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APPLYING MICHEL FOUCAULT'S THEORY OF SPATIAL POWER ON THE INTERIOR DESIGN OF DENTAL CLINICS

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Abstract. Purpose. Based on Foucault's theory of spatial power, we discuss its application and inspiration in the interior design of dental clinics and propose design strategies to achieve power balance and optimisation, to create a better dental treatment environment.

Methodology. Based on Foucault's theory of spatial power, using literature analysis, case study and interdisciplinary research methods, the indoor space of a dental clinic is analysed to reveal the mechanisms and effects of power operation and to propose design enhancement strategies.

Results. The paper analyses the subjects and objects of power in the interior space of dental clinics, describes the power relationship in the spatial layout, decoration and visual elements, and proposes a strategy to enhance the interior design of dental clinics based on Foucault's theory of spatial power.

Scientific novelty. Foucault's theory of spatial power is applied to the field of dental clinic interior design, analysing the spatial design in depth from the perspective of power relations, providing new perspectives and ideas for research in this field.

Practical significance. The proposed design strategy helps to achieve the balance and optimisation of spatial power in dental clinics, promotes the harmonious development of doctor-patient relationship, improves the quality of dental healthcare services, and has a guiding value for the practice of dental clinic interior design.

Keywords: design, interior design, healthcare interior, dental clinic, Michel Foucault, spatial power, design strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Based on Foucault's theory of spatial power, this paper discusses in depth its application and revelation in the interior design of dental clinics. By analysing the subjects and objects of power in the interior space of dental clinics and studying the power relationship in terms of spatial layout, decorative and visual elements, it reveals

the mechanism and impact of power operation in the interior design of dental clinics. On this basis, a series of strategies to enhance the interior design of dental clinics aimed at achieving power balance and optimisation are proposed, providing theoretical support and practical guidance for creating a more equal, harmonious and comfortable dental treatment environment.

ANALYSIS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

In the 20th century, Foucault, as a very rebellious and far-reaching thinker in France and even globally, constructed an extremely complicated and huge theoretical system. In his life-long theoretical research course, the doctrine of a wide range of fields and disciplines, covering sociology, history, criminology, medicine, etc., and the relevant works are widely disseminated around the world, the influence is enormous. In Foucault's extensive academic research and achievements, his interpretation and construction of the theory of spatial power is undoubtedly his theoretical system of the much-anticipated features and flashpoints [2; 6].

In his book 'Discipline and Punish' [4], Foucault elaborates on the idea of a new type of power-knowledge symbiosis that exists in modern societies: power arises out of knowledge, knowledge can be transformed into power, and power transforms the people who obey it through knowledge, thus shaping 'docile bodies' suitable for the use of power. Foucault argues that human beings tend to become 'docile bodies' through knowledge. According to Foucault, the process of pursuing the unified law in the structure of knowledge and the process of pursuing the standardisation of behaviours in the structure of power are synchronous, and there is a relationship between the two. This is the core of Foucault's genealogy of power, that is, the power-knowledge symbiotic structure, and the whole organisational system of modern society is built on the basis of this symbiotic structure. It makes space the material form of power. Power permeates society, and this principle of surveillance specifies the division of space, so that space becomes the space of a certain system, whose role is no longer merely to contain and symbolise but is entirely linked to disciplining the operation of power [21].

In Foucault's perception, the space of power, as a powerful force of will, a form of discourse with a directive character, and a pervasive perceptual force, is widely present and plays an important role in all spheres of human society. It is rich in functional attributes such as serving, influencing, operating, linking, adjusting, assimilating, alienating, collating, bringing together, ruling, suppressing, interfering, and resisting. In the real social world, whether it is physical space such as factories, schools, army barracks, prisons, or behavioural activities such as punishment and discipline, or science and technology, ideology, religious beliefs, cultural practices, and abstract categories such as knowledge and truth, they are all deeply impregnated with ubiquitous power [18].

Foucault's new spatial cognition and unique understanding of power have brought many revelations to architecture. Zhu Ting of Hefei University of Technology has launched an architectural interpretation of Foucault's theory of spatial power, analysing the role of spatial power in the creation of architectural design and how to seek innovation under the influence of spatial power [19]. Consequently, there are also scholars that combined it with the history of architecture, for example, Shin Gunsoo explored the use of Foucault's method of historical description in architectural historiography [13]. In addition, there are scholars who carry out research on architectural archaeology from the perspective of the idea of power, for example, Peking University's Qiao Qian discussing the roofs of the traditional Chinese ancient architecture as a point of entry [16]. Foucault's spatial power has been most widely applied in specific architectural design fields, such as the exercise of power and political reflection in urban landscape design [24], the concept of healthy cities in urban planning and design [9] and sustainable development strategies [7].

Foucault came from a medical family, and many times conducted internships and research in many hospitals in Paris, which provided a solid foundation and rich and detailed first-hand information for him to explore the spatial dimension of hospitals in different periods in Europe as well as their operational relationship with political power and was fully shown in his book 'The Birth of Clinic' [5]. As a result, his ideas are also inspirational to the development of the current medical space environment. In the healthcare spatial environment, the concept of spatial power has an impact on the layout and functional zoning of hospitals [10]. For example, the arrangement of wards, the work area of medical staff, and the placement of medical equipment, to a certain extent, all reflect the role of spatial power regulation, which has a potential impact on the activities of patients, the workflow of medical staff, and the interaction between doctors and patients. Current research focuses on the evolution of hospital architectural space [17] and the operation of political power in hospital space [22].

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The study of Foucault's theory of spatial power in the design of the built environment is a profound exploration that enables us to understand the complex relationships and influences within social space. At the same time, it discovers new possibilities and directions for the interior design of dental clinics. However, there

are still fewer studies related to the use of spatial power theory to guide the design of specific healthcare spaces, so this paper takes the interior environment of a dental clinic as an entry point to explore the possibilities of healthcare interior space design based on Foucault's theory of power. In-depth investigation of the application of this theory has significant theoretical value and practical significance, which can optimise the spatial layout of the clinic, enhance the patient's experience and promote the harmonious development of doctor-patient relationship.

THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH AND THEIR DISCUSSION

Space is not just a mere physical existence, but a field where social, cultural and power relations are intertwined [8]. Foucault's theory of spatial power provides a unique perspective for us to deeply understand the operation of power in space. As a specific spatial place, the interior design of a dental clinic contains rich and diverse power relations. In the indoor space of the dental clinic, the subjects of power include healthcare workers, clinic managers, medical institutions, and the healthcare system. Healthcare professionals, as professionals who directly provide treatment services to patients, rely on their own professional knowledge and skills to carry out diagnosis, treatment and care of patients in the process of treatment. Clinic managers are responsible for the day-to-day operation and management of the clinic, organising and coordinating the personnel and activities of the clinic through the establishment of rules and regulations, the arrangement of work processes and the layout of the space, and thus playing a guiding and restraining role in the medical behaviour of the patients. Healthcare institutions and the healthcare system regulate and manage the operation of dental clinics at the macro level through the formulation of industry standards, regulatory policies and laws and regulations, thus exerting an indirect but crucial influence on the power relations within the clinic [23]. The main object of power in dental clinics is the patient who comes to the clinic. Upon entering the space of the dental clinic, the patient, as an individual seeking medical assistance, is physically, behaviourally and psychologically under the power subject. In the process of seeking medical treatment, patients usually expect to receive professional and efficient treatment services, and also expect to receive treatment in a comfortable, safe and privacy-respecting environment. However, due to the asymmetry of information, the gap of professional knowledge

and the limitations of the spatial environment, patients are often in a relatively vulnerable position in the power relationship, and their needs and rights are sometimes difficult to be fully satisfied and protected [14] (Fig. 1).

In the dental practice, decorative and visual elements are not only used to create an aesthetically pleasing and comfortable environment, but they also contain expressions of power. Firstly, **the use of colour** plays an important role in shaping professional authority as well as creating psychological cues and power influences on patients. The selection of colours in the interior space of a dental clinic usually tends to be white, light blue, light green and so on (Fig. 2). White, a pure and flawless colour, symbolizes cleanliness, hygiene and professionalism. When patients step into the clinic space with white as the dominant colour, they will intuitively feel a rigorous and scientific atmosphere, as if silently announcing the high standard and professionalism here. The light blue and light green colours are like gentle soothing, with a calming psychological effect. When patients are anxious, these colours work wonders to relieve their tension to a certain extent. Through the use of such colours, the clinic has successfully created a professional image and a sense of authority, so that patients in the psychological unconsciously trust and rely on the professional ability of health care personnel, and then in the power relationship in a relatively passive position. At the same time, the colour can also quietly influence the patient's behaviour and emotions with the help of psychological hints. The clever use of cool colours, such as light blue and light green, can calm and relax the patient's state of mind. Imagine a nervous patient in such a serene colour atmosphere, perhaps more relaxed to face the doctor's diagnosis and treatment, more willing to listen to the advice of health care professionals. On the contrary, overly bright or strong colours may stimulate the patient's senses, causing them to become excited or tense, thus creating unnecessary obstacles to the diagnosis and treatment process. Therefore, by carefully planning the use of colours, clinics are able to unconsciously control and guide patients' psychology and behaviour to a certain extent, achieving an implicit expression of power [3].

Secondly, **signs and symbols** are also important ways of expressing power in dental clinics. Healthcare workers' work clothes, work cards, and various professional signs in the clinic, such as the medical practice licence and doctors' qualification certificates, have all become silent symbols of power. When patients see healthcare

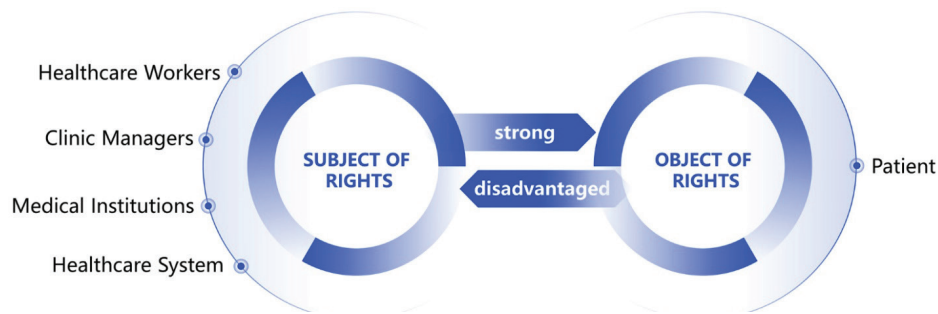


Fig. 1. Subject of rights and object of rights



Fig. 2. Commonly used colours in interior design of dental clinics

workers in neat uniforms, wearing clearly marked work badges, as well as all kinds of authoritative certificates and licences prominently displayed in the clinic, these visual elements are sending them a clear message that the healthcare workers here are trustworthy with their professional knowledge and skills. This visual presentation makes patients feel a sense of trust and obedience the moment they see it, so that they are more willing to listen to the guidance and advice of healthcare professionals in the process of diagnosis and treatment. In addition, the various signs, guides and warning symbols in the clinic, such as 'Directions to the clinic', 'No smoking', 'Beware of slippery floors', etc., are also expressions of power. These symbols and signs may seem simple, but they provide effective guidance and regulation of patient behaviour and activities in subtle ways (Fig. 3). In following these instructions and guidance, patients are silently obeying the rules and order set by the clinic. They are like silent instructions that ensure that patients' actions within the clinic are well organised and maintain the normal functioning and management order of the clinic [1].

Based on Foucault's theory of spatial power, the interior design of dental clinics can be significantly improved through a series of strategies to achieve a fairer and more humane distribution of spatial power, creating a better medical and working environment for patients and healthcare workers. In terms of **spatial layout**,

attention should be paid to the balance of power design. The traditional doctor-centred spatial layout model is gradually abandoned, replaced by the patient's needs and experience as the core. For example, specialised patient consultation and communication areas can be set up. In this area, patients can have full and in-depth communication with doctors before receiving treatment. In this way, patients are no longer passive recipients of the treatment plan but are able to actively participate in the treatment decision-making process, understanding every detail of the treatment, the expected results and possible risks. Through this, patients can better control their own treatment process and enhance their sense of control over their own health and decision-making power. At the same time, it is also extremely important to make reasonable adjustments to the layout of the consultation room. In the past, patients were often in a relatively passive state during treatment, and communication with the doctor was quite limited. Nowadays, by changing the layout of the consultation room, such as adjusting the position and angle of the treatment chair, increasing the opportunity for eye contact between the patient and the doctor, or setting up auxiliary facilities to facilitate communication between the two sides, patients can more easily express their feelings and needs, and interact with the doctor on a more equal footing. Such layout adjustment can greatly enhance the patient's sense

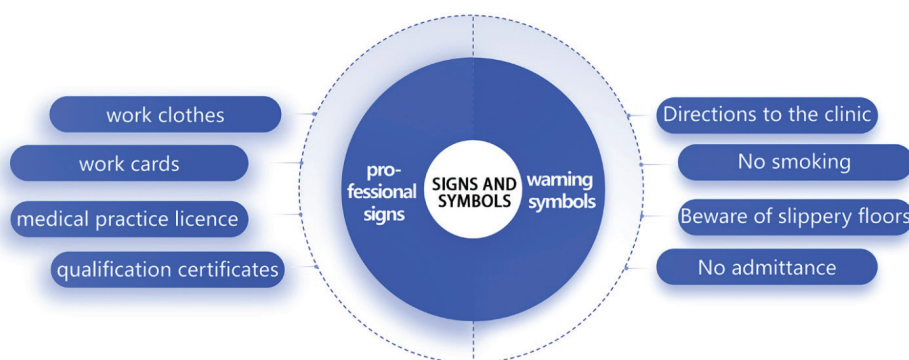


Fig. 3. Signs and Symbols in healthcare interiors

of participation in the diagnosis and treatment process, and then achieve a relative balance of power relations [15].

In addition, **enhancing the openness and visibility of the space** is also a key design strategy. Open space design concepts are becoming increasingly favoured and the use of closed spaces should be minimised. Using transparent partitions, open windows and other design techniques, the visibility between different functional areas, such as diagnosis and treatment areas and waiting areas, can be effectively enhanced. For patients, the ability to intuitively understand the work of each area in the clinic and know the workflow and environment of the doctor can help eliminate their anxiety caused by the lack of information transparency. Narrowing the power gap brought about by information asymmetry makes patients feel more equal and secure psychologically. Moreover, the open space design also promotes communication and interaction between patients. In the waiting area, patients are no longer waiting alone, but can communicate with other patients, share experiences, and give each other support and encouragement. This kind of interaction can not only ease the tension of patients, but also create a warmer and more harmonious atmosphere for medical treatment, so that patients can get more psychological comfort and support.

Creating **diversified space zoning** is also an important means to enhance the interior design of dental clinics. In addition to the common diagnosis and treatment, waiting, sterilisation and other functional zones, one can also add more diversified space zones according to the different needs of patients and the expansion of the clinic's services. For example, to set up a special play area for children patients, so that children can play in the process of waiting for treatment to alleviate the fear of treatment; to set up a reading area for patients who love to

read to provide a quiet corner, so that they can relax while waiting; to create a coffee bar and other leisure space, to provide patients with a comfortable place to rest, to relieve their fatigue and tension. Meanwhile, the oral health education room is also an important partition. Here, oral health lectures and training activities can be held on a regular basis, and professional doctors can be invited to explain oral health knowledge to patients, so as to enhance their oral health awareness and self-care ability. In addition, the establishment of a rehabilitation care area is also of great significance. For some patients who need postoperative rehabilitation, this area can provide them with professional rehabilitation guidance and care services, including rehabilitation training, dietary advice, etc., to help patients recover their health and improve their quality of life as soon as possible [11].

In terms of **visual and perceptual elements**, power adjustments are also needed. The use of colour and lighting can play an important role in guiding the psychology of patients. Based on the principles of colour psychology, it is wise to choose soft, warm and comfortable colours to decorate the interior space of the dental clinic. Beige, light pink, light blue and other soft colours can be used as the main colour to create a warm and relaxing environment for patients. It is also crucial to match the contrast and brightness of the colours appropriately, avoiding overly harsh or depressing colour combinations that may cause discomfort to patients. In terms of **lighting design**, the combination of natural lighting and artificial lighting can create an even, soft and comfortable light environment. By installing adjustable lighting systems, patients can adjust the brightness and angle of light according to their own needs, enhancing their sense of control and comfort in the spatial environment. This personalised lighting setup enables patients to feel more at ease and comfortable within the clinic [12].

The choice of **materials and decorations** is equally power-suggestive. Materials with affinity, natural texture, and environmental properties can create a warm, comfortable, and natural medical environment. Materials such as wooden floors, wooden furniture, and natural fabrics can give patients a feeling of closeness to nature and reduce the sense of distance and fear, while too cold, hard, smooth materials, such as metal, glass, stone, etc., should be avoided as much as possible. In terms of decoration, adding some elements with humanistic care and artistic atmosphere, such as art paintings, green plants, handicrafts, etc., can add a warm, comfortable and culturally rich atmosphere to the clinic. These elements can make patients feel the warmth and care of humanity in the process of medical treatment and reduce psychological pressure and resistance. On the contrary, overly commercial and utilitarian decorative elements such as large advertisements and promotional posters should be minimised so as not to make patients feel bored and uneasy [20].

In terms of **process and function**, the optimisation of power should not be neglected as well. Achieving the transparency of the consultation process is an important way to enhance the patient experience. Through information technology means, such as electronic display screens, mobile terminal applications, websites, etc., information about the clinic's consultation process, charges, doctor qualifications, patient evaluations, etc., are disclosed to patients. Patients will be able to fully understand the content and quality of the clinic's services before they visit the clinic, so that they can make a more informed choice. At the same time, clear and unambiguous **signage and guidance systems** can help patients quickly and accurately find the service areas and functional facilities they need, reducing anxiety and dissatisfaction caused by getting lost and searching. It is also crucial to establish a patient feedback mechanism to collect patients' opinions and suggestions in a timely manner and continuously optimise the consultation process and service quality so that the clinic can better meet patients' needs [10] (Fig. 4).

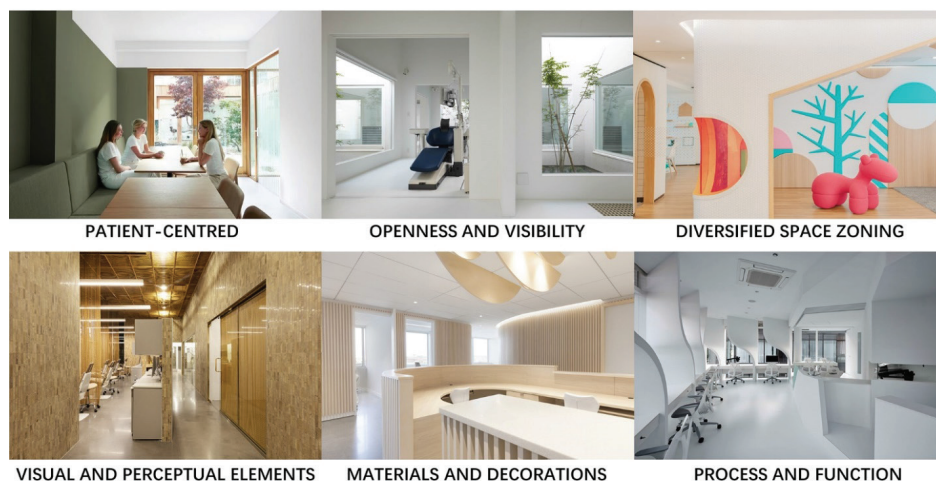


Fig. 4. Strategies for improving healthcare interior design

CONCLUSIONS

Foucault's theory of spatial power provides us with an important theoretical perspective and analytical tool for an in-depth understanding of power relations in dental clinic interior design. By studying the subject and object of power, spatial layout, decorative and visual elements, and time management in the interior space of the dental clinic, we reveal the power imbalance phenomena and problems that exist in it and propose corresponding design enhancement strategies. By

achieving power-balanced design of spatial layout, power adjustment of visual and perceptual elements, and power optimisation of processes and functions, we can create a more equal, harmonious, comfortable and efficient dental clinic environment, promote the healthy development of doctor-patient relationship, and enhance the quality and level of dental medical services. In the future interior design of dental clinics, we should apply Foucault's spatial power theory and other related theories and methods in a more in-depth manner,

and continue to explore and innovate, so as to provide patients with a better-quality medical space and service experience.

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Чжао Ке, Косенко Д. Застосування теорії просторової влади Мішеля Фуко до дизайну інтер'єру стоматологічних клінік

Мета. Базуючись на теорії просторової влади Фуко, ми обговорюємо її застосування в дизайні інтер'єру стоматологічних клінік і пропонуємо стратегії дизайну для досягнення рівноваги та оптимізації влади, щоб створити краще середовище для стоматології.

Методологія. На основі теорії просторової влади Фуко, використовуючи аналіз літератури, тематичні дослідження та міждисциплінарні методи дослідження, проаналізовано інтер'єр стоматологічної клініки для виявлення механізмів та наслідків просторової влади та виявлення стратегій вдосконалення дизайну.

Результати. У статті аналізуються суб'єкти та об'єкти влади у внутрішньому просторі стоматологічних клінік, описується взаємозв'язок влади у просторовому

плануванні, оздобленні та візуальних елементах, а також пропонується стратегія покращення дизайну інтер'єру стоматологічних клінік на основі теорії просторової влади Фуко.

Наукова новизна. Теорія просторової влади Фуко застосована до сфери дизайну інтер'єру стоматологічної клініки для аналізу дизайну середовища з точки зору відносин влади, надаючи нові перспективи та ідеї для досліджень у цій галузі.

Практична значущість. Запропонована стратегія дизайну допомагає досягти балансу та оптимізації просторової влади в стоматологічних клініках, сприяє гармонійному розвитку стосунків лікар-пацієнт, покращує якість надання стоматологічних медичних послуг, а також має значення для практики дизайну інтер'єрів стоматологічних клінік.

Ключові слова: дизайн, дизайн інтер'єру, інтер'єр закладів охорони здоров'я, стоматологічна клініка, Мішель Фуко, просторова влада, стратегії дизайну.

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