Beneath the Umbrella of the Hidden Curriculum:
The Underlying Premise, the Existence of Homogeneity, and the Deconstruction of Hierarchy

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INTRODUCTION

Critical pedagogists in architecture caution against treating architectural students homogeneously. They advocate a deconstruction of the hierarchical power relations typically found in the design studio culture. I am proposing that because the critical pedagogist inquiry is located within an existing supposition that I call the *underlying premise*, these educators are restricted in fully attaining their goals. The underlying premise is that students will graduate to become professional architects who practice architecture in architectural firms. By assuming that an architectural education leads to a career in a mainstream architectural office, the homogeneous student continues to exist in critical pedagogist discourse. The underlying premise is demonstrated by what educators presume to be the student's career goals, an assumption about what constitutes the design process, and the underdeveloped discussion of classism in architectural education. Furthermore, I am proposing that the deconstruction of hierarchy can not be achieved without acknowledging three forms of hierarchy that have not been adequately explored in critical pedagogical discourse. First, there needs to be acknowledgement that a hierarchy continues to exist within the architecture field itself that posits designing award-winning architecture as superior to all other career choices. Second, there is a potential for asymmetrical power relations to operate within the dynamics of collaborative student work. Third, by maintaining an expert opinion of the educator in critical pedagogical teaching models, the student learns to be an expert as well.

The concept of the hidden curriculum has been discussed and debated in other disciplines, but it is a concept that has only recently been embraced by architectural educators. Since 1990, there have been several publications by architectural pedagogists that discuss the hidden curriculum in architectural education. These are the values, virtues, and desirable ways of behaving in architecture that are communicated in both subtle and obvious ways to the student. Cuff states that this enculturation process involves an intense indoctrination of the student body. (1) Dutton and Stevens unveil the hierarchical social relations typically found in the traditional design studio, as well as critique the homogeneous treatment of the student in architectural pedagogical discourse.(2) Dutton believes that the asymmetrical power relations found in society between genders, races and classes are reproduced in the classroom. Crysler

states that teachers act as role models in transmitting the hidden curriculum to students.(3) Stevens claims that the concept of the *architectural habitus* favors certain types of students, those from well-to-do, cultivated families, at the expense of others, which sustains a certain social class in architecture. Stevens states that "Anyone who has experienced any form of discrimination - because of race, age, sex, or ethnic origin - is only too aware that failure is not necessarily failure to *know* something, but failure to *be* something." (4) In their study which focused on diversity in architectural education, Ahrentzen and Groat contributed a feminist perspective to the hidden curriculum in revealing the power relations among students and faculty.(5) These researchers point out that acquiring the architectural habitus of a white male may operate quite differently for women and persons of color.

The dominant view held by architectural educators that graduates will pursue a career in the architectural office generates a homogeneous treatment of the student. A study by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching revealed the homogeneous treatment of the goals of architectural education.(6) Stevens claims that architectural education is intended as a form of socialization to produce a very specific type of professional.(7) Crysler contends that the primary goal of architectural education is to produce a professional architect equipped with a range of marketable skills.(8) Crysler states that "many recent graduates accept poor-paying jobs outside the profession while waiting for their first break at unstable, and often exploitive contract work in an architectural office." (9)

Learning how to work collaboratively has recently been viewed as a necessary skill in the contemporary architectural office. The underlying premise that graduates will work in offices, coupled with challenging the hierarchy in conventional design studio models, prompts critical pedagogists to advocate a collaborative model of working. The collaborative design studio model led by Dutton confronts issues related to disadvantaged groups in society. This implies an expectation that architectural graduates will be employed in a service-oriented profession, rather than in an artistic profession.(10) Later in this paper, I will explain why collaborative student work may not be a solution to the problem of asymmetrical power relations and may actually work against the critical pedagogists' quest for equality, democracy and the deconstruction of hierarchical social relations.

THE HOMOGENEOUS TREATMENT OF THE STUDENT

The Students' Career Goals

The reality is that not all architecture graduates intend to pursue careers in architectural offices. In 1993, The American Institute of Architecture Students discovered that there are 107 alternative career paths for students studying architecture, including jewelry design, facilities planning, yacht building, and computer software design.(11) Traditional practice in architecture firms accounted for only five of the possible options listed. It is this minority of career options that architectural education and especially the design studio is modeled after, preparing students to work in architectural firms and to produce buildings. As well, there are graduates who intended to pursue a career in an architectural office upon graduation but because of extended periods of unemployment, exploitation or other negative experiences typically found in an architectural office, these graduates choose alternative venues for which their education in architectural design is also appropriate.

In view of the report on career options for architectural graduates, Boyer and Mitgang stressed in their report that schools should not expect that all students will become licensed professionals.(12) They propose that curricula be flexible enough to allow students to pursue their own aspirations and specialties which is more important than ever in a job environment where many graduates are finding careers in fields other than the conventional architect's office.

The authors quote a faculty member as saying "architectural curricula should not be designed to 'keep up' with the profession and society. There is not a single way of practicing architecture and there should not be a homogeneous architectural curriculum. Schools should not expect that all students will become licensed professionals. .... An architectural education educates a student in a way of thinking and trains a student in particular techniques and practices." (13)

Ahrentzen and Groat found in their research from six schools of architecture that women and African Americans are more likely than their colleagues to consider a wider range of career choices outside of conventional architectural practice.(14) These researchers found that African Americans are more likely than other students to consider research or a private consulting practice, as their first choice of possible jobs upon graduation. Women are more likely than men to prefer working in an advocacy group, a non-profit firm, an interior design firm, or in a government agency such as housing. If architectural educators ignore the reality that outsiders to the architectural habitus are pursuing other avenues with their architectural education by choice or by necessity, then educators are treating the student as a homogeneous entity who is destined to work in an architectural firm. If critical pedagogists have a mandate to be inclusive of all voices in architecture, then they must acknowledge this growing reality in today's world.

Learning the Design Process

If several career options are available to the architectural graduate then the nature of the design process is even more important to define and identify. The discussion of the design process is treated homogeneously in critical pedagogist discourse in two ways. First, critical pedagogists fail to both define the design process and to reveal the philosophical view of design held by the educator. Second, there is a failure to identify the nature of the design process that one advocates. I contend that if one's philosophical view is influenced by the underlying premise, encouraging students to learn how to design on an individual level may not seem as imperative as it would if one's view is that the individual act of learning the design process provides a solid foundation for which the student may pursue many career options.

Boyer and Mitgang define architectural design as a way of thinking during which the many elements, possibilities, and constraints of architectural knowledge are integrated.(15) The authors state that the core elements of architecture education have relevance and power far beyond the training of future architects. Schon believes that the design studio education is an education in *making* things.(16) Malecha states that "the act of design is a process of establishing a value system and making choices in relation to the chosen values." (17) Though Malecha acknowledges the collaborative nature of design throughout history, he stresses that for the beginning student of design, an investment of time and energy into the formation of a personal philosophy is of extreme importance. As well, the process of design is not a linear path, but a tangled and interwoven network of ideas and thoughts. For students of design, learning how to manage the design process for themselves is necessary.

Defining the Design Process

Critical pedagogists fail to define what they ascribe to be the design process. Bose, in her content analysis of pedagogical models in architecture, defined philosophy in architectural design as the conceptualization of the design process and the driving force behind each conceptualization.(18) A comparison of models indicates that the philosophical or worldview of the educator is largely responsible for shaping the components of each method and the expectations of the role of the architect in society. The tangible aspects of the design process are examined but what is missing is a clear sense of the characteristics of the psychological process of design, on both an intellectual and creative level, that the student engages in when learning how to design. It is imperative that the design process is not treated homogeneously by neglecting to state what it is, nor should it be assumed to mean the same thing to every critical pedagogist. By examining what they believe to be the design process, critical pedagogists would enhance their own analysis and understanding of what the architectural educational experience means for the student.

Identifying the Design Process

There are two distinct dominant views in architectural education as to what the design process is and this polarity has been a subject of debate for decades among architectural educators. Crysler claims

that architectural faculty are divided in their view of architecture as a technocratic profession or as an art.(19) The proponents of the former insist that schools should primarily transmit practical and technical skills, while the latter argue that the school's primary function is to provide an education in different aesthetic ideologies. Furthermore, architectural design has been criticized in the last three decades by researchers and academics who believe that the education of architects needs to be more responsible to the social demands of contemporary society. (20) Salama states that the conventional approach to design has been challenged by many architects who feel that architecture is too rooted in self-expression with little involvement in social concerns.(21) Critical pedagogists appear to believe that the primary function of architectural education is to provide students with practical and technical skills that will be employed in a socially responsible manner. However, this is not clearly communicated and by not defining or stating one's position on the purpose of the design process, which is typical of many of the writings by critical pedagogists, a homogeneous treatment of architectural education is presented.

Crysler contends that the transmission model of transmitting knowledge to the student currently dominates architectural education.(22) He critiques the transmission model of education on the basis that it portrays students as passive and homogeneous subjects removed from social and political forces. Crysler refers to the concept of students being "empty vessels" and that the faculty have control over what students require to become "full" themselves. However, Crysler's depiction of students as "empty vessels" is a homogenous rendering of the student of architecture. He is assuming that students allow themselves to be empty vessels and does not discuss those students who resist or students who purposely or unconsciously integrate what they learn from a transmission model of teaching with what they learn from other models of teaching. A student may integrate transmitted knowledge with ways of knowing and knowledge that he or she already possesses. Nor does Crysler explore the possibility of a reciprocal relationship of teaching and learning between those with more experience and those with less. When Crysler posits his argument in the context of polarities, he misses potentially enlightening insights about how students learn.

Classism in the Student Body

There has been little exploration of the issues of classism in architecture, and what has been explored has been treated homogeneously, despite the intention of the authors to critique a homogeneous treatment of students. In particular, the complexity and fluctuating nature of 'class' in the context of students' lives is not addressed. The hierarchy and asymmetrical power relations found in the design studio that critical pedagogists aim to deconstruct can not be achieved without a comprehensive discussion of the impact of classism on the students' education process.

Stevens asserts that "by assuming that students are broadly homogeneous.....institutions of higher learning privilege the privileged, simply by ignoring their privilege." (23) Stevens states that it is possible to forget that the experience of university life affects

students differently. Two examples that Stevens uses to support this claim are the differences between the student who has a family background of university degrees versus the student who does not, and the student who has a part-time job for extra money versus the student who has a part-time job to help pay for his or her tuition. Stevens chooses a generic presentation of class structure with high, middle, and low. I argue that the varying levels and fluctuations that occur over time within each class and between classes should be considered. The category of class that the architecture student fits into is not easily defined. The 'middle-class' student may be paying for her education with scholarships, by working as a teaching assistant, with student loans, or a combination of the above. Furthermore, each case has its own variable circumstances which are determined by such factors as having a stable monthly income, having a large sum of money deposited in one's account at the beginning of the semester, or having to deal with bureaucracy that delays financial support. A division of three classes and broad generalizations about one class can result in a homogeneous treatment of the student of architecture. A more complex addressing of the issue of class in architectural education would enhance Stevens' discussion of the acquisition of the architectural habitus in architecture school.

Just as educators ignore privilege, they too ignore the issue of student finances as it is assumed that all students have the same capacity to purchase the same architecture supplies and books. As well, some students' financial support systems can provide opportunities to work for famous architects, whereas other students can not even consider applying to these architects as they do not have the financial resources needed to take advantage of such opportunities. This perpetuates an exclusive class of students who work for a certain class of architects.

Crysler points out that within an education culture of continuous deadlines, that "only through the increased refinement of skills and competence within a given set of criteria can more time be obtained. Thus, an ability to excel is contingent on the student's ability to produce the time to do so." (24) In architecture school, emphasis is placed on meeting deadlines as efficiently and productively as possible. Hence, when a student has other responsibilities, such as working to pay her way through school, her ability to gain more time is not equal to that of the student who does not have financial concerns. Crysler considers time management as a pedagogical principle, a concept rarely discussed.

DECONSTRUCTING HIERARCHY

The Star System

A deconstruction of hierarchical power relations can not be achieved without acknowledging the hierarchy that continues to exist within architecture that places the design of award-winning *buildings* at the top and from there the value of what the student does with his or her architectural education decreases. There has been several articles published in the past two decades that discuss the impact of promoting designers of award-winning architecture in architectural

education, a process called the "star system". Ahrentzen and Anthony state that architectural educators must critically question the identification and glorification of stars in architecture.(25) They stress the political and gendered practices in both "gatekeeping and stargazing." (26) It is within this hierarchical framework that architectural education continues to exist and it should be recognized in any discussion that advocates alternative career choices. This is especially true for those who are marginalized in their attempt to acquire the architectural habitus. Although Boyer and Mitgang acknowledge that there are 107 possible career paths for the graduate architect to pursue, they do not discuss the hierarchy that occurs within the profession that originates in the culture of the school. (27)

Hierarchy in the Collaborative Model

There exists a potential for asymmetrical power relations to occur within the dynamics of collaborative student work that should not be dismissed in the quest for equality and the representation of all voices. The individual and creative freedom of working at a design problem by oneself has been negatively associated with pursuing a standard of excellence in a field defined by the star system in architecture. Working collaboratively in the design studio has been viewed as a counterpoint to this individualized process. However, this has often resulted in negative consequences for women who work collaboratively with males, in that the woman's contribution and voice has often been diminished or ignored altogether.(28)

Dutton claims that the traditional structure of the design studio is similar to the structure of contemporary workplaces in that hierarchy and competition are the norm.(29) Hierarchy has a strict division of labor, obedience, and competition that ensures work compliance and intensity. Dutton assumes that the model of collaboration is the counter model to the hierarchical model of working in the contemporary workplace. Ahrentzen and Groat cite Beckmans' premise that teaching students cooperative work skills is not a way of challenging capitalist values, because in the capitalist workplace, collaboration is one of the means towards the attainment of greater profit.(30)

In their desire to eliminate the negative aspects of hierarchy, critical pedagogists have turned to the collaborative work model as a means to rectify hierarchy. However, when advocating a collaborative way of working, critical pedagogists must consider the potential for hierarchy to exist within a group. Furthermore, one should consider at what level in a student's education is it appropriate for the student to begin learning how to design collaboratively. Having students work collaboratively later in their education process has the benefit of first providing the time for nurturing and helping develop the student's personal value system in design as well as his or her individual design process. I believe that one must first learn to work out design problems independently before one is ready to work collaboratively. A sense of confidence, competence, and a strong set of personal values in design will benefit any student who then participates in and contributes to a group design project. This would also appear to help decrease the intimidation process that can occur in group dynamics.

The "Expert" Opinion of Pedagogists

Too easily the transmission of the notion of expert can be transmitted to the student.(31) Advocating the expert opinion of the educator results in teaching the student to be an expert and perpetuates a hierarchical order within the profession of architecture. It is my contention that when proposing a breakdown of hierarchical power relations between teacher and student, the voice of the student must be represented. If the voice of the student is silent, then the critical pedagogist places himself or herself in a position of expert. The act of speaking for another does not support equality. Architectural educators must examine the issue of *voice* in architectural education more closely. Dutton stresses the politics of the narrative and that the notion of voice must represent a multiplicity of voices.(32) However, Dutton speaks for his students when he describes his model of the design studio in an architectural journal article.

Crysler reveals how paternalistic the transmission model is with its concept of experts and warns how easily the concept of expert can be transferred to critical pedagogy educational model. (33) Crysler cautions against any model of critical pedagogy in which the educators or participants become experts, as this perpetuates a hierarchical order. As well, Crysler cautions educators on the teacher taking on the role of leading students to emancipation, as Dutton proposes to do in his design studio. This insight by Crysler provides skepticism that Dutton's studio model actually achieves its goal of equalizing the power relations between teacher and student. According to Crysler, critical pedagogy is reduced to little more than a repression theory when it assumes that its goals will be achieved by replacing one authoritarian system with another that is somehow more multicultural.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

A more comprehensive examination of the underlying premise in architectural education and its suitability for today's graduate architect would contribute to the discussion centered on a diverse student body and the goal of dismantling hierarchical power relations in the architectural design studio. Critical pedagogists should question their assumption that graduates will become corporate architects and acknowledge that there are many design-related career paths that graduates may pursue, especially those students who do not fit the architectural habitus. By examining what they believe to be the design process, critical pedagogists would enhance their analysis of both the students' educational experience and what compels students to engage themselves so fully in the design studio.

Further exploration of the complexity and fluctuating nature of class in the context of architectural students' lives is recommended. By being inclusive of the star system in architecture in the discussion of alternative career options for graduate architects, a deconstruction of the hierarchical placement of options in postgraduate careers

begins. The probability that the dynamics of group work will parallel societal asymmetrical power relations can not be discounted. Facilitators of collaborative student work should be prepared to take measures to prevent an imbalance in power that can silence some members of the group. As well, delaying collaborative student work until later in the education process may prove beneficial to students in their personal development of the design process. Critical pedagogists should examine the notion of the expert more closely. Finally, if critical pedagogists have a mandate to be inclusive of all voices in architecture, then research that represents the voice of the student is an important place to start.

NOTES

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[10] Dutton, *Reconstructing Architecture*.

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[23] Stevens, The Favored Circle, 192.

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