walls to give any emotion and warm feeling to the room.

Nothing in the office is overbearing or out of the ordinary. The tropical screensaver on the computer monitor suggests a relaxed atmosphere.

The clutter and lack of bright colors.

Office 2: Male Owner, Cluttered

The clutter and untidiness. There is too much stuff on the desk and floor to focus on the professor. The chairs look hard and uncomfortable.

The order. Messy in my opinion. Not a workable environment.

It's cluttered and messy, that can have some effect of the overall mood of the room.

Lack of organization and how there isn't much space to more around.

Some of the random objects that are for decoration that aren't too serious.

Well this office is very messy and that's all I have to say.

It is extremely cluttered and unorganized. This bothers me as I am a very neat and orderly person.

The clutter is the biggest deal that makes me experience these moods.

Clutter on the desk.

All the junk.

The closed blinds, clutter on the desk, and the confinement in the corner.

Nothing more than the clutter and mess.

It is very messy and cluttered.

Everything in the office is messy. The desk is cluttered and the floors have stacks all over. I feel that this prof isn't well organized and I would be worried about work getting lost.

I'm a neat freak, so being unorganized doesn't give the best impression to me. I can tell that the professor probably has a very busy schedule by all the papers on their desk, so I would still be understanding of all clutter.

The pictures of the family.

The clutter is the main reason for the discomfort and anxiety. Depending on the way the professor looks and speaks would be the only way to make me feel comfortable.

Things are all over the place. A little bit messy, not very organized looking.

Just clutterness.

The variety of items bring out the moods because there are contradicting items such as the cleaning wipes, but the desk is cluttered.

It's messy just like my office would look.

Very cluttery and messy, but can relate to me because my room looks like this.

Too much clutter, things on the floor. No order. Obviously a busy person, afraid to take up more of their time.

No, not in particular. There is just a lot of junk everywhere that would stress me out.

The messy desk and scattered objects.

The cluttered desk and floors, make it seem as though the professor is not very professional and would make it hard to concentrate because you can get extremely distracted.

The clutterness in the office.

The papers everywhere and the random things around the room would distract me.

The glass bottle that looks like it has a little fluid in the bottom would make me a little uncomfortable.

All the clutter and trash. Also the disorganization and crooked frames. Crooked frames irritate me and I wish I could straighten them out if I could.

The fact that it is really unorganized and messy would be the only reason I would experience these moods. There is however no item present that would affect my mood. Just the papers thrown everywhere.

Unorganization. Cluttered. Post-it notes. Coffee….looks busy.

Kind of messy office, but not extremely messy, maintaining a sense of order. Makes me feel at ease, but not fully.

The office is a disaster. It is unorganized and really messy which would probably make me feel less comfortable and relaxed. The more organized my professor is, the more comfortable and assertive I'm going to be.

I am a very neat person and when a room is unorganized it makes me uncomfortable. But there are times when I've had friends/ relatives be extremely messy and it doesn't bother me because I feel they are comfortable with me seeing how they are normally.

Just the mess things not being organized makes it crazy and unwelcoming.

The clutter.

Very unorganized and cluttered person.

No, just the overall lack of organization.

The office is a complete mess.

No, just messy so I am more comfortable.

All the messy

The clutter and the lack of sunshine.

Stuff on the floor in front of the chairs. Papers on papers in the desk.

Crooked frame and the medication on the desk.

It's messy, everything is piled up. It makes me think that he doesn't care how people look at him. Everything is unorganized.

The office is disorganized.

It's very personal, which makes me feel like I can relate to the professor. The personal items make me feel not so threatened, although maybe a little claustrophobic.

A lot of clutter, pictures not hung, very disorganized.

Clutter, messiness.

I would feel calm and secure in this room, because his office looks a lot like my room looks like. It's a familiar environment home.

Office 3: Female Owner, Clean

I believe that the art work and the cat in the hat (cith) dolls seem more comforting plus the extra chairs and table to talk at.

The room is very colorful and bright, it has a warm feel to it.

The layout and openness of space in the office.

The open space sends a sense of welcome.

Neat, cozy, inviting.

Very colorful.

Multiple chairs, Cat in the Hat, open floor, vibrant table.

Plenty of comfortable-looking places to sit or relax. An open table.

Lots of chairs, lots of space, but organized, cat in the hat.

The office got like real comfortable atmosphere. I believe the seats are the things that make me feel this way.

Comfortable chairs, footrest, colorful tabletop, calm paintings, plants.

Cartoon apparel and the fact that the room is organized.

The chairs

The pictures and the decorative table.

The flower pictures make my moods change about the professor.

The brighter colors and the Dr. Seuss stuffed animal. Also, the lounge chairs that look so comfortable.

The presence of artwork and the cat in the hat; the comfortable looking furniture; the television; very colorful and expressive; imaginative, yet professional.

The cat in the hat stuff makes me feel more comfortable b/c maybe the prof is a more relaxed easy-going person.

The office looks very relaxed and welcoming. The presence of the study desk and chairs assures me that the professor is willing to work with students outside of class.

Nice comfortable chairs, bright artwork.

The light coming in through the window is welcoming and would make me feel safe.

It's like a typical office.

All of the Dr. Seuss stuff and the bright colors in the office; and all of the comfortable-looking chairs.

The paintings of flowers make me feel welcome and the cat in the hat items make me feel comfortable.

It is cluttered with too many chairs and tables/desk, and books.

The flower pictures are inviting and the cith are fun.

Cith and Dr. Seuss items. Also the colors make it a more relaxed space as well as the ez chair next to the desk. The small table makes it seem like the owner is welcoming visitors and gives them their own space.

Looks comforting because of all the chairs makes you feel like a kid because of the pictures and Dr. Seuss items.

The colorful pictures and organization help me feel relaxed.

Not very organized and a little cluttered.

Table and chairs makes the room more relaxed an comfortable.

Comfy chairs – Not 100% comfortable because seems uptight like you can't touch anything.

I think the flowers on the wall create a homely environment.

The furniture makes it more homely and comfortable looking.

The papers on the wall calm down the room as well as the colorful table. It's not overworked as well as the colorful table. It's not overcrowded so its not so claustrophobic.

Dr. Seuss stuff.

Cith dolls, Georgia O'Keefe framed picture, comfortable chairs.

The pictures and colors of the office.

The soft chairs and the bright lighting.

Dr. Seuss would be relaxing and less nerve wrecking.

The paintings on the wall make me feel calm and relaxed. There seems to be a lot light in the room, which gives more to these feelings.

The extra chairs around the table. The pictures of bright flowers. The drink on the desk.

Yes, light and creative.

The large black chair is very authoritative looking – much like a throne. The photos of flowers are calming.

Colorful.

It's always nice when you can relate to a professor, it helps make you feel more comfortable. Pictures of a teacher's kids, if they have any, would do so.

The table to the right is colorful and welcoming. The mess on the computer table makes the professor look unorganized. Everything else in the room is dull.

Seems well organized, has a table/chairs for visitors, lunch, etc. Has one window, could feel a little more open with another window. There isn't anything too overwhelming or uninviting. Open!!

It just looks like a very laid back office. The professor has given it a homelike quality.

Space, lots of seating. Bright windows with colorful pictures. Artsy furniture, footrest looks inviting.

Office 4: Female Owner, Cluttered

The clutter and disarray of the room causes me to feel like I'm intruding or disturbing someone who is extremely busy and has a lot on their plate. I'd feel like my reason for coming to see him/her was not important enough to bother then with.

The papers all over the desk and floor.

Just really messy.

It is just to messy.

Just the overall clutter and mess.

The clutter makes me feel more relaxed and comfortable. The chair seems rigid to, like it doesn't belong. I would probably feel uncomfortable in the relaxed atmosphere.

I'm a very organized person, therefore I would feel a little uneasy. But I'm also very open minded to other people's lifestyles. So that's why I would feel somewhat neutral.

Clutterness.

Clutter, disorganization.

The clutter – I am very organized.

All the stacks of papers that are really messy.

Just the clutter and the relaxed feel.

It doesn't look super professional so I wouldn't be scared or nervous to be there.

The lack of organization.

Lack of organization.

I feel that anyone who works in a environment like this one would not be in control of his or her work or responsibilities. I would feel more confident in my own abilities, he's in the profession.

Overflowing papers, no desk space, no discernable order.

It's not so clean (everything has a place) so you feel out of place, but it's really messy as so that you feel like you have no place.

It's extremely disorganized so I would think the prof doesn't stay on track very well. As a person, I'd feel relaxed in the office but as a student I'd be a bit worried that the prof. was careless.

The papers strew everywhere, a lack of order or organization would make me feel very agitated and out of control. There is too much junk and boxes in the room.

There are a lot of fast food cups – might mean she's always on the go. Which would explain the mess. And the brain might be scattered, which causes stress and many other moods depending on the person.

Boxes on the floor, lots of papers scattered on the desk.

Scattered papers, trash, unfinished food/coffee.

It's a cluttered room, similar to the type of room I would keep, but it looks highly impersonal with nothing really to catch hold of my attention. It looks like a very work-oriented room.

The very unorganized clutter gives off an unwanted feeling.

Boxes of stuff. Messy papers on desk. Family pictures around office.

The fact that it is really unorganized and messy would be the only reason I would experience these moods. There is however no item present that would affect my mood. Just the papers thrown everywhere.

The scattered papers (messy in general). Hard-wood chair for guests. Posted notes.
The clutter and messiness.

The messiness of the room the professor would probably be going threw everything quickly to find what he or she is looking for.

The clutter and unorganization is overwhelming.

Messy, stuff everywhere.

The clutter of papers on the desk. Unorganized files in the back table. Unemptied boxes by window. The guests chair looks to be in a worse condition than the owners chair.

Too much junk. Not straightened up in any way.. Unorganized. Too busy.

No, but just the fact that it is very messy and cluttered makes me feel somewhat uneasy, since I am used to being clean and organized.

How unorganized and messy it is. Boxes stacked up. Papers everywhere. Wood chair for visitors. But windows open and pictures on the wall are comforting.

All the clutter and disorganization.

The unorganization and lack of tidiness.

The hard looking, impersonal chair seems to be uninviting and uncomfortable. No books on shelf seems to show a lack of control. Papers on the floor seem unwelcome, insecure. Lack of coordination (papers, décor,) in room gives it a sense of chaos, he could over their mental space.]

Unorganized. Trashy. Cluttered. Papers all over the desk.

Although I would say that I am messy myself, being someone else's clutter would not be the same as in my own, because it would be my own things.

The mess and unorganization looks very trashy. It makes me believe the professor is a slacker who looses everything including tests. He/she doesn't take their job seriously.

Messiness – professor can't be too strict.

Mostly papers scattered on desk and look of extreme disorganization and chaos.

Very disorganization but lots of photos of family.

Overall though messy, my mood would be passive because if I were coming to talk to the professor they are not evaluated on office etiquette, but on their intellectual ability, why should a seating compromise that?

Scattered papers, trash, unfinished food/coffee.