FENG SHUI:
THE USE AND VALUE OF FENG SHUI
IN INTERIOR DESIGN IN NORTHERN OHIO

A Thesis
Presented to
The Graduate Faculty of The University of Akron

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

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August, 2005
FENG SHUI:
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Thesis

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ABSTRACT

Grand Master Thomas Lin Yun and his American pupil, Sarah Rossbach, brought Feng Shui, the ancient Chinese art of placement, to the United States in the early 1980s. Their introduction of Feng Shui to the West opened doors for ordinary people to learn, practice, and adapt the art of Feng Shui.

Traditional schools of Feng Shui, such as the Form School and the Compass School, continue to evolve. The newer Black Hat Sect and Pyramid Schools, however, have become the major versions of Feng Shui used in the United States.

Traditional Feng Shui is a complex system that may involve years of study. Westerners have found Feng Shui interesting and intriguing, but Americans prefer quicker resolutions. Books, with titles such as *Fast Feng Shui* and *10-Minute Feng Shui*, promote the idea that this Eastern concept can be implemented in a short time. They offer readers do-it-yourself advice and discuss basic concepts that are easy to understand and implement because they relate to common sense.

Western Feng Shui focuses on reducing clutter, which can impede the flow of energy or chi. Books suggest changes that can be made in the existing environment to increase the flow of chi and stress that people who carry out the recommended changes are likely to feel a personal sense of accomplishment.

The bagua is the newest and most important tool used by Western Feng Shui practitioners. Analysis revealed that the bagua has been increasingly simplified by
Western authors and practitioners since being first mentioned by Sarah Rossbach in her 1983 book, *Feng Shui, The Chinese Art of Placement*.

Feng Shui is only beginning to be offered by interior design specialists in Northern Ohio. Those who prefer this service report a growing interest in this practice. The designers and practitioners who were interviewed for this study believed that the process of learning, teaching, and using Feng Shui was beneficial and of value. Feng Shui provided clients a new intriguing path to design solutions. In turn, practitioners reported personal gratification from learning and implementing a new skill that enhanced their professional work.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of my Master's Degree would not have been possible without the continued support and encouragement of many special people. First, I thank God for the love of my life, my husband Fred. Fred has been a quiet but steady support for anything in life I have ever attempted to accomplish, especially my return to school. He has always given me a loving environment in which to stretch my wings. I love you and thank you for your years of continued love and many sacrifices you have made.

The School of Family and Consumer Sciences has always provided a superior faculty and staff that made for a positive learning environment. I thank all the professors and instructors I have had over the years, for without them, I would not be where I am today.

I wish to give my special thanks to:

LTC Kerry Albanese, U.S. Army Reserves, Retired, for challenging me to return to school and complete my first undergraduate degree.

Dr. Virginia Gunn for her unyielding guidance, encouragement, her countless hours of reading, and for the multitude of suggestions that made the successful completion of this thesis possible. Her ability to mentor students is a great tribute to her as a person and her career as a professor. I am very privileged to have been one of her students.
Mr. Robert Brown and Mr. John Vollmer who gave their time and energy to be committee members and their suggestions and input were greatly appreciated.

Dr. Lucille Terry for accepting me as a graduate assistant, for being tough and demanding, and being a continued source of encouragement and support.

My entire Kiehl family, who has always provided me with love and encouragement, and especially my cousin, Dave Jenkins, whose computer skills made the electronic portion of this thesis bearable.

My very dear friend and mentor, who passed away before my thesis was completed and before we could enjoy our retirement years, LTC Nancy C. Tipton, U.S. Army Reserves, Retired. I miss you.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The term Feng Shui began to appear frequently in popular interior design periodicals in the early 1990s. This strange name caught my attention and curiosity. The basic theory appeared to me as a different approach to interior design. The Chinese originally used Feng Shui for ancestor grave placement and it continued to evolve to cover the layout of interior spaces, individual homes, gardens, and cities. Today dozens of books about Feng Shui are available in the interior design section of bookstores in the United States. The purpose of this thesis was to explore the origin of Feng Shui, to determine when and why it came to the United States, to see how it has become Westernized, and to determine whether it is a useful tool for interior designers.

In ancient China it took a lifetime to become a Master of Feng Shui. Is it possible for an American interior designer to learn Feng Shui and use it successfully? Our American society promotes instant gratification, especially in advertisements, and Americans today typically do not want to spend a lifetime to learn a skill. How are Americans using Feng Shui in interior spaces? I studied thirty-one books on Feng Shui published for American consumers between 1982 and 2004, and consulted Internet sites for additional background materials. I interviewed one interior designer and three Feng Shui practitioners, to see how they were applying Feng Shui in Northeast Ohio.
The definition of Feng Shui literally translates from Chinese to English as “wind” and “water” and has been practiced in China for several thousand years.¹ This definition was consistent in all publications. In the East, the Chinese interchange the art of Feng Shui with geomancy. Stephen Skinner stated that the ancient art of Feng Shui or geomancy lies behind the whole pattern of the Chinese landscape. For the Chinese, it is an attitude toward the life in the land, and the art of living within the rhythms of the land and seasons. Sarah Rossbach says in her book *Feng Shui, The Chinese Art of Placement:*

The Chinese often tract success or failure not so much to human actions, but to the workings of mysterious earth forces. These (earth) forces are believed to be responsible for determining health, prosperity, and good luck. Chinese emperors consulted Feng Shui experts before building huge public works or waging war. Chiang Kai-shek’s rise to power is traced to the especially good Feng Shui of his mother’s grave; his downfall is blamed on the Communists later digging it up.²

Many Chinese believe in the powers of Feng Shui and conclude that if people change their surroundings, they can change their life. Author, Sarah Rossbach says “The aim of Feng Shui, then, is to change and harmonize the environment—cosmic currents known as chi—to improve fortunes. In practice, Feng Shui is somewhere between a science and an art.”³

Feng Shui can be applied to a small space like the top of a desk, a larger space like a single room, an entire floor plan of a house, or an even larger site like a citywide development. I sought to explore how Feng Shui concepts were being suggested for arrangement of American living quarters, and to determine if this Eastern or Chinese practice had a valid application for use by interior designers in Northeastern Ohio.
Notes

3 Ibid., 2.
CHAPTER II

HISTORY

This chapter presents a brief history of Feng Shui, a very old Chinese technique used by people to understand the interaction between themselves and their environment and to provide a way for that relationship to flourish. Feng Shui practices suggest a way for people and nature to live harmoniously with the rhythms of nature, so that the spaces in which they chose to live will support the people physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Feng Shui follows the laws of nature and is intertwined with other alternative modalities, such as alternative medicines and healing techniques, also brought to the United States from China.¹ It is a process, and as in any process, there is a migration over time and a collection of information behind it.

Feng (wind) and Shui (water) make up Feng Shui. Together, their flow of energy, not only on the surface but also through the earth, expresses the power of energy in the environment.² Feng Shui was specifically mentioned as a practice in a text dated back to the early Ch’in Dynasty (221-206 B.C.).³ The oldest traces of Feng Shui, however, have been found in a Neolithic grave, which dates from about 4,000 B.C., excavated in 1988 in the Henan province in China.⁴ Feng Shui may be as old as six thousand years. Certainly some of the main symbols of Feng Shui were in use then, but its philosophy is at least 2,600 years old.⁵
Stephen Skinner, in his book *The Living Earth Manual of Feng Shui*, said, “Feng Shui is the art of living in harmony with the land, and deriving the greatest benefit, peace and prosperity from being in the right place at the right time.”

Feng Shui knowledge has developed over thousands of years from the experience of successive generations of Feng Shui masters carefully measuring, recording, and matching their original intentions to the outcome of each Feng Shui change. Feng Shui in China has been considered a science for several thousand years. Just as medicine is a science and every doctor does not get his diagnosis right the first time, so Feng Shui practitioners may not initially prescribe the right cures, as those cures are based on a body of experimental knowledge.

The ancient tribal Chinese would align their graves with the stars. In known Neolithic Chinese burial sites the head of each grave aligns southward. The southern direction provided the “breath of cosmic life.” The lack of this cosmic breath could adversely affect the fortune of the person’s descendents. Practitioners believed that if the dead souls were happy, they would ensure that the living souls of descendents were happy. In reverse, if the dead souls were unhappy, so too would be the souls of the living descendents.

Feng Shui was a closely guarded secret throughout ancient history in Imperial China. The Emperor and ruling class were the only ones to benefit from its practice. The first Ming Emperor (A.D. 1368-98) had false or misleading Feng Shui textbooks written to keep the real secrets safe from the general population. He also had many Feng Shui practitioners executed to bolster his monopoly of the Feng Shui knowledge.
Feng Shui is not a spiritual practice, but a long-used technique with a huge body of practice and theory behind it. It does, however, share its roots with the three main religions or teachings of China, which are Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. The Chinese see the balance between heaven, earth, and man as complementary. Each area is represented by a religion or teaching as found in the ancient book of I Ching. Buddhism is concerned with the characteristics of heaven, which are the cycles of reincarnation and the heavens of afterlife. Confucianism is concerned with human relationships, which is man. Taoism is concerned with nature, the rivers, mountains, earthly sexuality, and immortality, and is considered the religion of earth. Feng Shui is not a Buddhist practice, and is frowned upon by many orthodox Buddhists. Feng Shui is a uniquely Chinese practice. Even though its origin predates Taoism, Taoism is where most of the roots of Feng Shui are found. “The Tao” when translated means “The Way.” This means people should try to live in harmony with the laws of nature, not oppose them. It teaches people to recognize how they are connected to the natural world, how to be in alignment with nature, how to create spaces that benefit people physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

When the Communists took political control of China in 1949, they proceeded to discredit any practice that appeared to be based on superstition. During the Cultural Revolution, 1966-1976, the effort to do away with traditional Chinese culture intensified. The Chinese suffered the loss of art, historical buildings, libraries, and Feng Shui manuals and tools such as the lo p’an, the Chinese compass. Therefore, some Feng Shui practitioners began to migrate and take their knowledge to other areas of the world where there were established Chinese communities. During the 1980s, Professor Thomas Lin
Yun arrived in the United States from Hong Kong. Lin Yun was later recognized as a Grand Master after having trained a number of Master-level students. His work and the work of his American pupil, Sarah Rossbach, provided the catalyst for Feng Shui practices in the United States.17

Schools of Feng Shui

In his teachings, Grand Master Thomas Lin Yun stressed that China is a very large body of land with many natural resources. The differences in the ecological environment throughout the vast Chinese countryside placed a great impact on the living and working patterns of the people. Chinese intellectuals continually devised mystical methods to solve the difficulties of daily tasks, such as how to construct buildings, choose land, or work with the changes in directions of wind and water. As a result, each practice of Feng Shui was conducted slightly differently, although each was in itself correct. Out of these differences in practice, individual schools of Feng Shui came into being. The Three Harmony School, Three Yuan School, Nine Star School, Cantonese School, Taoist School, Eclectic School, Yin-Yang School, and the Buddhist School were some of the individual schools named by Grand Master Lin Yun in his written forward to Nancy SantoPietro’s book, Feng Shui: Harmony by Design.18 Different interpretations developed due to the difficulty of learning all the individual aspects of each school. Feng Shui masters interpreted what they saw or heard a little differently, which led to different perspectives.19

The majority of the research indicated that there are two main Asian schools of thought in Feng Shui.20 The oldest and most popular is the Form School, then the Compass School. Each began in different areas of China.21
The Form School is particularly popular in the mountainous Chinese provinces of Kanchow, Kiangsi, Kwangsi, and Anhui. This school takes the configuration of the surrounding landscape as seen from the site of the grave or a building.

The Compass School, more apparent in the flat provinces of Fukien and Chekiang, and now in modern Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Malaysia, relies on precise calculations and measurements of direction. The prime tool for these calculations and measurements is the Feng Shui south-pointing compass or lo p’an, developed by early Chinese Feng Shui practitioners to calculate the Compass School orientations. The lo p’an is still used today by traditional Feng Shui Compass School practitioners.

Core Principles of Feng Shui

Throughout the centuries of Feng Shui practice, there are core principles that remain consistent: chi, yin and yang, and the five elements with their cycles. Chi is the universal energy that exists in everything, and is the most important principal that Feng Shui practitioners seek to change. Yin and yang represent eternal change, the evolution of all things. Their balance is essential and symbolizes the two primal forces of chi. The five elements are found in nature and represent different types of chi that change over time. They are used to balance negative chi and enhance positive chi through their Production or Creative Cycles, the Reduction or Controlling Cycles, and the Destruction Cycle.

Chi

Chi is defined as a major form of energy that exists in everything. Chi, sometimes spelled ch’i, qi, or ki, but always pronounced, “chee,” is the “life force of all animate things, the power of the sun, moon and weather systems, and the driving force in
human beings.” People practice T’ai Chi, a way of exercising that is designed to aid the flow of chi within the body. For centuries the Chinese have used herbal medicines to correct chi when it becomes unbalanced in the body. The Chinese have used acupuncture needles to unblock the energy channels and enable chi to flow through the body. Feng Shui manipulates the chi energy to improve people’s lives, prosperity, marriage prospects, career luck, the luck of their children, and more.

Chi can be thought of in terms of radio waves, microwaves, cell-phone transmissions, TV waves, X-rays, ultrasound, and cosmic and infrared radiation. Like chi, these are all invisible forms of energy that we accept even though we have never seen or touched them. Science says they exist, so we believe that they do. Stephen Skinner has said that chi naturally flows in a meandering course. In his *Keep It Simple Series Guide to Feng Shui*, he said:

Where it flows gently and accumulates, an abundance follows. Where the flow becomes stagnant, these life energies, and abundance, dry up. Conversely, where chi is forced to flow rapidly in straight lines, it becomes destructive. If you visualize it like water, you will not go far wrong in understanding its effects: Neither a stagnant pond full of rubbish nor a roaring rapid is an ideal living environment. Agriculture, life, settlement, and indeed trade—and, in turn, prosperity and wealth—accumulate along mature, slowly flowing, meandering rivers. You only have to think of most of the great capital cities of the world to see that.

Think of chi as any natural thing: it is born, becomes strong, it decays, and then dies. The essence of Feng Shui is to accumulate the right sort of chi at the right point of the cycle. When chi is positive, strong, and energizing, it is called sheng chi, a chi to be encouraged. The opposite of sheng chi, or stagnant energy, is called ssu chi, or torpid chi. Ssu chi is to be avoided at all costs, just as one would avoid drinking stagnant water to maintain one’s health. Sheng or bright chi is yang chi; while stagnant, decayed, ssu, or
torpid chi is yin chi. Essentially, the sole purpose of Feng Shui is to manipulate the flow of chi for the improvement of each individual’s life.

Yin and Yang

Yin and yang represent another core principle of Feng Shui. They are positive and negative forces that act together in order to create energy. They represent two forces in constant movement, each attempting to gain dominance. When one of the forces achieves dominance, an imbalance occurs. According to the author Gill Hale, they are “opposite yet independent forces that drive the world.”34 Yin represents the female principle of nature, looked upon as passive and weak. Yang represents the male principle of nature and is seen as active and strong.35 In *The Encyclopedia of Feng Shui*, Hale gives the following yin and yang examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yin</th>
<th>Yang</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>Sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dark</td>
<td>Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter</td>
<td>Summer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior</td>
<td>Exterior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valleys</td>
<td>Hills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardens</td>
<td>Houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold</td>
<td>Heat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Odd numbers</td>
<td>Even numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>Hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep</td>
<td>Wakefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feminine</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stillness</td>
<td>Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Still water</td>
<td>Mountains,36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other examples would be:

Death       Life
Shade       Sun
Night       Day
The Chinese philosophy of Taoism submits that all things are connected and dependent on one another. This philosophy supports Feng Shui. Yin and yang combine opposites that complement and complete each other. For example, if yin is the sunset, then yang is the sunrise. Yin and yang can be also applied to people’s personality and temperament types, and the spaces and surroundings within which people live. It is important to balance yin and yang so there is not an extreme, which will create an imbalance. This imbalance can affect how people respond and react to their environment.

The Five Elements With Their Cycles

The five elements, Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal, and Water, and their cycles are considered by the Chinese to be building blocks of the universe. They believe that everything in the world belongs to one of the five elements. These elements interact with each other. No one element is better than the other, and they should not be seen as separate from each other. Therefore, they should all be represented in every space.

Everything in nature is constantly changing. Each element is composed of a beginning and active phase, a declining period, and an end. In Feng Shui these are called life cycles. The elements will interact with one another. The reason a space can feel inviting or forbidding is due to the way elements are combined and how much of each is present.
In the Production or Creative Cycle, Wood creates Fire, Fire creates Earth, Earth creates Metal, Metal creates Water, and Water creates Wood (see figure 2.1). If in your room the elements are combined so that there is a predominate element, then use the next dominate element followed by bits of the next three elements, and your space will have balance in both appearance and ambiance.42

The next cycle is the Reduction or Controlling Cycle. In this cycle, Fire reduces or burns Wood, Wood reduces or drinks from Water, Water reduces or erodes Metal, Metal reduces or compresses Earth, and Earth reduces or smothers Fire (see figure 2.2). The Reduction Cycle will weaken the elements and it is gentler than the Destruction Cycle.43

The last cycle is the Destruction Cycle where Wood destroys or absorbs nutrients from Earth, Earth destroys or dams Water, Water destroys or puts out Fire, Fire destroys or melts Metal, and Metal destroys or chops Wood. This cycle presents a much bolder change and should be used with caution.44

Each of the elements are described by authorities as indicating color, season, direction, shape, objects, patterns of movement, and exerted influence. There is a way to use each element or combine the elements to create a remedy or cure for most situations. The ultimate goal is to balance the elements; however, each element may not be represented equally. The key to bringing about balance is in the way and in the order the elements are combined. The goal is to combine just the right amount of each one. The elements are present in homes and their balance in a room can be affected by choice of color, texture, material, type of object, direction, shape, or season.45
Figure 2.1. Production Cycle. The direction of the flow is the key to the cycle. Adapted from *Feng Shui for Beginners* by Richard Webster, 1997. Drawn by Dave Jenkins.

Figure 2.2. Reduction Cycle. Adapted from *Feng Shui for Beginners* by Richard Webster, 1997. Drawn by Dave Jenkins.
Author, Terah Kathryn Collins, in her book *The Western Guide to Feng Shui*, offers a simple list of where the representations of the elements are found:

The wood element is found in:

- Wooden furniture and accessories
- Wooden paneling, siding, roofing and decks
- All indoor and outdoor plants and flowers, including silk, plastic and dried material
- All types of plant-based cloth and textiles, such as cotton and rayon
- Floral print upholstery, wall coverings, draperies, and linens
- Art depicting landscapes, gardens, plants and flowers
- The columnar shape, like the trunk of a tree, found in columns, beams, pedestals, poles, and stripes
- The green and blue spectrum of colors.

The fire element is found in:

- All lighting, including electric, oil, candles, natural sunlight, and fireplaces
- Things made from animals, such as fur, leather, bone, feathers, and wool
- Pets and wildlife
- Art that depicts people and/or animals
- Art that depicts sunshine, light, or fire
- Shapes such as triangles, pyramids, or cones
- The red spectrum of colors.

The earth element is found in:

- Adobe, brick, and tile
- Ceramic or earthenware objects
- Shapes such as squares, rectangles, and long flat surfaces
- The yellow and earth-tone spectrum of colors
- Art depicting earthly landscapes of desert, fields, and so on.

The metal element is found in:

- All types of metals, including stainless steel, copper, brass, iron, silver, aluminum, and gold
- All rocks and stones, such as marble, granite, and flagstone
- Natural crystals, rocks, and gemstones
- Art and sculpture made from metal or stone
- The white and light pastel spectrum of colors
- The shapes of the circle, oval and arch.
The water element is found in:

Streams, rivers, pools, fountains, and water features of all kinds
Reflective surfaces, such as cut crystal, glass, and mirrors
Flowing, free-form, and asymmetrical shapes
The black and dark-tone spectrum of colors, such as charcoal grey and midnight blue.\(^{46}\)

Stephanie Roberts stated, in her book *Fast Feng Shui*, that each of the five elements can be linked with its own specific colors and shapes:

**Wood** – greens and light blues; tall narrow shapes
**Fire** – reds, purples, bright oranges; triangles, flame shapes and other pointed or angular shape
**Earth** – browns, yellows, cool or muted oranges; low, flat, square shapes
**Metal** – whites, gold, silver, grey; round and oval shapes, arches
**Water** – black and dark blues; sinuous, curvy, irregular, and wave-like shapes.\(^{47}\)

This information is the basis for using color, shape, and objects such as crystals, which are associated with each element to adjust the energy of individual rooms and areas within the home. The addition or subtraction of a color, shape, or object would bring the elements and into balance. For example, Roberts explained that to add interest to a relationship, one could add items that are red, pink and/or triangular in shape to represent Fire energy, to the relationship area of a room.\(^{48}\)

**Feng Shui Tools**

Feng Shui tools are devices used to interpret the meanings of directions, numbers, and locations that affect the flow of chi, the balance of yin and yang, and the five elements in particular situations. The tools are used in conjunction with each other. For example, tools such as the pa kua and the lo shu magic square can be used in conjunction with compass directions to provide an infinite number of possibilities for the Feng Shui practitioner. Practitioners must understand the significance of the tools used.
in conjunction with the School of Feng Shui that is familiar to them. Practitioners never use guesswork. They must be very exact with their measurements, placement of grid squares, and so on. This enables them to diagnose a problem and develop a solution for areas such as irregular shapes, unbalanced layout plans, and missing corners.\textsuperscript{49} The tools used most often are the eight trigrams, the pa kua, and the lo shu magic square.

The Eight Trigrams

A trigram is a set of three lines, yin (broken) or yang (unbroken), read from the bottom up. There are precisely eight different ways in which you can combine three yin or yang lines. Therefore, there are eight trigrams (see figure 2.3). The trigrams and the elements are considered universal and a basic part of Chinese culture. They not only form the theoretical basis behind Feng Shui, but also acupuncture, acupressure, astrology, Chinese herbalism, food combinations, some martial arts, and a host of other Chinese arts and sciences. The eight trigrams form the fundamental building blocks of the sixty-four hexagrams in the \textit{I Ching}, the ancient Chinese \textit{Book of Changes}.\textsuperscript{50}

Each trigram represents pattern, movement, and change that correspond to an element, a direction, a number, a season, a family member, an animal, a body part, or some other physiological association.\textsuperscript{51} Each trigram has a title or name, and a concrete image. The trigrams work in opposite yin/yang pairs and represent the physical world. Two are heavenly, Li, sun, and K’an, Moon; two are of the weather, Chen, thunder, and Hsun, wind; next are Ken, mountain, and Tui, lake; and finally there are Ch’ien, heaven, and K’un, earth.\textsuperscript{52}

The position of each of the eight trigrams is related to each of the exterior lo shu squares by one of the eight compass directions. In ancient China, the traditional house or
Figure 2.3. The Eight Trigrams. Originally from the I Ching. The Chinese name is first followed by the English name. Adapted from Feng Shui for Beginners by Richard Webster. Drawn by Dave Jenkins.
temple was built on the traditional nine square plan, with the central square being the
courtyard and not associated with a specific trigram. The rooms of the house were
located around the perimeter of the square. The layout of this square would look
similar to the lo shu square. The trigrams would then indicate the best rooms of the
house for specific purposes or specific members of the household.

The Pa Kua

The pa kua (pronounced “par-kwar”) is an arrangement of the eight trigrams
around the outside of an eight sided symbol, an octagonal shape, which can be used to
map the internal layout of a house (see figure 2.4). When using this tool, the traditional
Compass School of Feng Shui always places the Li or sun trigram in the south. The eight
trigrams are now matching compass directions. The center of the pa kua is generally seen
as a mirror or the yin-yang symbol.

There are two arrangements or sequences of the pa kua, which bear significant
importance for Feng Shui. One is for exterior use, and one is for interior use. The
Former Heaven Sequence is used for the Feng Shui of the ancestors, gravesites, and to
measure influences on the outside of a building, the part that is open to the heavens.
When the center is a mirror, the octagonal shaped pa kua mirror can be used to deflect
poison arrows, which are structures with corners pointed toward a house. This is
interpreted as killing chi and can be deflected with a pa kua mirror.

The Later Heaven Sequence is used for houses or offices of the living (see
figure 2.5). Ideally it is used for determining directions and locations inside the home.
It is laid over the floor plan with the Li trigram aligned with the Chinese South (Western
North) of the floor plan.
Figure 2.4. The Pa kua. A basic pakua from *Feng Shui for Beginners* by Richard Webster, 1997.
Figure 2.5. The Later Heaven Sequence Pa kua. It is used when balancing interior spaces. It is from the *Keep It Simple Series Guide To Feng Shui* by Stephen Skinner, 2001.
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Figure 2.6. The Lo Shu Square. A lo shu square showing the numbers, corresponding Elements, aspirations and directions. Drawn by Dave Jenkins.
The Lo Shu Magic Square

One of the oldest and major tools used to understand Feng Shui is the lo shu magic square (see figure 2.6). It looks like a tic-tac-to grid containing the numbers 1 to 9. The lo shu square is considered magic because the numbers in any three cells in a line add up to 15, in any direction, also diagonally. The yang numbers are odd and form a central cross within the square. The yin numbers are even and form the four corners of the square. Specific sides of the lo shu square are aligned with specific sides of a house plan and compass direction. Each numbered square of the lo shu is related to one of the eight Life Aspirations and one of the five Elements. The eight Life Aspirations cover key areas in life that are generally important to people and are briefly described as Wealth, Fame, Marriage, Family, Children, Knowledge, Career, and Mentors or Helpful People. Each exterior square of the lo shu also represents one of the eight compass directions, North, South, East, West, Northeast, Northwest, Southwest, and Southeast. The lo shu square is primarily used in forms of Feng Shui within the Compass School, and is used in conjunction with the lo pan or Chinese compass. It also becomes the shape of the bagua, which is described in the next chapter.

The Lo p’an or Chinese Compass

The lo p’an, also spelled luo pan, is a south-pointing compass developed by early Chinese Feng Shui practitioners to help calculate Compass School orientations (see figure 2.7). This ancient Chinese compass was a predecessor of the maritime compass. The ancient Chinese compass direction of south is the same as magnetic north on the current-day compass. There are up to 39 separate rings carved or painted on the surface of a lo p’an compass disc, each broken down into between eight and 365 divisions.
Figure 2.7. The Lo p’an Chinese Compass. It is from *The Living Earth Manual of Feng Shui* by Stephen Skinner, 1982.
and each labeled in black or red Chinese characters. There are eight directions, in addition to the center, that the compass identifies: the four cardinal directions of North, South, East, West; the Center; and the four corners, Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest. These directions fit together with the five elements, the eight trigrams, and the nine cells of the lo shu magic square. The lo p’an is still in use today, but it is complex and difficult to use, and remember, the writings are in Chinese characters. It is used predominantly by Feng Shui practitioners in the East who use traditional Compass School techniques.

Summary

In summary, Feng Shui has been in existence for thousands of years with a very complex historical background and theory of practice. The historical knowledge has been transferred through Chinese Master practitioners to the present day. The principles of chi, yin and yang, and the five elements and their cycles have remained in place. Two of the three main schools of Feng Shui have flourished for centuries, the Form School and the Compass School. The Intuitive School has become enmeshed within other Feng Shui Schools, including the Western Tantric Black Hat Sect School of Feng Shui. The practice of Feng Shui in China was exclusive to the elite and powerful, and was suppressed by the government and almost destroyed by the Chinese Cultural Revolution; however, it survived and traveled to the Western world. The next chapter will discuss how the West, specifically the United States, received and adapted this ancient Chinese art of placement for its own use.
Notes

4 Ibid., 50.
5 Ibid., 50-51.
9 Ibid.
11 Ibid., 21,25.
12 Ibid., 50-59.
13 Ibid., 54.
14 Ibid., 58
15 Spruill and Watson, *Feng Shui*, 5-6.
16 Ibid., 72.
17 Ibid., 73.
19 Ibid., xiii-xiv.
27 Ibid., 73.
31 Ibid., 80.
32 Ibid., 81.
33 Ibid., 81.
34 Hale, *Practical Encyclopedia*, 12.
35 Ibid.
36 Ibid., 13.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid., 34.
43 Ibid., 35.
44 Ibid., 35-36.
48 Ibid.
52 Ibid., 123.
54 Ibid.
56 Ibid., 126-127.
57 Ibid., 128.
58 Ibid., 129.
59 Ibid., 258.
60 Ibid., 342.
61 Ibid., 96.
CHAPTER III

WESTERN MODIFICATIONS

Today’s Western practice of Feng Shui, used in the United States since the early 1980s, has modified the interpretation and application of the historical principles and theories. Feng Shui is being used as the vehicle to look at one’s self and surroundings to see where adjustments can be made to benefit relationships, career, and home. Feng Shui is not a static concept comprised of hard and fast rules, according to author Jane Butler-Biggs.1 She believes that even though the world today is very different from that of ancient China, the Feng Shui principles are simply common sense, because they help people to organize their thoughts and structure their world. Within the flexible structure of Feng Shui, people can learn to make better use of their space and take a fresh look at their habits.2

Lillian Too is one of the most published current writers on the subject of Feng Shui for the Western market. Her work has been published worldwide and translated into more than fifteen languages. She made the subject of Feng Shui uniquely her own in the 1990s. She was responsible for blending Eastern and Western theories for everyday people. Too emphasized that Feng Shui is a subtle blend of opposite energies that complement each other, and she stated that the harmony of the opposite energies is what should be accomplished.3 In her Illustrated Encyclopedia of Feng Shui, Too noted:
The practice of Feng Shui in today’s world differs substantially from its historical origins. Today Feng Shui is available to everyone: it is used by rich and poor alike, as a result of which the practice is applied to individual residences and work places, and by individuals. Secondly Feng Shui is today being practiced in a dramatically different world. Because the physical landscape of the world has changed so much, Feng Shui today has greatly adapted old precepts. The growth of cities and the popularity of apartment living in an urban setting have necessitated a reinterpretation of the old texts. New meanings have been attributed to old metaphors.  

In order to understand the similarities and differences between Traditional and Western Feng Shui, I analyzed materials in thirty-one books published between 1982 and 2004 that were aimed at the American consumer. In addition, I reviewed information on the Internet and selected articles from fourteen sites that focused on interiors. When grouping the book resources in figure 3.1 by ascending date, it was found that two authors, Stephen Skinner and Sarah Rossbach, were key in bringing Feng Shui information to the West from the East. They were the first to write English books about Feng Shui, rather than translating existing Chinese books. Both authors lived, traveled, and studied extensively in the East. Skinner authored the first English-language book on Feng Shui in the twentieth century, *The Living Earth Manual of Feng Shui*, published in 1982. Rossbach, a language student of Grand Master Lin Yun in Hong Kong, became a key figure in bringing him to the United States. Rossbach then wrote the first book completely devoted to Black Hat Sect Feng Shui, *Interior Design with Feng Shui*, first published in 1987. By the mid 1990s numerous Feng Shui books began to appear in the American market, and 90.6 percent of the books used in this research were published between 1996 and 2004.
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Figure 3.1. Feng Shui Principles and Western Concepts. An analysis of the historical principles and Western concepts of Feng Shui in American books from 1982 to 2004. Prepared by author.
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Figure 3.1. Feng Shui Principles and Western Concepts, continued.
Eastern Principles in Western Feng Shui

There were four core historical Feng Shui principles that appeared regularly when all books were compared (see figure 3.1). Single, double, or triple XXXs indicate the degree of emphasis on the concepts compared. Chi energy appeared in 100 percent of the books analyzed, confirming chi as the primary principle in all Feng Shui. The five physical elements were used in 84.4 percent of the resources. Yin and yang, two opposing forces that are present in every living thing, appeared in 81.3 percent of the resources. The cycles of the five elements were discussed in detail in only 62.5 percent of the books.

A major common thread among all the schools and methods of Feng Shui is the flow of chi or energy throughout an interior space. The flow of chi, or the reduction of blocked chi, is what Feng Shui is all about. Without this flow, chi is stagnant, negatively affecting the body and the mind. Feng Shui is an external as well as an internal process. In creating the flow of chi, Feng Shui practitioners use various principles, tools, cures, remedies, and make many intuitive decisions to fix a problem.

Major Concepts Used in Westernized Feng Shui

While key concepts from traditional Feng Shui are still important today, the focus of how Feng Shui is practiced has changed considerably as the practice has been Westernized. Ancient practitioners of Feng Shui may never have chosen or approved the design of a home or the location of a home site that may be the only affordable option for a contemporary person. Very few people in the United States can control the location, direction, or configuration of the buildings and streets located in the areas where they live. Contemporary Feng Shui practitioners face a different set of challenges than the
ancient masters did. Thus, Westernized Feng Shui often follows intuitive cures or remedies rather than age-old prescribed techniques. Western Feng Shui practitioners have blended traditional Feng Shui wisdom with intuitive, diagnostic, investigative, and communicative skills. Feng Shui is a way to apply generally common sense solutions to everyday problem spaces.

Three major concepts emerged in the analysis that explain why Westerners use Feng Shui: (1) to control clutter that blocks the flow of chi in their interior environments; (2) to achieve a fast and easy fix for their problems; and (3) for self-empowerment to address their problems. The most prevalent Western concept of all is that clutter creates a major block to the flow of chi, which is the essence of Feng Shui. Westerners have found value in a fast and easy fix, and more recently published books and articles refer to Feng Shui as an approach to interior design that is quick with easy-to-use techniques. Authors also state that most people can make changes in the way they live by choosing to make changes in their environments, which may also result in self-empowerment. When the exterior environment is changed, something also changes inside people. Feng Shui is most effective when people are motivated to implement the changes themselves as opposed to having change dictated by someone else.

Clutter

One of the most prevalent problems in our Western culture is the collection of clutter. Most sources defined clutter as things not needed or loved, things that are untidy or unorganized, too many things in too small a space, anything broken, or any unfinished projects. A primary function of Feng Shui is to make sure chi energy can flow smoothly. A collection of clutter can block the chi flow. Karen Kingston declared that clutter
makes people feel tired and lethargic, even causing depression. It keeps people living in the past, congests the body, affects body weight, and can be an all around health hazard. It affects the way people treat one another, causes procrastination and disharmony, makes people feel ashamed, puts their life on hold, distracts them from important things, dulls sensitivity and life enjoyment, creates excess baggage, causes a fire hazard, makes them feel disorganized, or leads to financial losses. Stephanie Roberts communicated that most people have no idea how much their clutter affects them. It is only when they start clearing out the clutter that they realize how much better they feel without it. Roberts’s cure for clutter is to love it, use it, or lose it.

Most authors recommended that people using Feng Shui should proceed through each area of the home checking for the five elements, the colors, and the shapes, to see that they are balanced or represented equally. Each object in the room should be evaluated and a decision should be reached to determine its usefulness. If the piece really is not loved, is not useful, or does not have a place, then it should be recycled. Recycling includes using it in another room or space, giving it to someone who can use it, giving it to the local Goodwill, or placing it in the trashcan.

The identification of clutter as a problem, which needs to be corrected in order for Feng Shui to be beneficial, was overwhelming. There were references to clutter in 65.7 percent of the book sources reviewed. Karen Kingston’s book *Clear Your Clutter* was entirely devoted to the subject. Numerous references specific to Feng Shui and clutter appeared in 100 percent of the articles selected from the Internet. In the book *Everything Feng Shui*, an entire chapter entitled “Slaying the Clutter Dragon,” is devoted to clutter. The author, Katina Z. Jones, said, “The need for many things is purely
American - and it can easily go from a bad habit to a fixation that is difficult to get over.\textsuperscript{14} Karen Kingston pointed out that the specific location of clutter could affect specific areas of one’s life, and also stated in her book \textit{Clear your Clutter} that the process of clearing clutter actually becomes a process of releasing old emotional attachments.\textsuperscript{15} The attic represents higher goals and aspirations. A build-up of clutter or junk there could leave people feeling that they have not achieved all they were capable of in life.\textsuperscript{16} Skye Alexander, in her book \textit{10-Minute Feng Shui}, stated: “Clutter is synonymous with confusion and blockages. Broken furniture can signify broken dreams or breaks in communication with family members.”\textsuperscript{17} Katina Z. Jones noted that clutter had its roots in fear, a fear of not having enough to survive. Clutter becomes more than just stuff or possessions in the home.\textsuperscript{18} Jones identified additional kinds of clutter that are familiar to Westerners:

- Time clutter - too many commitments
- Mind clutter - too many thoughts, worries, future concerns
- Electronic clutter – too many voice mails, emails, hard drive documents
- Food Clutter - consuming more than the body needs, keeping more food than can be eaten.\textsuperscript{19}

There are many reasons why Westerners have accumulated great amounts of clutter. Depression-era parents saved many things due to what they had to once live without. A need for instant gratification within the current younger generation leads to the accumulation of possessions. Shopping seems to have become a pastime or emotional release from the daily pressures of life. Authors noted that the only way to break free from the clutches of clutter is to part with it. Jones stated in her book that people should take a hard look at themselves, their needs, and their motivations so they can learn why they are keeping these possessions. Once the motivation is understood,
they can come to terms with it and eliminate the excess, which will improve their inner sense of well-being.\textsuperscript{20}

Fast, Easy Fix

Western books on Feng Shui, especially those published since 1998, have titles such as \textit{Fast Feng Shui}, \textit{Quick Feng Shui}, \textit{The Western Guide to Feng Shui Room by Room}, \textit{Clear Your Clutter with Feng Shui}, \textit{Clearing Sacred Spaces with Feng Shui}, and \textit{10-Minute Feng Shui}. These titles indicate the fast and easy fixes for de-cluttering that have made Feng Shui attractive to many modern Westerners.

Not every author addressed Feng Shui as a fast fix, but it appeared in 30 percent of the resource books published since 1998. They emphasized techniques that are easily applied or easy-to-execute, and discussed simple changes, simple solutions, simplified versions, and so on. Very importantly, all the books state or imply that readers can implement these simple identified methods themselves to transform their homes so that they can benefit from maximum harmony.

Self-Empowerment

Thirty-nine percent of the resource books addressed the importance of intention by the individual as it relates to gaining self-empowerment from the Feng Shui experience. Stephanie Roberts wrote that the self-empowering aspect of contemporary Feng Shui is a key ingredient to its popularity. The mental intention of people to shift the energy of the home and initiate changes in their lives becomes the source of this power. In her book \textit{Fast Feng Shui}, Roberts stated:
Contemporary western Feng Shui focuses on creating a healthy flow of chi through a space. Chi wants to meander through your home like a gentle breeze or a winding stream. Blockages and other forms of negative chi (sha) are removed or neutralized in order to welcome opportunities and encourage progress.\textsuperscript{21}

In \textit{The Everything Feng Shui Book}, author Katina Z. Jones expressed the importance of personal intentions. She believes people must ask and answer four questions to help narrow the focus and embrace the possibility of trusting the Feng Shui process, thus contributing to self-power. The questions are as follows:

- What do you want to accomplish?
- What are your goals?
- Which goals are most important to you right now?
- What action are you preparing yourself to take?\textsuperscript{22}

When people can analyze their clutter and identify why they are holding on to it long after it has passed its prime usefulness, they gain self-confidence. This confidence will help them to determine why they are keeping their clutter. Then it will enable them to let it go by discarding it in one of several ways: by throwing it out, giving it away, or selling it. This process will empower people to continue to sort through their belongings and part with what they are not using. Karen Kingston says people are afraid to let go of their belongings. They do not want to make a mistake and they do not want to hurt anyone’s feelings. Sorting through belongings is emotional; however, the reward is increased self-confidence, which is self-empowering.\textsuperscript{23}

Many people who complete or clean something have a feeling of gratification or accomplishment when finished. Skye Alexander in her book, \textit{10-Minute Feng Shui}, relates that Feng Shui offers logical solutions to people’s problems.\textsuperscript{24} Authors often pointed out that Feng Shui is based on what people call common sense. People do not have to understand everything about Feng Shui to gain from it. The most important
aspect for success is the intent of the individual. The success lies in what people want. If they really want to correct a problem and if they believe what they are doing will work, it will. When these criteria are met, then Feng Shui will work. Westerners do not really care about the ancient Chinese wisdom. “They just want something that works,” writes Skye Alexander.25

Along with the physical cleaning, clearing, and organizing of an area, Terah Kathryn Collins said that people must seek the development of their inner self as well as external improvement of their environment.26 Along with doing the physical work, people need to address the development of their inner selves. By improving their minds, hearts, and emotional well being, they attract blessings into their lives. When accomplished this way, satisfying and long-lasting results can be produced.27

For example, people seeking a significant other should look at the pictures they have placed in a specific room and consider the content of these pictures. People who want to attract someone into their life should replace pictures showing lonely, sad, or single people with ones showing joyful scenes, couples celebrating, joyous family photos, or elements in pairs. They should replace negative objects such as piles of papers, unfinished projects, and broken items with objects that reflect what they are trying to attract. For example, a pair of bookends or a photo of a happy couple would imply happiness in pairs, and would be more likely to attract the positive energy needed to create a happy couple.28

In the books published between 1996 and 2004, the Western version of Feng Shui focused primarily on the accumulation of clutter as it contributed to stagnant chi. The next emphasis was the ability to gain self-empowerment by learning to identify and
then correct problems. Both concepts are mentioned as early as 1996 (see figure 3.1).

The third emphasis, a fast fix, does not appear until 1998 in Richard Webster’s book *101 Feng Shui Tips for the Home*.

**Feng Shui Schools Used in the West**

The traditional Form School and Compass School were recognized in 50 and 53 percent, respectively, of the thirty-one books analyzed (see figure 3.2). The Intuitive School, popular in the West because it combines both the Form School’s technique of direct observation and the Compass School’s use of metaphysical aspects, was recognized in 18.7 percent of the books reviewed. This school appeared most frequently in recently published books, but not before 1997. In addition, the Black Hat Sect School, founded in the United States by Grand Master Thomas Lin Yun, was referred to in 34.3 percent of the books. Some of the books analyzed (18.7 percent) gave no reference to any particular Feng Shui School. Two of the books discussed the Pyramid School of Feng Shui.

The Form School looks at Feng Shui visually and creates balance by manipulating forms or objects within interior spaces to achieve the flow of chi. Author Terah Kathryn Collins identified this school of Feng Shui as less scientific and more flexible in meeting the personal tastes and needs of her Western clients. She says the Form School process has been easier to integrate into the Western lifestyle than the techniques of the Compass School.

The Compass School uses a south-facing Chinese compass, or lo p’an, in combination with the birth information of those living in the home. Both compass reading and birth date and time produce numerical information, which then must be
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Figure 3.2. Feng Shui Schools. An analysis of Feng Shui Schools discussed in American books from 1982 to 2004. Prepared by author.
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Figure 3.2. Feng Shui Schools, continued.
interpreted by a Feng Shui practitioner. Thus, this school is more difficult for the layperson to implement. Several versions of the Compass School Feng Shui are the Eight House or Eight Mansion Formula, the Flying Star, and the Four Pillars of Destiny. These take much more study and interpretation of charts based on the four cardinal points on the compass (North, South, East, and West), individual birth dates of household members, individual trigram readings, house construction dates, and other variables. One key difference between Traditional and Western Feng Shui is that most of the modern practioners no longer use the south-facing Chinese compass or lo p’an. Instead, the association of specific areas of the home with specific areas of the eight life aspirations become based on positions relative to the front door, which is considered the mouth of chi.

The Intuitive School brings some aspects of the Form School and the Compass school together. It uses direct observation from the Form School and the metaphysical, or universal energy aspects of the Compass School. It leaves more to the individual interpretation of the practioners, depends more on individual intent, and appears to be incorporated by more Westernized practitioners.

Thomas Lin Yun, Black Hat Sect Chinese Grand Master, established and brought Tibetan Tantric Black Hat Sect Feng Shui to the United States during the early 1980s. This form of Feng Shui is a hybrid of customs, thoughts, and practices arising from the long transition of Tao and Buddhism as it traveled from India through Tibet and finally to China. Most of the schools that have evolved in the United States are variations of the Black Hat Sect teaching. Sometimes the reference Black Hat Sect (BHS) is used to designate this Western school of Feng Shui philosophy. This contemporary form of Feng
Shui is based mostly on traditional Form School teachings, places additional emphasis on personal intentions and incorporates new tools such as the bagua map, which will be discussed later in the chapter.

**Feng Shui Tools**

Once people have determined what they want to achieve from the Feng Shui experience and look around their space, they can now determine the type of Feng Shui cure or remedy that may be employed. A cure is generally something that is placed to attract or deflect chi. A remedy can be interpreted as a design solution. Figure 3.3 shows which authors discussed historical tools used by Feng Shui practitioners. These tools are (1) the eight trigrams, (2) the pa kua, (3) the lo shu square, and (4) the lo p'an Chinese compass. These tools are discussed more frequently in books published after 1999. In practice, the Westernization process melds the first three tools into one, the bagua; and the lo p’an is rarely used by Westerners without formal Chinese training.

The tools used most often by Westernized practitioners, as noted in figure 3.4 by book, are: (1) the bagua; (2) cures and remedies; (3) symbolism; (4) crystals; and (5) colors. The first bagua appears in 1983 in *Feng Shui, The Chinese Art of Placement* by Sarah Rossbach, and has now become the primary tool of the Western practitioner. In addition, practitioners continue to focus on particular solutions, which were part of balancing the five elements along with other associated cures and remedies, use of symbolism, hanging of crystals and use of color. These are described below.

**The Bagua**

A key Feng Shui diagram tool made popular by the Black Hat Sect is called the bagua, which, when translated, literally means Eight (Ba) Trigram (Gua). The bagua is
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**Figure 3.4.** Feng Shui Western Tools. An analysis of Feng Shui Western tools discussed in American books from 1982 to 2004. Prepared by author.
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Figure 3.4. Feng Shui Western Tools, continued.
formed by the combination of the pa kua, the lo shu magic square, and the eight life aspirations, also referred to as the eight life situations or stations of life. The bagua can be represented as an octagon or a square. The pa kua and its eight trigrams are superimposed over the lo shu square. This brings the eight trigrams, the eight life aspirations, the five elements, the eight magic numbers, and the eight cardinal directions together in one tool. The bagua is used by aligning the bottom three squares of knowledge, career, and helpful people, along the wall that has the main entrance to the home, room, or space. The bagua became the primary visual tool used by The Black Hat Sect (BHS).

The bagua is used as a guide to interpret a person’s life issues and as a cure to find resolution. The first mention of the term bagua is by Sarah Rossbach, pupil of Grand Master Lin Yun, in her 1983 book *The Chinese Art of Placement*. Her second book, *Interior Design with Feng Shui*, 1987, was the first book written by a Westerner in the United States that exclusively taught Tibetan Black Hat Tantric Sect Feng Shui. In Rossbach’s words it was a “how-to” manual for the practical application of Feng Shui.

Feng Shui is a way to apply solutions to everyday problem spaces. Terah Kathryn Collins, a well-known Feng Shui author, shared concepts to implement the process in her book *Home Design with Feng Shui A-Z*. First, a Feng Shui practitioner would use the bagua map. Collins states: “the bagua map connects the design of your home with the blessings and treasures of life.” She also said that mapping the bagua of the home could solve difficult problems. For example, when one couple looked at their bagua map laid out over their floor plan, they found that their back porch, located in the fame and reputation bagua square, was filled with dead plants; and located within the wealth and prosperity bagua square was their junk-filed garage. When these areas were
organized and transformed into clean and clutter-free functional areas, the couple reported experiencing positive results that were unidentified.45

During the last twenty years as Western Feng Shui has evolved, the bagua has become increasingly simplified. Figure 3.5 shows the bagua as presented by Collins in *The Western Guide to Feng Shui* in 1987. Each of the eight exterior bagua squares has listed their trigram name, trigram picture, the row and square position, the elements and colors, and the English title of each of the trigram aspirations. The center square does not have a trigram picture or name, but does have a label (center), an element, and a color.

In 1999, Karen Kingston’s simplified bagua map appears in her book, *Clear Your Clutter*, as shown in figure 3.6. The trigram pictures are gone. The English titles of the eight trigram aspirations are somewhat modified. The elements and their colors are gone and the center square does not have a title. By 2004, the bagua map in Darrin Zeer’s book, *Office Feng Shui*, further reduced to one English word representative of the trigram aspiration name in each of the eight bagua squares, and the center square is titled balance. The overall shape is a square grid (see figure 3.7). The elements, trigram pictures, and the colors are all removed.

In *Fast Feng Shui*, Stephanie Roberts states that the best way for people to begin to practice Feng Shui is to identify what changes need to be made in their lives and define a clear goal of where they need to go. After these changes are defined, people should go to the bagua map, lay it over their floor plan, and look at corresponding areas in their homes. Even if they want to change everything, it is best to go forward with only a few changes in the beginning. The focus should be on one specific issue at a time. If one change makes them uncomfortable, things should be put back until they feel like
Figure 3.5. The 1987 Bagua. The earlier the bagua, the more information it contains. It is from *The Western Guide to Feng Shui* by Terah Kathryn Collins.
Figure 3.6. The 1999 Bagua. This early bagua appeared in *Clear Your Clutter with Feng Shui* by Karen Kingston, 1999.
Figure 3.7. The 2004 Bagua. A more simplified bagua. From Office Feng Shui by Darrin Zeer, 2004.
moving forward again. Roberts developed nine Feng Shui principles to help people identify what they want to achieve from the Feng Shui experience. They are:

Know what you want
Locate your power spots
Create a path for chi
Repaint, repair, renew
Clean up clutter
Neutralize negative influences
Activate power spots
Work on yourself as well as your home
Evaluate the results.

The bagua can be superimposed over any fixed space. The nine squares of the bagua are shrunk or stretched to fit the space; however, each of the nine squares of the bagua should be about equal in size. When the bagua map is placed over the floor plan of a single room, the nine squares will be smaller than when imposed over a whole house floor plan. The room can now be evaluated for its contents within the entire bagua map and the advantage to this is that the Feng Shui process can begin with one room at a time. Trying to look at the entire home floor plan at once may be overwhelming. Using the bagua map over a single room develops a more definitive layout. One disadvantage to this method is that one may become too involved and overwhelmed with detail. People need to look at the overall room and begin with common-sense adjustments.

The bottom row of squares on the bagua map should be aligned along the front of a desk top, the wall containing the main entrance door to the room, or the main entrance door to the home. Portions of the bagua map may not be over a living space if the room or house is not a square or rectangle. This is simply called a missing bagua area and can be corrected later with a Feng Shui cure or remedy. Rooms may also share
bagua squares. As noted, entry door positions correspond with the bottom row of squares on the bagua rather than an actual compass direction, which was the central consideration of traditional Compass School Feng Shui. The far left square is the knowledge/self-cultivation area, the center square is the career area, and the far right square is the helpful people/travel area. The remaining areas of the floor plan will be within one or more of the nine bagua squares.

Cures and Remedies

Cures are simple Feng Shui enhancements that can be applied to strengthen or redirect chi. A minor problem may respond to a very simple cure such as hanging a spherical faceted crystal, creating movement, to send colorful rays of sunlight into a room to encourage chi to flow. A remedy may also be described by American designers as a design solution. Using and balancing the five elements is a traditional remedy. Other potential remedies can be the use of natural or man-made light, color, sound, life, movement, stillness, and straight or curved lines.

Skye Alexander stated, in her Better Homes and Gardens article, “Many Feng Shui cures are easy, inexpensive, and based on common sense.” For example, she suggests the following:

1. Use a wind chime to counteract street noise
2. Hang a small mirror above your stove to attract prosperity
3. Turn on all your stove’s burners for a few minutes every day, even if you don’t cook anything
4. Make sure your front door is clearly visible and easily accessible
5. Paint your front door a bright color to attract prosperity
6. Wash windows and replace cracked panes of glass to improve health
7. Position your bed so that when you’re lying in it you can easily see the door
8. Fix leaky faucets and toilets
9. Turn on the lights as they symbolize the life-giving energy of the sun
10. Get rid of clutter.
As noted previously, the ritual of cleaning is very important in Feng Shui to remove negative and stagnant energy that can accumulate on everything. Space clearing, another method of cleansing, is accomplished by lighting a candle, burning incense or a smudge stick, while maintaining the positive intention to clear the space.

Symbolism

Feng Shui experts believe that symbolism is reflected in the meaning of objects with which we surround ourselves. Western Feng Shui practitioners prefer to use objects that mean something to their clients, items they already have around them. They also believe pictures should represent what people want to convey in their lives. For example, pictures of family members would be beneficial to display in the living room, family room or the bagua relationship corner of any room. People will attract what they use to surround themselves within their homes. Positive references to relationships attract positive relationships, while broken items or unfinished projects could deflect a relationship or possibly lead to one with poor communication. A lack of pictures on walls and furniture tops may make a room feel stark and bare, therefore creating a sad or depressed feeling in the room.

Symbolism can also incorporate myths and folklore. Chinese animal luck protectors such as guardian lions, three-legged toads, or unicorns can bring energy into a room. Their location or position can also be very important. The use of coins, swords, double happiness character symbols, statues representing Chinese gods of protection, products such as wealth vases, model ships, money trees, and Taoist talismans are other examples of cures based in Chinese symbolism.
Crystals

Feng Shui practitioners use round, multifaceted lead crystals that refract light to provide quick, easy cures to get stuck or stagnant chi moving as they promote the movement of light. These crystals can also be used to slow down rushing chi, as in a long hallway, or to keep chi from rushing down steps and out a door. Round crystals are preferable to crystals with sharp pointed edges. Other types of natural quartz crystal clusters found in geodes may be used within the spaces and also represent the earth element.

Color

Color surrounds us and is one of the most plentiful and visible of all the gifts of nature. Feng Shui practitioners believe that color or lack of color inside the home can nourish or drain the spirit of energy. People respond to color with feelings and emotions. Most issues really revolve around the lack of color rather than too much color. People feel safe when they paint their walls white. Any color by itself is neither good or bad; it is all in the combination of colors. Good luck can be created with a good color combination; bad luck can be the result of a bad color combination. Author Lillian Too gives examples of good color combinations: two blues and one green; two yellows and one white; two reds and one yellow; two browns and one red; or two whites and one blue. Her examples of unlucky color combinations would be two blues and one red or two whites and one green.

There is a primary and a supportive color associated with each square of the bagua. The primary color enhances the chi within the gua or square it oversees, while the supportive color works indirectly within the space. For example, the primary color
for the wealth gua is purple and the supportive color is green or red. To create an adjustment in the wealth corner of a room, add something that is purple, such as a purple pillow. The vibration of the color purple will raise the level of chi that is connected to the person’s finances. Also within the wealth gua or square, there should also be some of the supportive colors, red or green, which could possibly be woven into a throw or blanket, laid over a chair. This creates balanced color within the space.\(^{68}\)

### The Application of Western Feng Shui

Feng Shui in the United States has grown in popularity over the past twenty plus years, as evidenced by the number of Feng Shui books on the shelves in bookstores. Author Terah Kathryn Collins identified reasons why her clients began seeking and using Feng Shui. She stated that the majority of her clients claimed that they were unhappy because something in their lives was not working. Some of the sources of unhappiness identified were divorce, health problems, an unsatisfying job, a troubled past, the uncertainty of the present, or fear of the future. Collins offers her clients a new way of looking at their individual situations, giving them a method of bringing their emotional and spiritual selves into their home environments. She points out a stark realization, that their homes have the ability to literally strengthen or weaken their health, wealth, and happiness. When people realize this, they make a significant shift in their thinking, realizing their possessions and homes are intimately connected to their quality of life. Through the use of Feng Shui, they become aware of the emotional and psychological connection between themselves, their homes, and their personal power.\(^{69}\)

Feng Shui has established a foothold in the Western world in the last twenty-five years. By the late 1990s and early 2000s, there was an explosion of information
available for the public through books, articles, Internet information, and educational venues. Numerous Americans have adapted the concepts of Feng Shui to assist them in providing their homes with a positive flow of chi which can benefit their daily lives.

The bagua emerged as the most important tool used to practice Feng Shui in the West and has been increasingly simplified as it has been used. It has changed from three separate tools, the eight trigrams, the pa kua, and the lo shu square, to a nine-block square with Chinese symbols and words, elements, colors, locations and an life aspiration for each square to a nine-block grid with one English word per block.

The general public is using Feng Shui as a tool to help correct problem areas in their living spaces, especially to identify and control clutter, a Western problem. Feng Shui is being presented as a fast and easy fix that will promote self-empowerment or confidence in the user. People are urged or encouraged to define their goal, implement their plan using a selection of relatively easy, quick, cures and remedies to increase the flow of chi within their interior space. Hopefully, the result will be a sense of peace and order, so that positive things can now occur in their lives. This self-discovery should provide a sense of accomplishment, which in turn will promote self-empowerment.

Notes

2 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
8 Collins, *Feng Shui: Room by Room*, 20.
10 Roberts, Fast Feng Shui, 6, 25-35, 104.
12 Ibid., 1-179.
15 Kingston, Clear Your Clutter, 22.
16 Jones, The Everything Feng Shui Book, 22.
19 Ibid., 33.
20 Ibid., 25.
21 Roberts, Fast Feng Shui, 3-6.
22 Katina Z. Jones, The Everything Feng Shui Book, 16.
24 Alexander, 10-Minute Feng Shui, vii.
25 Ibid., viii.
27 Ibid.
28 Collins, Feng Shui: Room by Room, 194.
31 Too, Eight Easy Lessons, 29.
32 Collins, Feng Shui: Room by Room, 3.
33 Ibid.
34 Roberts, Fast Feng Shui, 14.
35 Butler-Briggs, The feng shui directory, 27.
39 Collins, Home Design with Feng Shui, 131.
43 Ibid., xix.
47 Ibid., 8.
50 Sarah Shurety, *Quick Feng Shui Cures* (New York: Sterling, 1999), 22.
51 Ibid., 25.
54 Ibid.
55 Shurety, *Quick Feng Shui Cures*, 34.
56 Ibid., 35.
57 Ibid., 33.
60 Jones, *Everything Feng Shui*, 17.
63 Ibid., 102.
64 Ibid.
66 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 104.
CHAPTER IV

WESTERN APPLICATIONS OF FENG SHUI IN NORTHERN OHIO

The people of the United States have found Feng Shui interesting and intriguing, but Western culture promotes and prefers processes that happen quickly. Western Feng Shui focuses mostly on offers of quick, simple cures or remedies to promote positive changes in people’s lives. People are drawn to the many recently published books with titles such as *Fast Feng Shui, Feng Shui Chic, and 10-Minute Feng Shui*. The most current books promote the idea that it does not take much time to implement this ancient Eastern practice. Many of the concepts do seem to be easy to accomplish and related to common sense. Still, Feng Shui is an old and complex system that could involve years of exclusive study to implement in all of its historic aspects. This would include years of mentoring by a Feng Shui Master Practitioner. The majority of Westerners do not wish to devote the time to become this intensely involved. Western society currently, as noted, is in a do-it-yourself phase, and the numerous recently published books and articles are directed toward the do-it-yourself mentality.

This said, there are several levels of Feng Shui that can be implemented somewhat simplistically. The books published recently really give self-help methods, basic information, and simple tools people can use; therefore, an individual or designer should be able to learn on their own how to implement basic Feng Shui. There are also
several Feng Shui Schools within the United States that teach the basic concepts in a fairly short period of time.

The Feng Shui Institute of America (FSIA) in Wabasso, Florida was founded by Nancilee Wydra in 1989. This was one of the first professional schools to offer a basic Feng Shui practitioner certification course in the United States. Currently classes can be taken by teleconference, home study, in-residence, or a combination of home study and in-residence. The six-day on-site course cost is $2500 plus expenses. The Institute also offers a series of in-depth mini courses, which provides continuing education credits for those requesting them. These options are attractive to interior designers who want to broaden the base of services they can offer to their clients.¹

Author, Terah Kathryn Collins founded the Western School of Feng Shui, located in Solana Beach, California. This school offers a seven-day in-residence course that includes pre-and post-homework at a cost of $2700 plus expenses. At the end of the course the student receives the designation of Feng Shui Practitioner.²

Author, Nancy SantoPietro, a full-time Feng Shui specialist, provides consultations and educational services. She teaches introductory and advanced classes on Feng Shui principals in various locations throughout the United States. Their seminars are perfect for the do-it-yourself individual.³

Designations of “Specialist, Practitioner, or Certified Practitioner,” are not recognized by the established interior design professional groups. It is a standard within the realm of Feng Shui Schools or groups to show that some type of standardized training was received. Currently there is no national standard in place with which to make comparisons.
Western Feng Shui schools, like current books, encourage change within the living environment to make it easy for chi to flow. They too focus on the removal of clutter, a very Western problem that blocks the flow of chi.

Trained practitioners use remedies and cures to increase the flow of chi in areas where little choice may occur. Historical remedies and cures are also still in place; the use of the five elements and their cycles, crystals and colors are the main ones. Crystals have taken the shape of man-made lead crystal spheres instead of natural quartz crystals from the earth. Chinese symbolism has been more common in the East than the West; however, with the growth of the world economy and Internet access, Chinese symbols are also easy to obtain and use.

**Interior Specialists Incorporating Feng Shui**

It is not easy to find designers who offer Feng Shui services in Northern Ohio. They are not listed on the Internet or in the telephone book. Six were located through newspaper articles or word of mouth. Two did not want to be interviewed. Between 2003 and 2005, four interior specialists were interviewed. One identified herself as an interior designer and used Feng Shui in her design practice, one identified herself as a certified Feng Shui professional, and two identified themselves as Feng Shui consultants who used Feng Shui in interior applications. None of the interviewees had a degree in interior design; however, all stated they had taken some interior design courses. Two of those interviewed, Johanna Pockar and Kris Halter, are Black Hat Sect Feng Shui practitioners, while Barbara Keplinger and Therese Stadul are Pyramid School Feng Shui practitioners. Pyramid School Feng Shui is a more contemporary Western adaptation of Feng Shui. All four reside in Northeastern Ohio and agreed to be identified in this study.
Johanna Pockar

Johanna Pockar is a residential and commercial interior designer with her own design firm and she is certified as a Black Hat Sect Feng Shui consultant. She has practiced interior design for over twenty-five years and has worked with Feng Shui for over twelve years. She offers numerous services such as upholstery, window treatments, and remodeling design-build.

Ms. Pockar knew she wanted to learn more when first introduced to the concept of Feng Shui. She studied under several instructors in the United States and continues to take classes when possible. She works with residential and commercial clients.

Ms. Pockar believes good interior design is representative of Feng Shui and believes that the two go hand-in-hand. She says most people do not realize she has incorporated many aspects of Feng Shui in her designs. Some clients specifically request it and others are skeptical when it is mentioned. Her tools of choice are the bagua, and cures and remedies such as the five elements and their cycles, and crystals and colors. She uses the bagua and the client’s floor or room plan to determine the flow of chi. Upon entering a space, she mentally places the bagua over it, giving her client a verbal account of the existing situation and suggestions for what can be done to improve the flow of chi and enhance each area of the bagua. Clients may take notes, or she can furnish a written report for an additional fee.

Frequently after an in-depth consultation and joint completion of a single room re-design, clients invite her back to work other areas of their home. By contrast, those clients requesting only verbal consultations seldom contact her again. Therefore she does not know how successful her suggestions are.
Kris Halter

Kris Halter is a certified Black Hat Sect Feng Shui consultant who also trained with Denise Lynn, a nationally know Feng Shui consultant in the United States. Along with her Feng Shui consulting, Kris has taught Feng Shui classes for eight years and believes Feng Shui is a language of symbols. She does not have a degree in interior design as her bachelor’s degree is in Fashion Merchandising. She therefore only offers her clients reconfiguration of their existing furnishings. She says the basic principle of Feng Shui has been to improve the energy in a person’s life. She believes strongly that everything in a person’s home is a symbol of something within their life. She states that chi is a universal life energy that flows through everything, and stresses that all existence is connected by chi. Each person needs to be very mindful of their own possessions and what an over abundance of possessions can do to the flow of chi within their interior space and what the blocked flow of chi can do to them. When people surround themselves with things they do not love, do not know what to do with, or unfinished projects, they are then surrounded with clutter. Clutter is stagnant chi, which contributes to the feeling of energy loss, lack of motivation, depressed feelings, the inability to make decisions, and feeling overwhelmed. She stresses the reduction of clutter, not the organization of clutter, to enhance the flow of chi. The concept of reducing and removing clutter, not just organizing it, set her apart from all the other interviewees.

Her tools of choice are the bagua, cures and remedies to include the five elements and their cycles, crystals, and colors. When she enters a person's space, she mentally places the bagua over the entire floor plan, and then over each individual room. She will discuss possible changes to increase the flow of chi and make recommendations.
for possible remedies. For an additional fee she will work along with the client to assist in the decision process. She also said that when she does a single, strictly verbal consultation, she rarely knows the outcome of her recommendations.

Barbara Keplinger

Barbara Keplinger is a certified Feng Shui design professional who creates site-specific and distinctive designs for Ohio homes and businesses. Her training is in Pyramid School Feng Shui through the Feng Shui Institute International, a derivative of Black Hat Feng Shui. She shares that this particular school of Feng Shui, developed by Nancilee Wydra in 1989, is tailored to current American architecture and lifestyles.

Twelve years ago when she researched the available Feng Shui schools, she resonated with the Pyramid theory that stresses a person-place connection rather than the more traditional school with ancient culture-specific design rules. Her goal is to integrate her clients’ lifestyle and home so they create a connection between themselves and their home with the intent of determining where the individual, couple or family wants to go in the future. She stresses to be “in the present,” not to live in the past with old possessions.

Ms. Keplinger states that clients want the most for their investment, and investment includes their money, the time the design professional spends with them, the tangible items such as design boards, color swatches, and written reports, and results. Some clients choose to be cost effective, which means they take notes and no design boards, color swatches, or written reports are offered. She feels she has diverse clients who are very satisfied at the level of service they select. She will also pre-shop for clients for carpet, lighting, furniture, accessories, and paint color selections and will also accompany them to stores or model homes. Keplinger’s tools of choice include the
bagua laid over the floor plan, cures and remedies to include the five elements and their cycles, symbolism using items belonging to the client, crystals, and colors by utilizing them in her interior solutions. As a Feng Shui professional, she feels it is her responsibility to educate her clients and the public about Feng Shui.

   Therese Stadul

   Therese Stadul is a certified Pyramid School Feng Shui practitioner with additional specialties in energy healing techniques. She obtained her certification in Pyramid School Feng Shui through the Feng Shui Institute of America. Ms. Stadul looks at Feng Shui as a natural extension of her energy healing studies and practice with residential clients. She shared that her background in energy healing is a plus as she is able to detect other subtleties during her consultations that can be addressed if the client is open to the suggested change. Change is often difficult for clients, but they have some realization that something has to change, as this has led to the request for a Feng Shui consultation.

   This practitioner’s tools of choice include the bagua laid over the client’s floor plan, cures and remedies to include the five elements and their cycles, symbolism, crystals, and colors through utilizing or symbolizing them in her interiors. She does not have a background in interior design and therefore the changes she offers her clients are in the form of reconfiguring existing rooms and their contents to reflect Feng Shui changes. Many consultations are a one-time request for a verbal assessment, and the long-term effect of the consultation is unknown to her. Those clients who choose to use her in the actual process of clutter reduction are more likely to call her for additional consultations.
Personal Feng Shui Application

After interviewing Johanna Pockar, I wanted to experience working with a Feng Shui practitioner so that I could freely understand how they began work with a client. I called her and scheduled a home consultation. She told me to allow a minimum of two hours of un-interrupted time. My husband was curious, so he also participated. Upon arrival, she made an assessment of the front of the house from the curb then walked up the brick walk and into the main entrance, our front door. No trees directly in front of the front entrance, a curved walk, flowering plants and shrubs on each side of the door, all received a favorable review.

Once inside she walked the first floor to get her visual picture of the layout and mentally placed the bagua over the first floor. We then went from room to room discussing some of the contents. She was determining how important some of the items were to us. She checked for representation of the elements; was it balanced or dominated by one or two elements? She pointed out where chi would be stagnant and why. She then asked if I thought I could do something about what she identified as causes of stagnant chi in a particular area. Recommendations for additional cures were also made. We went through each area of the first floor and the attached garage, then on to the second floor and repeated the sequence. Upon completion of the second floor, we went to the basement and again repeated the sequence.

The entire consultation was verbal, and I took copious notes. She said cures and remedies should be implemented within twenty-seven days to be most effective. Payment was required to be presented in an all red envelope, a practice she had mentioned in her interview. Payments or gifts in red wrappings are supposed to bring
good luck. They can also be a reminder to intentionally focus on the goals to be achieved.

Common Practices

Apparently, not many design practitioners in Northeastern Ohio offer Feng Shui as a service. The designer and consultants who were interviewed, each thought the process of learning, teaching, and use of Feng Shui was beneficial not only for their clients, but for themselves. Feng Shui adds a different dimension to each of their business practices. Feng Shui provides clients a place to begin. Not all interior design clients are receptive to Feng Shui; however, when one designer uses the concepts in her designs, the designs are not rejected.

The four designer/practitioners interviewed have a number of characteristics in common. All studied in the United States under Black Hat Feng Shui or a derivative of Black Hat Feng Shui, Pyramid School Feng Shui. All offer verbal consultations and use the bagua as an analysis tool by mentally placing it over the house or room plan. They implement cures and remedies that include reduction and relocation of possessions, balancing the five elements and their cycles, and the use of crystals and color. They do not prepare written reports or drawings unless requested, which becomes an extra cost to the client. All have clients that return for further assistance, and those they never hear from again. The interior designer and the Feng Shui professional could offer their clients a more complete design service, while the practitioners do not have that ability.

The interior designer and Feng Shui practitioners interviewed did not rely on the use of Chinese symbolism. Their focus was on the flow of chi through reduction of clutter and arrangement or re-arrangement of the client’s furnishings and accessories.
They believe that when clients are involved in the process of their own clutter reduction, they gain a sense of accomplishment and self-empowerment when they completed the goals they set for themselves. Each designer or practitioner believed very strongly that Feng Shui contributed a valid additional service they could offer clients, and each one confirmed that the addition of Feng Shui was a good personal choice and business decision.

Notes

Feng Shui, the ancient Chinese art of placement, has traveled to the West through thousands of years of Chinese history. In part, the credibility of Feng Shui is due to its survival from ancient times to the present. This long-used technique, originally considered to be only for the powerful and elite, has survived suppression by Chinese Emperors, the Communist take over of China, and the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Grand Master Thomas Lin Yun and his American pupil, Sarah Rossbach, brought the practice to the United States in the early 1980s. Their introduction of Feng Shui to the West opened doors for ordinary people to learn, practice, and adapt the art of Feng Shui.

The traditional schools of Feng Shui, including the Form School and the Compass School, still exist. They continue to evolve and adapt to the cultural differences of the Western world. The core principles are still in place. The initial use, for grave placement, is also still valid; however, the Western world has further adapted Feng Shui to improve the comfort of people’s living spaces, and to increase their self-esteem and feeling of self-empowerment. The newer Black Hat Sect and Pyramid Schools have become the major versions of Western Feng Shui available in the United States.

Traditional Feng Shui is a very complex system that may involve years of exclusive study, including mentoring by a Feng Shui Master, to be implemented on a
highly professional level. The people of the Western world have found Feng Shui interesting and intriguing, but Western culture prefers quicker resolutions. The majority of Westerners do not wish to devote the time to become intensely involved. Western Feng Shui has conformed to this demand by offering quick, simple cures or remedies to promote positive changes in people’s lives. People are drawn to the many books published since 1990. These books, with titles such as *Fast Feng Shui*, *Feng Shui Chic*, and *10-Minute Feng Shui*, promote the idea that it does not take much time to implement this Eastern concept. Western society is also in a do-it-yourself phase. Recently published books are directed both to speed and the do-it-yourself mentality. These books try to assist the reader in the self-education and application of Feng Shui art. Many of the concepts they focus on are easy to understand and implement because they relate to common sense. For those who prefer a little more help, several Feng Shui Schools in the United States now teach the basic concepts in a fairly short period of time.

A major focus of Western Feng Shui has become the removal of clutter and the more recent books on Feng Shui often include the word “clutter” in the main title. The Western focus is on reducing clutter which can impede the flow of energy or chi. Feng Shui Schools and books encourage making changes in the environment to make it easy for chi to flow. They offer simple remedies and cures to increase the flow of chi in areas where little structural change can occur. The books stress that people who follow through with recommended changes are likely to feel a personal sense of accomplishment and self-empowerment. Since Western homeowners often must live in houses that are less than ideally located or designed, they are willing to concentrate on simple design solutions that promise to improve their existing homes and locations.
The bagua has emerged as the newest and most important tool used by Western Feng Shui practitioners. It is a relatively new tool that combines features from traditional tools: the eight trigrams, the pa kua, and the lo shu square. Analysis clearly revealed that the bagua has been increasingly simplified by Western authors and practitioners since being first mentioned by author, Sarah Rossbach in her 1983 book, *Feng Shui, The Chinese Art of Placement*. Over time, the traditional elements, trigram symbols, Chinese names, and colors have all been eliminated from the bagua map. The simplest version is a nine-square grid with a key English word centered in each square. This tool is used to analyze spaces that need change.

The interior designers and Feng Shui practitioners interviewed in this study do not rely on Chinese symbolism and traditional cures and remedies even though, with the growth of the world economy and Internet, Chinese symbols are relatively easy to obtain and use. Their focus, instead, is on improving the flow of chi through the reduction of clutter and the arrangement or re-arrangement of clients’ furnishings and accessories.

Feng Shui is only beginning to be offered by interior design specialists in Northern Ohio. Not all clients appear to be open to Feng Shui, just as not all people are open to herbal remedies and acupuncture, but that does not mean there is not a useful place for this additional design approach. While not all designers would want to use Feng Shui; for those who have added it, it would appear to be a beneficial addition to their business.

There is growing interest in this practice. A number of do-it-yourself customers in the marketplace opt for a one-time consultation. Clients who want to go beyond clearing clutter and the Feng Shui basics can seek a professional interior designer.
or Feng Shui practitioner to conduct a more in-depth review of their living spaces.

Interior designers find value in adding Feng Shui in several ways. Feng Shui can add a different dimension to a designer’s practice by offering clients a new way to look at interior design and a different approach to applying basic design principles. It can also provide a starting point for those clients who appreciate a more unusual or exotic way to think about and address their clutter or their interior design. It offers another way designers can identify meaningful objects related to a client’s cultural background or artistic preferences that can be displayed or used in design solutions. These objects become the cures or remedies of the Feng Shui practice.

The designer and practitioners who were interviewed for this study believed that the process of learning, teaching, and using Feng Shui was beneficial not only for their clients, but for themselves. Feng Shui provided clients a new intriguing path to a design solution. In turn, each designer or practitioner received personal gratification from learning and implementing a new skill that resonated with their overall personal goals.

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**Interviews**

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August 20, 2003

Kathryn Kiehl
1450 Lakeland Avenue
Akron, Ohio 44320

Dear Ms. Kiehl:

The University of Akron’s Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) completed a review of the protocol entitled "The Use of Feng Shui in Interior Design". The IRB application number assigned to this project is 20030707.

The protocol qualified for Expedited Review and was approved on August 20, 2003. The protocol represented minimal risk to subjects. Additionally, the protocol matched the following federal category for expedited review:

- research on individual or group characteristics or behavior or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies

This approval is valid until August 20, 2004 or until modifications are proposed to the project protocol, whichever may occur first. In either instance, an Application for Continuing Review must be completed and submitted to the IRB.

Please note that within one month of the expiration date of this approval, the IRB will forward an annual review reminder notice to you by email, as a courtesy. Nevertheless, please note that it is your responsibility as principal investigator to remember the renewal date of your protocol’s review. If your project is funded, failure to comply with IRB requirements could jeopardize your continued funding.

Please retain this letter for your files. If the research is being conducted for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, you must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Sincerely,

Sharon McWhorter
Associate Director Research Services & Sponsored Programs

Cc: Virginia Gunn, Department Chair
Nikki Wingerson, IRB Vice Chair
Phil Allen, IRB Chair