



PARALLEL PAPERS I
FRIDAY 7th JULY 1145-1300
ROOM IV - 7.0.22

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Home of the Homeless

Bachelard (1958) regarded "home" as the primary site upon which our relation to all other sites is based. He called it "the non-I that protects the I", an essentially secure and nurturing space. What happens when this primary site fails in its protective and nurturing function? What effect does an unsafe and even persecutory early home environment have on the individual in their relation to the places and spaces they encounter later in life?

The Lighthouse Foundation provides shelter and therapeutic services to young homeless people of ages 15-23. The organisation has grown from a single home in 1992 to its present state - a central building located in inner Melbourne, the Resource Centre, and nine residential houses for young people scattered about the suburbs. Each house holds four clients and two carers. Clients and carers

have their own rooms and there is a large communal space. The houses are designed to simulate a stable family home with reliable "parents", providing a corrective emotional experience in a safe environment. Clients come in for therapy, meetings with their care team and to hang out. Clients frequently engage in attention-seeking behavior and staff has to balance sociability with performing their organisational tasks.

Homelessness is the presenting problem for the clients, but almost all have histories of family breakdown, serious neglect, family violence or sexual abuse. The consequences of early trauma and attachment failure include difficulties in forming stable relationships, substance abuse, mental illness and self-harm.

Lighthouse aims to develop the clients' capacities to form stable relationships, become economically independent and care for themselves, both physically and emotionally. This

places it in the class of organisations in which Bion's (1961) basic assumption dependency predominates. Bion's baD is a major determinant of the organisation's culture, which is expressed in the common practices of staff and care team meetings and the provision of therapeutic support to all staff involved in direct care as well as the clients themselves. The increasing size and complexity of the organisation has created tensions within the organisational culture, which will also be explored.

This paper takes a socioanalytic perspective, paying particular attention to the expression of the culture in the design and use of spaces within the Resource Centre, including the décor, the furnishing and arrangement of spaces.

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