

These key recommendations from the multi-site POE were combined in a single Full Service Lobby test site that was evaluated prior to being “rolled out” nationwide. Features include:

- Newly designed graphics, information, and casework for the take-a-number dispenser and system.
- Elimination of the parcel slide, with the addition of sufficient surfaces for writing and resting packages.
- Redesigned cashier station with adequate workspace, a location that reinforces visibility, and sufficient queuing space in front of it.
- Improved relationship between layout, circulation, and function by locating primary merchandise display sections (especially stamps) where they are easily seen and accessed by customers and ensuring clear view and circulation throughout the area so customers can see and reach all key elements.

This case study is based on the work of research architect Jay Farbstein, Ph.D., FAIA, of Jay Farbstein Associates, Inc., Los Angeles and San Luis Obispo, CA, and Min Kantrowitz, psychologist, architect, and planning and design consultant, School of Architecture and Planning at the University of New Mexico.

OVERVIEW

To design environments suited to what people do in them, we must understand environmental behavior: *Who does what with whom?* In what *relationship*, *sociocultural context*, and *physical setting*? This chapter proposes that by looking at how environments affect people’s ability to see, hear, touch, smell, and perceive each other, we can begin to understand how environments impinge on social behavior.

Environmental elements that affect relationships include barriers such as walls, screens, objects, and symbols; and fields, such as shape, orientation, size, and environmental conditions. Design decisions about these elements have identifiable side effects for social behavior.

Environmental-behavior descriptions that can enable designers to improve control over behavioral side effects of their decisions include six elements: actor, act, significant others, relationships, context, and setting.

The next three chapters discuss how to find out about people’s feelings, attitudes, perceptions, and knowledge—namely, by asking questions.

CHAPTER 10

FOCUSED INTERVIEWS

Asking questions in interviews and questionnaires means posing questions systematically to find out what people think, feel, do, know, believe, and expect. When we think of a focused interview we generally have in mind the type of group questioning used in market research and when we think of a questionnaire, we think of the yes/no or multiple-choice questions of most public opinion polls. The term “interview,” meaning any form of face-to-face questioning is so broad it can lose its meaning in a sentence describing a research project, such as “We interviewed the building manager.” In almost all cases of E-B research, interviewers ask questions to learn how an individual feels about, perceives, or otherwise reacts to a particular environment or situation. For this purpose, the mix of structure and open-endedness that the focused interview technique provides is helpful. The popular form of group interview discussed at the end of this chapter is a variation of this basic method. In most cases, when E-B researchers say they are carrying out interviews, they are actually using a form of focused interview.

You can use focused interviews with individuals to find out in depth how people define a concrete situation, what they consider important about it, what effects they intended their actions to have in the situation, and how they feel about it. Originally formulated to tap reactions to films of military instruction and propaganda, radio broadcasts, and other mass communication devices, focused interviews are particularly suited to the needs of environment-behavior researchers interested in reactions to particular environments. Many of the concepts this chapter explains and the way it explains them are based on Merton, Fiske, and Kendall’s insightful and inventive book *The Focused Interview* (1956).

