

Arts and Humanities in Higher Education

<http://ahh.sagepub.com>

The Architectural Review: A study of ritual, acculturation and reproduction in architectural education

Helena Webster

Arts and Humanities in Higher Education 2005; 4; 265

DOI: 10.1177/1474022205056169

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://ahh.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/4/3/265>

Published by:

 SAGE Publications

<http://www.sagepublications.com>

Additional services and information for *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://ahh.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://ahh.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>



The Architectural Review

A study of ritual, acculturation and reproduction in architectural education

HELENA WEBSTER

Oxford Brookes University, UK

ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of an ethnographic research project that looked at architectural students' experiences of disciplinary acculturation. The research focused on the architectural review: a pedagogic event used for the assessment of students' design projects and commonly understood as a liberal celebration of student creativity. The research investigated the review from the viewpoint of those who experienced it, that is, the students and staff, thereby arriving at an understanding of its character and function beyond that declared in 'folklore' or reified in texts. The findings built a picture of the architectural review as an important symbolic ritual in which 'apprentices' (students) repeatedly present their *habitus*, a notion of identity that includes cognitive and embodied aspects, to their 'masters' (tutors) for legitimization. Far from being a celebration of student achievement, the review was experienced by the students as a frightening event in which staff used their power to coerce students into reproducing staff-centred constructions of architectural *habitus*. In light of the findings the continuing use of the architectural review is questioned.

KEYWORDS *acculturation, architecture, Bourdieu, education, habitus, hidden curriculum, legitimization, pedagogy, reproduction, ritual*

INTRODUCTION

THE WELL-DOCUMENTED HISTORY of the western architectural profession (Cuff, 1998; Saint, 1983) records a long tradition of the reproduction of architectural culture through various methods of training. For instance, in the enlightenment period the status of 'architect' was accorded almost

Arts & Humanities in Higher Education

Copyright © 2005, SAGE PUBLICATIONS, London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi ISSN 1474-0222

VOL 4(3) 265-282 DOI: 10.1177/1474022205056169

exclusively to members of the aristocracy or gentry who had learnt the 'correct' values of architecture by taking the Grand Tour of the ancient sites of Greece and Italy. Subsequently, with the growth of specialist workforces in the post-industrial period the architectural profession became larger. However, despite widening its access to new social groups it succeeded in controlling entry through a system of articulated pupilage. Under this system a student would be articulated to a master and would learn from the master the necessary professional knowledge, skills, competences and 'understanding' required for professional action through a combination of observation, assimilation and emulation. It was only in the 19th century that the training of architects shifted from pupilage to the academy.

The first architecture course for students was established within the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris in 1819. Shortly afterwards University College London founded the first school of architecture in England. The curriculum and pedagogy employed by the new courses almost literally reproduced the previous master-apprentice model. However, in the academies the principles of architecture were now taught in lecture theatres by academics, rather than by masters in the office, and those principles were now applied by students in the design of theoretical projects in the design studio, or ateliers, rather than to real projects in the drawing office. Within the design studio, the replacement for the drawing office, the tutor or 'studio master' mirrored the role of the master architect by 'coaching' the students individually on their design projects. Although there were many similarities between the apprenticeship model and academy model of education, the new location in the academy required that the performance of student apprentices be judged by institutionally accepted 'objective' and 'fair' methods rather than at the discretion of individual masters. Hence, the 19th-century *École des Beaux Arts* adopted a 'jury' or 'review' system to carry out the assessment. The jury consisted of a panel of 'experts' who would make a collective judgement about the quality of a student's work based on a verbal presentation of the drawn or modelled work made by the student's studio master (as opposed to the students themselves). This system of assessment by proxy was subsequently adopted in all schools of architecture and has proved remarkably resilient, although in the post-war period the students themselves began to present and defend their own work. The design studio, and the jury – or 'review', 'dialogue' or 'crit', as it is alternatively known – remain central to the pedagogy of architectural education across the world and are held up as a paradigm of student-centred learning (Schön, 1983, 1985, 1987). Yet, the architectural review presents a paradox. On the one hand staff perceive the review as a highly valued method of collective dialogue and objective assessment, while on the other hand students perceive the review as a tutor-centred

pseudo-mystical ritual that elicits feelings of fear and failure. The article attempts to untangle this paradox by asking what is really going on in the architectural review, and why?

EDUCATION AND ACCULTURATION

The notion that formal education is a prime site for acculturation is not particularly new or contested. It has long been recognized that there are two aspects of any curriculum. Firstly, there is the explicit or declared curriculum that maps out the cognitive student learning (that is to say the knowledge, skills and abilities) to be acquired. Secondly, there is the tacit or 'hidden curriculum' that is concerned with inculcating non-cognitive dispositions such as values, tastes, beliefs (Dutton, 1991). Further, if we accept that disciplines are social constructs then education involves the acculturation of novices into a prevailing knowledge base (where knowledge includes the cognitive, corporeal and embodied). An attempt to define the 'prevailing knowledge base' for any particular discipline might start by looking at the discipline-specific curriculum as reified in course documents. However, whilst this exercise tends to provide a full picture of the core knowledge, understanding and skills of a discipline, it rarely throws any light on its non-cognitive aspects. These implicit aspects of the curriculum therefore require excavation if they are to be interrogated for their worth and relevance. Equally, to find out how students are acculturated into the explicit and hidden aspects of the curriculum one has to unravel the complexities of discipline-specific pedagogies.

Despite a long tradition of unreflective teaching practice in higher education, the hidden curriculum and supporting pedagogies have not entirely evaded the researcher's lens. Following on from the earlier work of Durkheim and Foucault, Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Giroux (1981, 1983), and Freire (1994), amongst others, have written of the coercive power of covert educational practice to reproduce the dominant values and beliefs of disciplinary fields. Bourdieu's extensive empirical research on the *Académie Française* (Bourdieu, 1988, 1992, 1999) provides a persuasive general theory of acculturation, and his notion of *habitus* is particularly useful as a representation of a disciplinary disposition or 'feeling for the game'. However, it is the smaller ethnographic studies of medical students (Becker, 1987), of business students (Schein, 1988) and of physicists (Traweek, 1988) that provide particularly rich and detailed narratives of the process and products of disciplinary acculturation.

Although there are no parallel studies for architectural education, its curriculum and pedagogy have not entirely evaded the researcher's eye either.

Donald Schön's rather unreflexive research that led to the promotion of architectural education as a model for all professional education (Schön, 1983, 1987) has been followed by more critical scrutiny from theorists concerned with the coercive power that the design studio pedagogy affords design tutors (Dutton, 1991; Giroux, 1991; Stevens, 1998; Vowles, 2000). To date there has been little empirical research to test or substantiate these theories. The studies that do exist, Anthony (1991), Cuff (1998) and Wilkin (1999) focus on the architectural review, perhaps because it is perceived as an important event in the life of a school of architecture. Each study builds a rich ethnographic picture of a generic, highly choreographed theatrical event in which students present and defend their design work to a panel of experts. Despite exposing the architectural review as 'probably the most gruelling and potentially humiliating experience of [students'] education' in which 'criticism is sometimes levelled without much apparent regard for the students' growth, as educators and renowned practitioners parade their own talents verbally' (Cuff, 1998: 126), none of the studies made an attempt to build any type of critical understanding of the event or relate their findings to the pre-existing formal constructs. It is this lacuna that prompted the present study.

THE RESEARCH

The study was primarily concerned with exploring the complexities and qualities of the architectural review as understood by those who experienced it as a pedagogic event, that is, primarily the students. It was less involved with testing existing hypotheses than with explicating 'meanings', that is, theory building rather than theory testing. Towards this end, an in-depth qualitative or 'naturalistic' case-study method of inquiry was employed. Although a case study cannot claim to be 'typical', and hence the external validity of the results would be limited, the literature search suggested that the review process was sufficiently generic to allow the results of a case study to make a relevant contribution to a generalized understanding of the architectural review.

Following the methodological precedent set by Becker (1987), the study focused its attention on the architectural review in one English school of architecture over the period of an academic term (10 weeks). In the attempt to find out what was common to all students within a short period of time it was decided to study different groups of students at different levels of the course for short periods of time. Therefore the design took the form of a cross-sectional case study that focused on understanding the review experiences of a sample of three students from years one, three and six. Data on the experiences of these nine students was collected *via* non-participant observation of the reviews, semi-structured interviews with the students before and

after their reviews, written reflective statements from the students, and semi-structured interviews with design tutors, while other contextual data were obtained from documents such as the programme handbooks and students' design briefs. Such a rich mix of data collection methods allowed for triangulation of the results and thereby increased the validity of the findings. The data analysis was carried out using Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Rigorous indexing and sequential analysis of the data led to the definition of core thematic categories and sub-categories of student experience. In parallel with the development of thematic categories the researcher began to hypothesize about the relationships between categories. These hypotheses were constantly tested and revised in an iterative manner against subsequent data (constant comparison) until the point of theoretical saturation was reached. The resulting theoretical constructs are explored here.

RE-PRESENTING THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

The researcher was left in no doubt that the architectural review was perceived as a key symbolic event by both staff and students. Informants often used the word 'ritual', even though they had difficulties explaining exactly what it was that made the review a ritual. The following section presents the research findings in terms of the central characteristics of students' experiences in an attempt to unravel the ritual experience (Bell, 1992). It also highlights any differences between the experiences of different year groups.

Experiencing the legitimacy of a tradition

Both students and reviewers who took part in the research talked about the review as a 'ritual' that had legitimacy and weight because it was perceived to be part of a historical tradition. They talked about this strong sense of tradition being evoked by the stories and legends of past reviews that were both inscribed in architectural histories and recalled by tutors and students as a kind of 'folklore'. A third-year student recalled how he gained his early understanding of the review's lineage: 'I got stories about reviews from my design tutor, stories about their review experiences as students' and 'stories about Mies van der Rohe ripping students' drawings off the walls'. This sense of legitimacy or 'naturalness', a sense that the review 'had always been there', was reinforced by the repetition of the ritual experience. Students from all years recalled that they experienced their first review a few weeks after they started the course and subsequently reviews occurred at the end of every design project, between two and five per year, and therefore became regular and 'natural' features of their lives.

Special preparations for the review

The perceived importance of the review, together with the formal course requirements for students to make specified drawings and models of their designs to present, meant that preparations for the review started well before the event itself. Students commonly talked about 'building up to the review', which meant working harder than normal (anything from 10 to 24 hours a day) for days or even weeks before the event. Students recalled how, when they started the course, they quickly adopted the working patterns that they saw being enacted by the older students in the school and that these patterns were encouraged by their tutors. In a post-review interview a first-year student boasted that he had worked '24-7' for the week before his review. The working patterns of all students in the upper years confirmed this level of commitment as the expected norm. Both high-level and low-level learners seemed motivated to work long hours by the fear of being publicly humiliated in the review, 'so we don't get killed'. During the period of preparation for the reviews observed, all the students interviewed reported that they had both physically and mentally withdrawn from the 'real' world and had lived for a week or so in a 'hermetically sealed' world of architecture that included sleepless nights, snack food, coffee and loud music. In trying to explain the accepted inevitability of this self-abuse a third-year student commented that:

Friends on other courses have assignments that they can finish and then take time off. It's more nine to five. For us there is no end, a design can always be better, different, changing. Inevitably the work takes over, takes over completely actually.

As a result of these extensive preparations students often seemed to arrive on the day of their reviews tired, unfocused and anxious.

The review as a special occasion

The review performance was universally perceived as a 'special' occasion for several reasons. Firstly, the review was considered special merely because it was a daylong event that was different from the normal day-to-day learning activities that go on in the school such as tutorials, seminars and lectures. Secondly, it was considered special because it usually involved a specially invited constituency. For the first-year this meant all the tutors and students together, and for the upper years specially invited guest architects, specialists, or academics might join the tutors and students of a design studio. The final reason for the review's elevated status was its role as a public event for the assessment of student work by experts. As a consequence of all this, students talked of review days producing a sense of individual and collective

excitement, nervousness, fear, and expectation. A third-year student summed up the collective student feeling:

The review is brilliant in some respects and scary in others . . . it feels exciting because it is like an end – you present your work saying ‘that’s the best I can do’ and that is it. But that’s also scary because it’s a big judgemental process.

These mixed and somewhat contradictory emotions seemed to reflect the complexity of the review event as a collective celebration of the end of a design project, a judgement of individual and collective performance by outsiders, and a site of inter-student competition.

The review as a ritualized performance

The data suggested that student experiences of the actual review event were remarkably consistent both within years and across year groups. Whilst documentation in the form of programme handbooks and general literature (Doidge et al., 1997) outlined the nature of the review event as an objective exercise for the assessment of cognitive and communication skills, the research findings suggested that students’ understandings of the review process entirely derived from a combination of repeated experience and received ‘folklore’. A sixth-year student recalled: ‘my first review was a disaster. I didn’t know what I was supposed to do or say. But, by observing other people I soon got the hang of it’. All the reviews observed followed similar formalized spatial and choreographic patterns.

Some of the reviews were held in special ‘review rooms’ in the school, but others were held in design studios. Yet, in all cases the rooms were made distinctive by the formal arrangement of chairs. Chairs would initially be placed in a fanning arch in front of the work of the first student to be reviewed. The front row of chairs would be ‘understood’ as designated for the reviewers and the rows behind for the student’s peers. Subsequently, the grouping of chairs would be moved around the room to face each student’s work in turn. Although the room setting was often familiar to the students, they experienced the arrangement of chairs as symbolizing the review’s judgemental function – the judgement of a novice by the community of experts. A sixth-year student explained that the formal spatial arrangement of the review ‘puts you on public display – it’s a scary thing because you are so open’.

The formality of the reviews observed was heightened by the choreography of the event. All the reviews followed a similar pattern of events. Early in the morning students gather to pin up their work. This period seemed to heighten students’ review-day nerves because they are able, for the first time, to compare their final drawings with those of their peers. A first-year student

talked about 'getting a bit more worried when I see people who are better than me'. At a prescribed time, or in reality often much later than the prescribed time, the reviewers and tutors arrive in the review room and the reviewers are formally introduced to the students. These introductions served only to heighten the students' fears and expectations because they were usually being told how distinguished their reviewers are. For weaker students this procedure heightens their fear of public humiliation, but for the more acculturated students their exposure to important people is perceived as raising the worth of the review as a site both of judgement and of learning, as well as having the additional benefit of opening new networks for future employment.

The reviews are timetabled to consist of time slots of between five and ten minutes long in which students present their work to the panel of reviewers. These are followed by a 15 to 20-minute period in which the reviewers make comments on both the validity and quality of the student's ideation, method, designs and presentation. However, the reviews observed rarely followed this pattern. A third-year student's description captures the reality of most reviews:

Basically, you pin up your work. Then you quickly talk about what your design is about, your strategy, and then the reviewers usually butt in pointing out things that you have done wrong. Then it rolls from there. They discuss bits and pieces. Sometimes they get stuck on one thing. If you can't justify something they are probably going to hang on to that piece. I don't know if it's to be evil or whether it's a learning thing – that we have to be able to justify.

Students of all years and all degrees of acculturation perceived this highly unpredictable part of the review process as the most stressful. The review observations recorded nervous and tired students standing in front of their work attempting to explain their ideas, and the way that their drawings represented and objectified those ideas in architectural form, through a semi-coherent stream of consciousness. Most students said that they did not have time to prepare their verbal presentations, although they knew they should. Only the most acculturated students in the upper years really understood the importance of constructing their verbal and drawn presentations as a kind of rhetorical narrative. One student talked of 'attempting to use the presentation to seduce the reviewers to "buy into" my notions of architecture'. However, it appeared that all but the most acculturated students unwittingly set themselves up to fall prey to negative criticism from the reviewers.

Interviews with reviewers suggested that they believed their role was to offer comment on both the validity of the student's intentions and the degree to which the design, objectified through the drawings, had met those intentions. They said that might also suggest alternative ways in which the students could have achieved their intentions and/or ways to develop the student's

design. However, talking to students about their experiences it was clear that, in reality, the students took in very little of the reviewers' comments, partly because of the complexity of the language used and partly because they were too anxious to understand let alone retain the comments. A second-year student explained that '[the reviewers] say something and you take it in one way and then you talk to someone else after the review and they have taken it in a totally different way'. In addition to complex language, reviewers were observed using harsh judgemental language to students, such as: 'that's wrong'; 'you can't do that'; 'that's unacceptable'; 'you obviously don't understand'; 'what have you been doing all this time?' Reviewers were invariably insistent that their notions were 'correct' and students 'must' follow their direction. All of the students interviewed could recall being regularly upset or demoralized by a reviewer's coercive and judgemental language. It is hardly surprising that the students observed were generally very passive in their receipt of reviewers' comments and that few students asked clarification questions or entered into dialogue with the reviewers. They subsequently reinforced the conclusions from the observations by explaining their passivity as the result of being 'fearful of being made to look stupid in public' or 'just wanted to get [the review] over with'.

These findings suggest that the architectural reviews scrutinized in this study fall a long way short of a collective celebration of student achievement. Rather, the architectural review appears to be a highly ritualized performance characterized by its appeal to tradition, its periodicity and its special and choreographic formality. All these factors appear to work together to heighten the students' perception of the review as important, judgemental and instructive, and to elicit feelings of fear, expectation, humiliation, failure and occasionally success. These findings support previous characterization of the architectural review in studies by Anthony (1991) and Cuff (1998), but they also extend the structural understanding of the review as 'ritualized performance'.

THE INCULCATION AND LEGITIMIZATION FUNCTIONS OF THE ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

Interestingly, in all major respects the architectural review conforms to the characteristics of 'rite of passage' rituals from other cultural domains (Bell, 1992). Hence, the review can be expected to function as other rite of passage rituals, such as bar mitzvahs or marriage ceremonies: that is, to legitimate initiates as full members of a community. The research findings suggest that this is indeed the case. However the architectural review, because of its repetition throughout a novice's passage towards full membership of the architectural community, is more complex than a 'one off' rite of passage ritual. The

research findings suggested that the architectural review should be conceived as a ritual whereby the architectural community (as represented by the reviewers) repeatedly both legitimizes students' progress towards full membership of the community – that is, how closely their individual *habitus* matches that of the community – and at the same time inculcates them with correct notions of what it is to be an architect (also represented by the reviewers). The detailed findings outlined in the following sections identify the key aspects of *habitus* that are being both inculcated and legitimized in the review process and explore how inculcation and legitimization are realized. The discussion also attempts to highlight any differences in students' experiences across year groups.

Inculcation and legitimization of architectural values

Despite its noticeable absence as an aim of the curriculum, few would argue that the unique ability of architects is to create architecture: that is to say, buildings that objectify cultural values and ideas. Equally uncontested is the notion that the field of architecture is largely responsible for constructing the definition of architecture and architectural value. The research findings suggest that the central theme of the reviews observed was not the assessment of the explicit knowledge, understanding and skills specified in the curriculum; rather, the central theme was the assessment, or legitimization, of the students' conceptual thinking and its objectification in design as judged against the reviewers' personal constructions (as representatives of the field of architecture). Even at the earliest stage in their education students seemed to realize that the explicit criteria for assessment were inextricably interwoven with other implicit criteria relating to notions of aesthetic or architectural value. They also realized that it is a student's ability to comply with the implicit criteria that largely regulates success. When asked whether they understood the notions of quality, one first-year student replied 'no, I can't tell which is a better scheme, not until [the reviewers] talk'. By the third year it appeared that the most acculturated students realized that their tutors and reviewers (usually invited because of their sympathy with the tutors' paradigms) used highly idiosyncratic constructions of quality and value to assess their work. Hence, doing well meant 'playing the game'. However, some students only wanted to play games that they believed in. One student talked of feeling annoyed because he felt he had to 'fulfil the tutor/reviewer's notion of the potential of [his] idea' if he was to get a good review/mark. But most third-year students interviewed seemed happy to follow their tutors'/reviewers' 'expert' advice, because they perceived them as paternal figures or 'gurus'.

On rare occasions reviewers' constructs did not concur with tutors' constructs. In these cases students who expected confirmation during their reviews actually experienced criticism. A student explained that she had been upset by her review:

Because at every tutorial my tutor had told me to try this or try that and I had just taken it and gone with it, done exactly as he had told me . . . and then in the review he didn't say a word when the reviewer ripped me apart.

The students who did not understand the notion that architectural value is a contested issue were often left confused by the review process. Which reviewer is correct? Whose advice should they follow? However, most of the time the views of tutors and reviewers concurred, and praise (legitimization) was awarded to those students whose work aligned with the shared architectural paradigm (however exclusive or idiosyncratic). Those students who were unable to meet the expectations of the review panel were generally treated to a barrage of correctional or judgemental language: 'that's wrong', 'that doesn't work', and so on. Reviewers appeared only interested in supporting the learning of the high-level, acculturated students:

It is much more interesting to review a good student's work, because I can associate with the design problems the student is wrestling with, whereas the poor students just don't have a clue and probably shouldn't be on the course.

This attitude, perhaps a result of the lack of training of architectural tutors and reviewers, has the result of de-motivating the majority of students and leaving them without support for their learning.

The experiences of students in the sixth year differed surprisingly little from those in the third year except that there was a higher proportion of students who understood that notions of design ethos and valorization were contested within the architectural community and within culture itself. However, none of the students was able to articulate what constituted the differences or how it was possible for reviewers to mark students' work fairly when notions of quality were contested. One student suggested that 'there must be universal notions of quality. I guess they stem from what we find beautiful going back to geometry in Greek architecture or something'. Sixth-year students talked of choosing to join the design studios that most closely fitted their own sense of design ethos, and so seemed happy if their work was assessed according to the values of the studio. Hence, the sixth-year reviews were generally more positive experiences for students and it was noticeable that there was a greater degree of congruence between reviewers and students about notions of value and quality; also, as a consequence, the reviews were more dialogical. We might conclude that the acculturation process with regard to architectural value had been successful and the sixth-year students were ready to join the

community as full members. Of course it is ironic that students often find subsequently that the architectural values of practice bear little resemblance to those promoted in schools of architecture.

Inculcation and legitimization of architectural communication: Drawings and language

As was the case with design, both drawn and verbal communication were promoted by programme handbooks as practical skills that are both 'transparent' and 'neutral'. Yet, the observations suggested that these forms of communication were very particular to each design studio and were akin to private languages with their own vocabulary, grammar, syntax and meanings. Thus, it follows that acculturation into the architectural community's *habitus* includes learning the private languages of drawings and words.

DRAWINGS AS COMMUNICATION

First-year students talked about learning the basic conventions of drawings almost immediately they started their course, and they then used these drawing skills to prepare for their design reviews according to the list of drawings and models handed to them by their tutors. Students recalled that in the early months they felt moderately confident that, if they produced the prescribed drawings for a review (plans, sections and elevations and so on), they would receive good reviews and good marks. However, they also recalled that this notion was soon shattered by their review experiences, in which reviewers repeatedly told them that drawings should convey both 'fact' and 'meaning'. Indeed, in the observed first-year reviews the reviewers talked incessantly about the need for drawings to communicate meaning and 'to express architectural ideas'. Yet the interviews revealed that first-year students found this notion perplexing because, for them, drawings were functional rather than expressive. One student thought that some peers produced 'arty drawings' merely to 'show off'. Students were further perplexed when reviewers read into their drawing or models meanings that were unintended. One student presented a conceptual model of a spiral that represented the starting point for her project and was most surprised when the reviewers eulogized about its 'metaphorical' potential. Although nodding during the review the student later admitted that she didn't intend the metaphor because she didn't know what a metaphor was. In this case the student's drawings were legitimized more through luck than intention.

Third-year students talked of gradually learning to work within the particular version of an architectural drawn language that their studio tutors promoted. Hence, in the observations of the third-year reviews it was notable that most students within a particular studio drew the same sorts of drawing

in a shared style. Now much of the reviewers talk was about praising or chastising the students for the connection, or lack of connection, between drawings and the intended meanings. In effect, students were learning how to produce drawings containing symbols that could be read by both creator and viewer using a shared language of interpretation. This collective expression and understanding produced allegiance and cohesion within a studio; however it also produced certain problems. There were some students who were unable to grasp the language and were cast as 'no hoppers' by the group, and no alternatives to the dominant paradigm were permitted. The idiosyncratic nature of the language also meant that the ideas were largely impenetrable to outsiders and thus closed to scrutiny or challenge.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Architectural drawings are accepted as the central means by which architectural ideas are objectified and communicated through shared readings. However, it was clear from observing the reviews that verbal skills also had a central place in the communication of ideas. Students 'told' the reviewers about their ideas and used their drawings to objectify their verbal descriptions. But why this necessity to talk when the meaning of architecture is ascribed to it by those who view or experience it? A commonly held justification for verbal explanation was that students of architecture must learn to explain their ideas to non-architect, clients, consultants, planners and so on: 'it's what architects do'. Yet, it was clear that the language used in communicating ideas to a layperson is very different from the specialized language used in an architectural review. A more convincing explanation, but one which remains largely tacit, is that language is used by students as a rhetorical tool, alongside their drawings, for convincing the audience of the merit of their ideas, and also as the means by which students can learn to bring intellectual ideation and the objectification of those ideas (drawings) closer together. Accepting that verbal communication is an important aspect of a student's *habitus*, how does the review inculcate students with the appropriate verbal language and legitimate student success?

The research findings suggested that first-year students used very functional descriptions in reviews. They admitted in the interviews that they felt more comfortable explaining how their building worked rather than what was meant. When questioned about the existence of specialist architectural language, most referred to jargon such as 'spatiality' or 'materiality' rather than used necessary terms such as 'plan', 'eaves' or 'section'. One student explained that he picked up verbs, nouns and adjectives from other students and tutors and would 'try to incorporate them in my next presentation'. Another said that there were 'certain words which were cool to drop in'. In the first-year

reviews it was noticeable that students who used architectural jargon were well received by the reviewers. Subsequently, reviewers admitted that they considered the use of architectural language as evidence of 'thinking architecturally' even if, as in the observation, the use of jargon appeared to be contextually redundant.

By the third year the most acculturated students recognized the power of language as a rhetorical tool. They understood what is meant by 'talking architecturally' within the context of their design studio, and how talking architecturally could increase the likelihood of a good review. Other, less acculturated students were observed as dropping jargon into their presentations in an attempt to impress reviewers. However, this tactic worked less well than in the first year because the students were unable to respond to reviewer probing. For instance, one student explained to reviewers that he wanted to create a 'dynamic space' but when asked what dynamic meant he admitted that he didn't know.

Sixth-year students' attitudes varied with respect to the implicit requirement verbally to articulate design ideas in reviews. Of the small number of students interviewed there were those who were happy to 'play the game' and adopt the rhetoric of their design studio, and as a consequence they did well in reviews. This group of students was treated by the reviewers as colleagues with a shared *habitus* – i.e. they were legitimated as full members of the community. However, there was one student who had produced drawings for his review but failed to present to the reviewers. Afterwards he said that he had always been shy and felt that the review system was an unbearable occasion. He was critical of the review system because he thought it favoured those who were naturally extrovert and confident, though he did not see the connection between those qualities and being a good architect. He believed that it is the people who use architecture who should judge how successful it is, irrespective of what the architects might say, and hence he believed that his drawings should be allowed to speak for themselves. However, the review process clearly does not admit this attitude. The findings given here suggest that students must learn to conform to both the particular drawn and verbal languages promoted by their tutors if they are to progress through architectural education.

Inculcation and legitimization of behaviour: Deportment and deference

Gail Hall (1997), after Erving Goffman, suggested in her study of the socialization of ballet dancers that ritualistic performances have the effect of legitimizing the corporeal dimensions of the individuals involved. This section explores the review's legitimization of the corporeal aspects of students' presentation of their designs, under the categories deportment and deference.

DEPORTMENT

Deportment refers to the external presentation of self to others through a combination of verbal and gestural elements. The earlier description of the review explained how the spatial conventions of the review sets students bodily in front of their reviewers and then expects them to present their work. The research findings suggested that students learn to present both their work and themselves through experience rather than being taught the rules. Students from all years talked about 'not knowing what to do or say' in their first reviews. However, they also said that they soon learned that the ritual required them to act as embryonic architects: that is, action characterized by confidence, assuredness, competence and artistic exuberance. Some students talked critically of the way some of their peers 'played a game of professional bluff'. By this they meant that students who learnt to act and talk like confident designers were often perceived by reviewers as confident designers, even if they had little or no drawn work objectifying their architectural design. A particularly shy sixth-year student said that he found the review's insistency on a particularly masculine model of professional deportment objectionable, because it was 'antithetical to learning, both because it encouraged students to cover up their weaknesses and discriminated against those students who didn't want to or couldn't, for reasons of gender, race or culture, conform to the professional model'. These criticisms were mentioned by a number of other students. However, in all cases it was recognized that conforming to the accepted paradigm of deportment would result in legitimization. Hence, mastery clearly involved 'playing' but not necessarily believing in 'the game'.

DEFERENCE

Deference refers to an acknowledgement of respect that a subordinate owes a superior on the basis of his/her formal status. In the case of the review all the students interviewed perceived themselves as inferior to their reviewers. It was clear that their feelings of deference resulted from the inevitable power differential between reviewer and student, and that this power differential was heightened by the spatial arrangement and choreography of the review process. It hardly seems a coincidence that the review requires each student to 'perform' in front of a panel of experts, who then deliberate on the merits/demerits of the performance. The majority of students who were observed receiving reviewer comments outwardly accepted the comments, whether good or bad, even if they subsequently admitted that either they did not agree with them or did not understand them. Students explained their passivity variously, as 'not wanting to look stupid', 'fear of breaking down in front of the reviewers', 'wanting to get the review over' and, rather cynically,

'what's the point because the reviewers are always right because they mark your work'. Only a few of the final year students talked of overcoming their deference to reviewers. Having undergone full acculturation these students saw reviewers as having ideological agendas and personal strengths and weaknesses. One student explained:

I realise now that not all reviewers are right, although they think they are right. I think this is all right because reviewers are employed to have a viewpoint but what you learn as you get older is that you work in a particular way and build up what you believe is right about architecture. If I think a reviewer does not understand I stand up for myself now . . . and I take on board only what I feel is appropriate.

These confident students were seen to be more proactive during the observed reviews. For them the review became more of a dialogue between equals, in which design issues would be debated and design problems wrestled with. However, for the majority of students the reviewers' word remained gospel and required the appropriate deference.

CONCLUSIONS

This study has provided insight into the complexities of a particular case and therefore cannot make any great claims to represent the generality. However, it is clear that the findings correlate with and extend those of previous empirical research on the architectural review (Anthony, 1991; Stevens, 1998; Wilkin, 1999). Together, this body of research undoubtedly brings into question the hitherto accepted 'folklore' notions that the architectural review is a collective and liberal celebration of individual student creativity and achievement. Rather, the collective findings suggest that the architectural review plays a central role in the design studio pedagogy, derived from a pre-existing 'apprenticeship' model, which results in the reproduction of the dominant notions of architectural *habitus*. This study has re-presented the review as a key ritualized performance that, through its coercive choreography, functions to ensure that students subordinate their own pre-existing *habitus* in favour of assuming the *habitus* of their tutors. While it is clear that this process is a very effective vehicle for acculturation of students, it is surely questionable whether a pedagogy that is so insistent on the reproduction of particular paradigms can be equated with student-centred learning. Surely, student-centred learning would require pedagogic events that support students in the construction and reconstruction of their own *habitus* through a process of open critical dialogue with peers, tutors, reviewers, the field of architecture, and society in general. The key question for those in architectural education, and in other fields that use similar pedagogic devices, is whether the architectural review could be recast to support student-centred

learning? Certainly, if tutors were to become more reflexive about the part they play in the review process then it may be possible for the event to change from being a ritual for the display of tutors'/reviewers' egos and student submission to a celebration of student creativity and personal development through critical engagement with the field of architecture. If not, then the place of the architectural review in architectural education must surely be questioned.

REFERENCES

- Anthony, K. (1991) *Design Juries on Trial: The Renaissance of the Design Studio*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold.
- Becker, H. (1987) *Boys in White: Student Culture in Medical School*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
- Bell, C. (1992) *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1988) *Homo Academicus*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1992) *Academic Discourse: Linguistic Misunderstanding and Professional Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1999) *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.
- Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J.P. (1977) *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*. London: Sage.
- Cuff, D. (1998) *Architectural Practice*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Doidge, C., Sara, R., Parnell, R. and Parsons, M. (1997) *The Crit – An Architecture Student's Handbook*. London: Heinemann Butterworth.
- Dutton, A., ed. (1991) *Voices in Architectural Education*. New York and London: Bergin and Garvey.
- Freire, P. (1994) *Pedagogy of Hope*. New York: Continuum.
- Giroux, H.A. (1981) *Ideology, Culture and the Process of Schooling*. Philadelphia, PA and London: Temple University Press and Falmer Press.
- Giroux, H.A. (1983) *Theory and Resistance in Education: Pedagogy for the Opposition*. London: Heinemann.
- Giroux, H.A. (1991) 'Cultural Politics of Architectural Education', in A. Dutton (ed.) *Voices in Architectural Education*, pp. x–xii. New York and London: Bergin and Garvey.
- Glaser, B.G. and Strauss, A.L. (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies or Qualitative Research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.
- Hall, G. (1997) 'Workshop for a Ballerina: An Exercise in Professional Socialisation'. *Urban Life* 6(2): 193–220.
- Saint, A. (1983) *The Image of the Architect*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Schein, E.H. (1988) 'Organisational Socialisation and the Profession of Management'. *Sloan Management Review* 53(Fall): 53–63.
- Schön, D. (1983) *The Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Schön, D. (1985) *The Design Studio – An Exploration of its Traditions and Potential*. London: Royal Institute of British Architects.
- Schön, D. (1987) *Educating the Reflective Practitioner*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Stevens, G. (1998) *The Favoured Circle*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Traweek, S. (1988) *Beamtimes and Lifetimes: The World of High Energy Physicists*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Vowles, H. (2000) 'The Crit as Ritualised Legitimation Procedure in Architectural Education', in D. Nicol and S. Pilling (eds) *Changing Architectural Education*, pp.259–64. London: E. and FN. Spon.
- Wilkin, M. (1999) 'Reassessing the Design Project Review'. (Unpublished report) HEFCE Fund for the Development of Learning and Teaching Project (FDLT 155/96).

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

HELENA WEBSTER is a Reader in Architecture at Oxford Brookes University. She teaches the history and theory of architecture and writes on architectural history and architectural education with particular reference to reflective learning and to Pierre Bourdieu's notions of social capital, field and *habitus*. Recent publications include: (2004) 'Facilitating Reflective Learning: Excavating the Role of the Design Tutor', *Journal of Art, Design and Communication in Higher Education* 2(3); (2004) 'The Discipline of Architecture', in M. Temple (ed.) *Studying the Built Environment*, London: Palgrave; (2000) 'Learning Contracts: A Diploma Case Study', in D. Nicols and S. Pilling (eds) *Changing Architectural Education*. London: E. & F.H. Spon. Address: Department of Architecture, Oxford Brookes University, Gipsy Lane Campus, Oxford OX3 0BP, UK. [email: hmwebster@brookes.ac.uk]