Ana-Monica Racila

The Feel of a Room: Locating Affect in the Interior Design of Gender-Affirming Health Clinics

Attending to the architecture and interior design of healthcare clinics enables inquiry into the role of built space in the maintenance of healthcare bureaucracies. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork in two gender-affirming healthcare clinics in the Midwest U.S., an outpatient clinic and a community healthcare clinic, I demonstrate how features of clinics’ interior design structured health staff’s and patient-participants’ abilities to occupy clinic space and engage in affective discursive practice. For example, patient-participants made connections between perceived building age and clinic resource availability and linked the conspicuous presence of gender-neutral bathrooms in waiting rooms to feelings of comfort and safety. Gender-expansive patients’ affective responses to interiors are important to address because they influence patients’ decisions to continue to seek care at the clinics and subsequently embody their plans for medical transition. Parsing out the affective relationships between clinic interiors and the actors that occupy them is vital for those seeking to optimize patient comfort within the context of gender-affirming healthcare and beyond.

March 6th, 2020 at 2:30pm in 27 Macbride Hall