THE STUDIO WORLD:
SHOP, HOME, AND TUBE
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The logic and the structure of the presentation

This section presents the information collected on the field together with analytical commentaries. The analysis, organization, and interpretation of the data in qualitative research is a holistic, syncretic, and forward-moving process. The first bits of incoming information were meticulously processed so that feedback could be produced for the collection of the next batch of data. The analysis of every interview and observation session was a prerequisite for designing the research behavior in the next round of interviews. The presentation of data in qualitative research could not be done independently of their analysis and interpretation. Most of the decisions about the presentation format were made in parallel to the development of the in-
terpretation options.

The narrative format that is chosen here follows the directions of a basic sociological matrix composed of several universal categories (subjects, activities, and relations) and their ramifications. Several themes are reconstructed and further developed in detail. First, the subjects (students) are depicted. Second, the setting (studio) as a physical environment is presented. Third, studio life is described: activities, daily rhythm, semester cycles, social life, and the personal meaning of the studio (hub of life, turf, home, and socialization ground). Fourth, issues of professional socialization are discussed, because they both constitute most of the studio activity, and also greatly influence studio everyday life. Fifth, perceptions about architecture students are described. Several viewpoints are considered: how the students in the studio view themselves, how the undergraduates in the school view the graduates, and vice versa, and how architecture students are viewed by other students, mostly the “newcomers” in the three-and-a-half year gradal bachelor’s degrees.

The students

The particular studio that was studied consisted of fourteen students: ten were enrolled in the undergraduate program and four were in a three-and-a-half year master’s program. The educational and professional background of
the students was quite diverse. There were several people with considerable learning and some work experience in the field of architecture. Others had professional background in other areas, but were complete novices in architecture. This presupposed a wide range of ages, ranging from the early twenties to the early forties. However, age does not automatically presuppose greater architectural experience. On the contrary, younger people usually had had more exposure to and some kind of previous experience in other design programs.

Most of the students had part-time jobs on an hourly basis for 10-20 hours a week. Usually, this work required little skills and offered low pay and flexible work hours. It was hard to assess the social background of these people. One of the faculty had explained the high working spirit of the students (both in school and on the job) with the suggestion that most of them came from upwardly mobile, working-class families. The job engagements, although independent from the studio, had a profound effect on the thinking and lifestyles of these people, and will be shown later.

The students were dressed casually: jeans, T-shirts, and sneakers or Doc Martens-type shoes. According to the students, "This attire is most comfortable for studio life." They don't need to worry about black ink spots, blots of glue, or paint. In some ways, the dress code was not much different from the dress code of other liberal arts students -
convenient, simple, and inexpensive; there were no big statements and no standing out from the rest of the flock. Maybe the students were a bit more conservative in their classic jeans than the art majors who had started wearing bell-bottoms and wide-leg jeans. However, I hardly ever saw anyone in a blazer, except for a few very special occasions that will be mentioned later. It is interesting that the students in urban planning, who take classes in the same building, just one floor below, could be seen quite often in shirts and blazers. On the other side of the street, the business majors showed up even in suits.

The setting

The studio space was a big (36 ft. by 30 ft.) barren room. The ceiling's concrete beams and lighting fixtures were like those in a factory or a workshop and were painted white. The walls were plain and white. They were made from a material that allowed students to pin up drawings and sketches. Three weeks after the beginning the semester, the walls were covered in all kinds of sketches, drawings, and memos, and the factory allusion began to shift towards an image of an artist's studio and improvised gallery. The floor finish reinforced the workshop-studio perceptions: it was dark gray vinyl. There were huge windows with glisting silver window shades. The shades were often closed,
shuttering the sun; curiously enough, the desk lamps were on even on sunny days. The workshop atmosphere was reinforced by two yellow electric cord reels hanging from the ceiling and providing electricity for the tables in the center of the space.

The room was cluttered with tables. At first, the dislocation of tables appeared haphazard and occasional. But after observing the situation for some time, it became evident that there was a common principle that persisted in the chaos - most of the students had oriented their drafting tables towards the center of the room, so that they could see and communicate with each other. This pattern persisted even when students had to turn their backs to the windows and the incoming natural light. Evidently, priority was on "community orientation" rather than natural light that seemed so important for drafting and rendering activities. In most cases, turning the tables toward the center of the room presupposed that students would have the wall behind their backs as a convenience for pinning up sketches and drawings illustrating the project ideas, informing others about the history of the project, and providing displays that would compare alternative solutions and observe trends in the project progress. The display opportunity was a necessity for most students.

The week after the semester started, students began to appear in school with their cars or borrowed trucks and vans, delivering all kinds of casual materials they needed to
accommodate their professional activities and daily needs. Vehicles lined up in front of the building entrance closest to the elevators and a continuous trail led upstairs to the studio rooms. Students brought boxes full of all different things, such as CD players, refrigerators, microwaves, ergonomic chairs, desk lamps, drawing appliances, small bookcases, and metal cabinets, and occasionally, couches, armchairs, or small coffee tables. At the end of the semester, this process was repeated, but it flowed in the opposite direction - carrying the stuff from the inside to the outside of the building. The official policy was to clear everything out of the studio rooms so that the custodians could clean the floors and prepare the space for the new semester.

The hustle and bustle was comparable to moving into a new apartment, and many people said that it was a pain. Some students managed to keep larger items, such as couches and refrigerators, stored somewhere in the school so that they did not have to repeat every semester the inconvenient and back-breaking procedure of transporting bulky furniture back and forth from their houses to the school. This brisk movement of people and their belongings indicated that a busy life was about to take place at school, and everybody was preparing to work around the clock; they evidently knew from experience or from the stories of older students what would be of use during such hectic times. Very often, the materials they brought in represented a big investment - ergonomic chairs, drafting
lamps with special functions, drafting instruments and materials, metal file cases, microwaves, boom boxes, occasionally a TV set, and other things - amounting to $400-$500, not including textbooks. Some people brought small metal file cabinets with locks to keep their property safe.

One can compare the studio “landscape” with an oriental souk, a barrio, or a shanty town. Students often barricaded themselves with tables, making narrow passages that would allow only one person to pass through at a time. These formed a serpentine narrow “street” among the tables, providing circulation and a connection with the public open space, a “square,” which was marked by a couch and several armchairs. The square was reserved for informal socialization, chatting, and hanging out, as well as for the major studio rituals: pin-ups and critiques.

The scenery looked quite exotic, due to a myriad of objects that were quite unusual for a school environment: one couch, one loveseat, one futon chair, sleeping mats, an armchair, two microwaves, four dormitory refrigerators, coffee-makers, half a dozen boom boxes, several handmade bookshelves, milk crates used as file folders and storage boxes, and small file cabinets (sometimes metal, with locks, which presupposes the importance of the items stored and the necessity for security). Everything was in turmoil. Futons and sleeping mats were usually folded under tables. The floor was often covered with drafting paper, sketches, cardboard, and all kinds of discarded materials. The tables
were covered with drawings, stacks of books, instruments, and supplies.

The big heavy drafting tables, the barren white walls and ceiling, together with the "production process" waste, created the atmosphere of a factory. The lounge furniture and the kitchen appliances, together with the handmade bookcases and milk-crate file cabinets, projected a strange sense of a shanty home. It was not uncommon to see a student sleeping on the sofa, at any time of the day. The hustle and bustle around him/her didn't affect his/her sound sleep. These conditions conveyed the feeling of a pre-industrial workshop where apprentices both study the secrets of the trade and carry out the chores of daily life; after work hours, they turn the workshop into living quarters.

The night hours produced a special "flavor." When all students were present, there was a great deal of light in the room. But in the early morning hours or on the weekend nights, only a few people remained. Then they preferred to switch off the ceiling lights and work only in the light of the desk lamps. One could observe two or three spotlights in the darkness of the studio. At such times the music was loud and reverberated in the school corridors.

Another peculiarity of the studio environment was the noise factor and the auditory atmosphere. Everyone wore headphones, like in a machine manufacturing plant. The reason was simple. If someone's boom box was on, all
the other students either had to like this music or run away. The “headphones on” policy guaranteed a comparatively normal acoustic environment and partial protection from musical excesses. There were moments when everyone was shouting, and also moments when students worked quietly with their headphones on. But there were also times when the music was off and all folks work silently, hurrying to catch up with a project deadline. At such times students seemingly live in their own private worlds, barricaded in their barrios.

In the same school building, one floor below, the studios of the students enrolled in the master’s program in urban planning were housed. The contrast was amazing. Although the rooms were also occupied for long periods of time, the environment was much different. The tables were arranged in a traditional office pattern. There were a couple of textbooks scattered and some papers spread on the tabletops, but everything was within the limits of the office norms. The rooms contained office furniture and even a case with mailboxes. Sometimes there was a vase with fresh flowers. There were no couches; there might have been a microwave, but it was used much more rarely. Everything was in order and neatly organized. The floor was clean. Students read silently or quietly discuss their group projects. It was unusual to hear music in these quarters. Some of the students had just come from work in local government planning offices and other agencies - and bore the insignia
of office culture, white shirts and ties. Many of the women wore skirts rather than the torn jeans of the architecture students. The feel of downtown coming into the University was apparent.

One of the urban planning rooms was assigned to the master's level joint degree program for students who study both architecture and urban planning. This environment looked to me like a strange hybrid - some modular furniture, some white shirts, and some order. Suddenly, however, I would see a heap of drawings, a huge, six-foot model of downtown junctions, a student cutting chips of wood to fit into the model, and ... a boom box keeping the beat!

Students display two different daily schedules according to their personality types: early risers or owls. Early risers begin drifting in as soon as morning classes are finished. They work intensively in the morning, afternoon, and even at night, often staying at school until ten or eleven o'clock p.m. Such is the schedule of Ann, Alex, and Teo. A conspicuous majority of people emerge at noon; the owls are making their appearance. In the afternoon they are busy, and in the evening the presence is substantial. The owls socialize until the evening hours, and then become organized and concentrated. They sometimes work until 4 or 5 o'clock a.m., and eventually spend one or two nights a week sleeping in the studio. They often sleep in the studio.
between morning classes. Amy and Jeff prefer this way of life. They say that they can accomplish more work at night, when nobody is around. Amy finds it more productive to work between 8 p.m. and 3 a.m. She seems to be a real all-nighter.

Contrary to the word of mouth that all architecture students are all-nighters, I found out that this was not the case. Although the constant all-nighters create the exotic aura of studio life, they are a minority in comparison to mainstream students. It is interesting that this smaller group creates the general impression and all the talk about all-nighting. These people may be in the minority, but they set the trend and are the role models for the rest. Students often measure their heroism and devotion to the art of architecture by their stamina to stay up late—a kind of macho way of self-expression.

But even hard-core all-nighters prefer to sleep comfortably in their own beds any time they can. Everybody who has ever slept in a studio confesses that this is not a very rewarding experience and the day after is really ruined. For example, Teo usually goes home at midnight, and only occasionally stays until 2-3 a.m. Jeff sleeps about once a week in the studio. Ivon is married and after midnight has to go home. Before critiques she may stay until 3 or 4 in the morning, but otherwise family concerns are sending her home. A simple calculation shows that if each one of the 14 students stays one night a week, there will
always be 2-3 people sleeping on the couches. This coincides with the normal capacity of the sleeping “facilities” scattered around the room: one couch, one loveseat, one futon chair, and one sleeping bag.

In general, architecture juniors and seniors spend a lot of time in the studio room. Alex, Amy, Ann, Teo, and Jeff all say that they spend an average of at least 40 hours a week in the studio although the amount of time might increase during the final weeks before major presentations. Students also spend about nine credit hours a week in other classes, which adds nearly ten more hours in school. It is obvious that students work much more than the “trade union’s” 40-hour week.

However, students confess that during the period they count as “studio time” they may run errands out of school, spend time with friends from other studios or simply relax and enjoy procrastination. (This word was the most common answer given when I asked someone how the day was going.) During regular semester days, socialization and procrastination often take up half of their time, while people work much more efficiently before presentations. This is also the opinion of at least two faculty.
The Architecture Student Culture
The studio life

The studio world is comprised of a number of components. The major component in regard to the objectives of this study - the reconstruction of the sociospatial relationships - is the everyday life of studio occupants. This part of the description/analysis presents the activity core of the studio reality. First, a typical daily schedule is reconstructed; then a sample of the customary everyday activities is presented; next, the pattern of social interaction is constructed; a brief highlight of students' out-of-school life is offered; and last, the personal meaning of the studio is explored. All these themes are conceptualized as elements and aspects of the everyday studio life.

The daily rhythm

The studio has its own rhythm of life. At any time of the day there are at least two students in the studio. Usually they are five or seven at a time. Typically, students come to school for morning classes. They may drop into the studio just before class, leave their backpacks at their work stations, make coffee, and go to class. On the other hand, they may come into the studio after the first morning class and take refuge until the next class begins in an hour or so. These pauses between classes are used for relaxing, quick snacks, or doing some homework.
It is interesting to notice a second pattern of peak presence - a couple of days before critiques/presentations. At such times I have counted no fewer than 10 people (from a total of 14) at one time. The studio room is filled almost to capacity, if we consider that there is always a person who hates to work among other people, that someone can fall ill, and that somebody might have an emergency. These patterns of studio presence indicate two types of cycles: a daily cycle and a semester cycle. The daily cycle is a function of personality types, the official schedule of classes, and customary job hours. The semester cycle coincides with project due dates. It might be due to poor time management, or to deliberate time planning.

The everyday activities

The activities that take place in the studio can be grouped into four basic areas: studying, socializing, eating, and resting. Each of these areas includes dozens of constituent behaviors. For example, studying includes two sub-groups of activities: design-related work and preparation for reading classes. Examples of the activities in the first sub-group are drafting, model-making, working with wood and cardboard, gluing, painting, consulting, and making informal pin-ups with friends to elicit their opinion and advice. The second sub-group, the lecture classes, includes reading, writing papers, and typing, to name just a few. Socializing is the most diverse area, but there are several typi-
cal activity patterns that most often occur: chatting, talking with friends, exchanging opinions, listening to music (with headphones or boom boxes), meeting with friends from other studios, and sometimes meeting friends/guests from outside. Eating involves the microwaving of food, eating, brewing coffee (probably the most common occurrence), drinking coffee or soda, and much more. Once I was astonished to discover someone boiling chili beans in an electric pot. Resting activities include sleeping, relaxing on the sofa, taking a nap during the day, or just sitting motionless in the armchair. Some of the activities expand and transcend the studio boundaries: the janitors' wet room is used for brushing teeth early in the morning and after lunch. Many students keep toothbrushes at school, and may use them as needed, whether after lunch or a sleepless night. The corridors become playgrounds for softball (mostly a symbolic behavior) or “hang out” places to meet someone from another studio.

The two most extraordinary activities in a school setting are eating and sleeping. There are a wide variety of options for managing the food issue, both institutionalized and non-institutionalized, and students use them in different ways. Regarding food, students may bring their own lunches from home and heat them in the microwaves. At lunch or dinnertime, it is not uncommon to smell various kinds of food, which are being microwaved at the other end of the building. The air-conditioning system obviously was
not designed to cope with such occurrences. Students also buy meals “to go” at the student union, nearby fast-food establishments, or one comparatively inexpensive hospital cafeteria, and go back at the studio to continue their work, placing the styrofoam containers on the drafting tables while reading lecture notes for an upcoming quiz. If time is really tight, or money is scarce, students use the vending machines or the student co-op vendor service on the first floor of the school. A more rare option is to call the pizza deliveryman. This may happen at peak workload times or before presentation when all the students are in the studio and look forward to enjoying a warm meal together.

Sleeping at school is not something that the administration is happy about, but it happens on a regular basis. It is not unusual, at any time of the day, to see somebody taking a nap on the sofa at the central “studio square.” Some people go to great lengths and take off their shoes and cover themselves with a blanket. Meanwhile, a CD player may be on and several students may be discussing their projects or class assignments, or chatting and socializing, just a couple of feet away. The students who cannot stand the constant chatter may choose to curl up on the floor mat below their tables, or go to the most distant corner of the room. At night, it is not unusual to see somebody tucked into a sleeping bag. By this time, there are a handful of students present, the ceiling lights are off, and even the constant roar of the boom boxes may be reduced. It is a much more
serene and delicate atmosphere, which, when perceived by outsiders, creates a feeling for the romanticism of the profession. These represent the real nights, or actually, the wee hours of the morning, with the real all-nighters.

Some graduate students think that the intensive use of the studio for everyday activities is due to the "opportunity": "Architecture students have keys for their studios. This makes the environment more secure. One can bring stuff. Studios become a mixture of the work and home environment." Still other graduate students think that the extensive use of studio rooms "is more an initiation than a necessity."

The socialization ground: Social life in the studio

The time constraints

Before speaking about studio social life, I would like to mention again the heavy workload and the time pressure experienced by the students. Everybody talks about pressing deadlines and tons of work to do. To cope with the workload and to manage their responsibilities, students begin to cut down on their leisure activities and particularly those that are too time-consuming. This is both the typical and the easiest response to time pressure situations. But this strategy narrows down the social world of the students and pushes them to isolation and withdraw
Helga says that her colleagues do not really have a lot of time for activities other than study. She continues, “I am astonished how people can live basically with very little outside activities, only to study architecture. I have a family, I have a whole other life. They don’t.” Most of the students I observed really had a confined social life and geographical area. They did, however, manage to get all components of their social life together at school: friends and partners, socialization site, and possibilities for easy organization.

*The social interaction*

There are intensive social interactions going on in studios. At the beginning of the semester most students do not know each other. But just a few weeks are enough to entangle all studio participants into a small life-world. This process is slow to develop in the first few days, but as workloads grow, and time spent in studios increases, connections form more readily. Teo noticed, “When people spend more time in the studio, there is more interaction, more friendship, and more camaraderie.” By the middle of the semester, the studio space becomes a hub of activity. Winston says, “What I see is socializing, most of the time. There are some people who are always working and concentrating, but the majority of people use it (the studio) as an arena. ... At times it is frustrating, because the people who are socializing stay until 3 or 4 a.m. for days in a row, trying to get
their project done. Exhausted, they make bad decisions.”

Gradually the students establish relationships in
their own studios and in the other studios in the school
which are either next door, or on the same level of teaching.
Everybody mentions that they have friends in the studio.
Many people like Teo and Jeff sketch a picture of an emerg-
ning collective life and common brotherhood. However,
Alex, Ann, and Amy think that with a closer scrutiny a per-
son can notice that there are several small groups in which
people obviously are much closer and more readily stick
together. They call them cliques, and have mixed feelings
about such developments. Teo and Jeff are reluctant to con-
fess such developments. But when they think over some
past and current events, they acknowledge that some of the
students are closer to one another than others. There are ob-
viously cliques, they confess. One can’t expect, however,
that fourteen students will always stick together; besides,
they have friends in other studios, from previous semesters.
Clinging together in cliques is more a function of common
values and entertainment approaches than politicking.

Everyone believes that there are no major conflicts
in studios. The consensus is that people are attentive and
care about each other. Music is the source that sometimes
makes people tense. It is more of a personality problem. For
example, Lloyd does not bear the musical tastes of the rest.
For him, the studio is “a New York Stock Exchange, a cir-
cus, a social arena.” But Teo and Jeff think that everyone is
happy with the musical choices. Evidently, personality features influence perception. People who are more delicate may easily be harmed even by considerate fellows. Observations made in other studios show that music may be the source of intense conflicts. In this regard the official school policy requires the use of headphones.

An interesting aspect of social interactions in studios is conflict management. It is comparatively easy to manage people’s presence in short-term institutional environments, where everyone can suppress his/her needs for a short period of time and escape conflict of interests. But when people share a space for a long time, they begin to “appropriate” this space in order to accommodate their everyday needs. Many activities that are usually performed in home environments have to be carried out in the studio. When such activities (let’s say, listening to music, talking, etc.) are displayed in shared environments, particularly environments like the 24-hour studio, many problems arise. It is almost impossible to reach a consensus about what to do and how to do it, so that everyone is happy. Sometimes the conflicts become so acute that institutional procedures are introduced. For example, problems with loud music and the thunder of boom boxes are resolved by mandating the use of headphones. This is obviously not the most delightful way to experience the moving rhythms. The compromise, however, is worthwhile because it makes it possible for all parties to coexist in one space without substan-
tial discomfort or sacrifice. People learn that the price for social peace is compromise and abstention. Unusual solutions to such problems contribute to the emergence of the exotic picture of the studio: At any time of the day, it is possible to see a few people with their headphones on, making strange movements, sometimes rhythmically. Others just draw silently and do not pay attention, even if a stack of books falls on the floor with a loud banging noise.

The "social peace" in the studio is supported by a hierarchy of normative mechanisms. At the beginning of the semester the rules of conduct are negotiated. There are official departmental rules and semi-official instructor requirements, and lastly, some of the daily patterns are negotiated by the students alone. If they can't come to terms, the instructor will intervene in favor of protecting the interests of the most vulnerable individuals. No one reported problems like these, although such situations are not uncommon in other studios.

Tacos and beer: The studio extension

The studio also serves as a meeting place to organize occasional out-of-school leisure events. This may be a tailgating party at the county stadium, a midnight walk to Axell's (a nearby bar) for a drink, or the regular Wednesday pilgrimage to one of the local bars, Judge's. Such fun may last a couple of hours. After that, students return to their drafting tables. Although these events take place outside the
studio space, they originate in the studio room, and the picture of social life in the studio would be incomplete without mentioning them. It would be difficult to understand the camaraderie and the mechanisms of bonding without observing the Wednesday night ritual at Judge’s, the favorite bar of the studio. This is the weekly entertainment of one of the cliques, but it transcends group boundaries and attracts many other students from a particular studio and their friends from other studios.

*Is there another world? Dwindling out-of-school life*

To my astonishment students did not reveal much about their life outside of school. Usually they gave schematic answers and even probes did not stimulate their memories. Maybe the answers I got were solicited rather then stemming from reality. Of course, no one said that he/she had no friends outside school. But the descriptions were rather vague, and I got the sense that students simply do not spend much time outside of school. In most cases I gathered that students have a couple of friends they rarely see because they have no time. The exceptions are probably girlfriends/boyfriends. But even Ann, who is “married with children,” claims that for several days before critique sessions she sees her children only at breakfast.

*The personal meanings of the studio*

The design studio coursework is the major focus of
architecture students. They understand very well that their professional capabilities are developed through design experience. Maggie told me that all lecture courses are treated as secondary. She continued, "In all other subjects I put in as much effort as I need to pass. If I get a "B," I am thrilled. But in the studio I put in all my effort." The non-design courses are a realm that many students pass through without much emotion.

The studio as a behavior setting has acquired a second cluster of meanings as well. All students agree that they use the studio as a base; it is a convenient meeting place to go anywhere. From the studio they go out on campus or even to town several times a day, just to run small errands, or to make dates and meet with friends. Some students feel that their studios are home because they spend all their active time there, while they use their rental rooms only to sleep. Teo said, "If not for my girlfriend, I don't need a room. I can sleep in the room of my apartment-mate and save some rent expenses." Other students still prefer to make the distinction between their daily operation bases and homes. Alex said that a studio can't be substituted for a home. He needs a setting to relax and rest from the hustle and bustle of the studio, this swarming arena where the gladiators struggle endlessly with the challenges of design. According to him, home is the place where a person can really relax in front of the TV.
Drilling or initiation: Some issues of professional socialization

The purpose of this section is to provide a background for the interpretation of the everyday studio. Some people may see it as a digression from the focus of the study - the informal life in the studio - but it is essential to understand the professional culture in order to make sense of everyday life in the studio. Understanding the culture of the reference group is a necessary background for understanding the social phenomena in the studio setting. The learning activities in the studio outstrip the socialization events in both volume and importance. The professional values and learning goals strongly influence student strategies and behaviors. Keeping in mind the professional dedication of students, it is important to consider the influence of the architectural professional culture on student personality and behavior. In this regard, it is interesting to consider several themes: the nature of architectural work, the architectural problems/tasks, the seeds of professional socialization, the main agent of socialization, the role of the critique, and the influence of workaholism. The narrative that follows was created on the basis of fieldwork, personal experience, and literature sources, although publications on this subject are scarce.
Art, craft, and science: The nature of architecture

Architectural work combines elements of craft, art, and science. This trivial formula illustrates quite clearly both the skills needed and the types of activities in which architecture students engage. This may be one of the keys to understanding the "arkies" mentality.

The "craft" element becomes evident immediately when one enters the architectural studio. The interior is as barren and ascetic as a workshop. The floor is buried two feet deep with waste paper, cardboard, and other materials. There is a trash bin for each student, and in addition a big trash container stands right in the middle of the public space in the studio. The tables are cluttered with materials, instruments, paints, brushes, etc. Often the sound of an electric drill or a mechanical eraser can be heard. Students work in jeans and T-shirts, and are sometimes sprinkled with paint. When the due-date for a project presentation nears, everybody makes models, most often from wood. The room literally looks like a wood-shop.

The "art" element is closely interwoven with the crafts. The aesthetic problems in architecture make students think like artists. It is the art element that motivates these people to pursue excellence and work with dedication. The students more often see themselves as artists and consider the architectural studio as an artist's atelier rather than viewing themselves as craftsmen and blue-collar intellectuals laboring in a workshop. They view the mess and
clutter in the studio room as an inevitable attribute of an artist's atelier - sketches and drawings are hanging on the walls, books with glistening color illustrations are spread all over the tables, and almost everywhere one can see sets of colored pencils, crayons, markers, and sometimes boxes with watercolors.

The "science" element in the architectural work clearly differentiates the architecture students from their peers in vocational schools, and from the eccentric personalities in the fine arts department. Students have to learn how to find out information by themselves in order to solve architectural problems. Also, they are taught to conduct research and analyze and critique theories and professional doctrines. Architecture students acquire more reflective and disciplined thinking than their peers in vocational schools. They display much broader interests and bridge a wider area of skills and expertise, ranging from technical craft operations to thorough theoretical analysis. The intellectual discipline they acquire in a number of classes makes them more organized, focused, and balanced in their lifestyles.

**Ill-defined and open-ended: The influence of architectural problems on student work-life styles**

The interviews I conducted with students who held bachelor's degrees in other majors revealed that architecture majors are busier with schoolwork than are non-architecture students. The reasons stem both from the nature of the
architectural programs' educational traditions and from the nature of the design problems. Design problems are ill-defined and open-ended and there are no clear criteria for evaluating solutions. Because of this there is always the possibility of coming to a better solution. The pursuit of excellence becomes an endless venture - the architect's work is never done. Architecture majors who have undergone undergraduate work in the sciences have developed skills for coping with reading assignments, exams, and intellectual problems with well-defined bodies and clear criteria for appropriate solutions. They intuitively know how much work is needed for an exam and when to stop reading. But when these same students come to the architecture program, they face a completely new set of challenges - the ever-changing nature and redefinition of the problem, the dwindling and subjective criteria for the solution, and a thinking process that has more in common with juggling five balls at once than with a systematic pursuit of a problem solving.

Architecture students always experience the feeling that in the next hour or day they will conceive a great design, and in order to do so, they are willing to spend another sleepless night. Every design is the best one only for several hours. After that, students see a better solution and the process continues. So, when the time for presentation comes, students suddenly realize that their design needs one more improvement before they draft it in black ink and
make a wooden model. Even the most organized individuals have to spend the last several nights before presentation working in the studio.

**The rites of passage: All-nighting and studio crits**

*Emulating the office roller-coaster:*

*Work (not shop) 'til you drop*

In order to gain a better understanding of the patterns of studio life it is also necessary to consider the architectural studio as a school replica of the design office. Students learn about office rites by some invisible (and visible) channels and begin to prepare for the transition. “They are like cubs who learn about the real world by playing,” as Ann mentioned. One example is the constant complaint that there is too much work and not enough time. In architecture, clients always recognize a building problem at the last moment, and urge designers to provide a solution as soon as possible. The urgency and ability to deliver quick services are crucial for obtaining a commission and earning a good reputation. The nature of the architectural profession involves short deadlines, peak workloads, and of course - sleepless nights. In a case study in her latest book, *Architecture: The Story Of Practice*, Dana Cuff (1992) presents the story of a young architect who is much more overburdened with design work than are the studio “cubs.” Maybe the all-nighters are trying to imitate the ferocious struggle with deadlines in real practice. Lured,
however, by the overt conspicuous “picture” of the profession, students often see and imitate only the effects and consequences rather than the methods and approaches. One of the younger faculty said that he would rather close the school at midnight, so that students would learn to organize better, and do their work during the daytime.

The all-nighting

The most spectacular symbol of the architecture student is the all-nighter. This word is a jargon commonly used in architectural departments to denote someone who works in a studio around the clock for several days and nights, drinking coffee and occasionally brushing his/her teeth, no shower, no razor, no change of clothes. The most dramatic experience is to fall asleep on the couch in the middle of the day, when all of the boom boxes are on, and fellow students are communicating by shouting. One can hardly say which is more important: to get an hour or two of refreshing sleep, or to show everyone (including the instructor) your heroic effort and devotion. This is almost the way architects do it in the office when a capricious client pays to have his/her project ready the very next day (something like the “Next Day Air” service of UPS).

Most of the students think that all-nighting is useless: what they gain at night, they lose during the day. They believe that it is more important and more professional to manage their time better than to stay up for several sleep
less nights in a row. Alex said, "They [students] wait until the last minute. ... A lot of procrastination." However, the all-nighter is the most exotic, the most spectacular, and the most formidable representative of the architecture student species. This heroic figure makes the dull daily life look more artistic. Recently, thesis students posted invitations for their thesis presentations. The poster featured a dramatic battle among the defenders of a medieval fortress and the assaulting warriors. This picture served as a background on which the names of the thesis defenders, the times, and the venues were announced. The allusion was clear: a tribute to all-nighters. The sleepless nights are symbols of heroism in a profession that is perceived only as artistic by the outside world.

*Playing the professional: The critique*

Another part of the studio experience are the crits. These are such important events that even the journal of the American Institute of Architecture Students is named Crit. There are two types of crits (or project presentations): intermediate, which are usually held in the studio rooms, and final, which take place in other rooms, thus emphasizing their significance. It marks the transition to a higher level of professional development, even if this new state is within the boundaries of the semester. The final crits for every project create the most tense and frustrating experiences. Everyone can imagine the emotions of thesis students when they stand before the jury. The same feeling exists
with the presentation of final crits. The learning atmosphere of the studio is replaced by the courtroom tension. Although the final crit as an event is usually an out-of-house happening that transcends the boundaries of the studio setting, it is important for understanding the phenomenon of studio life. The crit highlights the dialectic of the workshop and the office. The changes that take place with students and their behavior patterns at crits unveil the dualism of the architecture students’ self-perceptions. These changes also indicate several phenomena: the tremendous tensions these students must learn to manage, the shifting norms and criteria for behavior in different situations, the presentation of self, and the complex relations with the environment, both social and physical.

When the students appear at the crit venue, they look completely different - more like downtown office clerks in sharp office attire than the apprentices they resembled just a few hours before. The blue-collar intellectuals or artists are transformed into would-be businessmen/women who are struggling to persuade clients and sell ideas. The immediate observation shows a dramatic change in the dress code: the T-shirts and jeans are replaced with white shirts and ties. The white shirt, the symbol of business and serious intentions, is very important, even if the shirt is not ironed! Women have to change their unisex jeans for skirts; some may put on makeup and nail polish, maybe for the third time since the beginning of the year. Against this
background, the shabbiness of the previous lifestyle becomes even more obvious.

*The team work imperative: Make or break*

Architectural projects involve a lot of work and require the joint efforts of a group of people. Because of this, design practice is based on teamwork. Teamwork is a hot theme in today's office world, but in architecture it is already a tradition. The architectural education philosophy emphasizes the development of teamwork skills. Students are encouraged to work in groups and the number of team projects is considerable. It is expected that students will learn to share resources and information, manage conflicts, learn to lead and communicate with associates, cooperate, and support each other.

To promulgate this philosophy and the corresponding teaching and learning objectives, the school administration requires students to work in the studio during official class hours, and encourages and facilitates student work in the studio after classes. Many schools have detailed policies and regulations and spend a lot of effort to administer them. The studio as an everyday setting is a product of these circumstances to a large extent. The influence of the teamwork philosophy is compatible with the time-saving imperative, the achievement rush, and the socialization ground syndrome (all to be discussed later in the text).
Let them live their dreams: The studio instructor

The major agent of professional socialization is the studio instructor. His primary activity is one-on-one desk consulting: criticizing student designs, reformulating problems, and suggesting better solutions. He evidently views studio teaching as a highly personalized process that will shape the minds and talents of the students into thriving architectural characters.

The instructor is an experienced designer and an erudite professor. His expertise and skills make him an idol, a guru, and an enviable role model for the students who aspire towards acquiring “divine” professional secrets. He is a master-professor, a charismatic informal leader, and a friend. He balances the scholarly discipline and the creative freedom most students need. The spontaneous build-up of the studio environment is not a consequence of lack of control. Rather, it is an outcome of a teaching philosophy that emphasizes respect for personal identity and exploration. Ann says her instructor is encouraging, cares about people, and never makes people ashamed of their work at studio critiques.

The arkies: Images of architecture students

An understanding of people and their culture emerges in the process of analyzing their activities. This
inquiry focused on reconstructing the major aspects of studio life: the actors, the studio setting, the studio life, and professional socialization. In order to achieve a complete understanding of sociocultural phenomena, it is beneficial to consider the perceptions of the actors who constitute the social situation. In the same way in which the self is shaped in a process of reflection over personal perception, mirror images, and the presupposed opinions of the significant others, the architecture student’s personality will be further unveiled by studying student self-perceptions, peer opinions, and the images that the general student body holds.

Architecture students in the mirror

Architecture students hold surprisingly consistent images about themselves. They have clear self-perceptions. The major points revolve around the professional commitment and the work ethic. Ann related that she sees architecture students as being committed, being completely absorbed by architecture, making a serious effort, and attempting to learn. She continues, “They live with very few outside activities and live only to study architecture.” Teo said, “Architecture students are challenging and highly competitive. You don’t really see it. They don’t show it. Lots of ego.” According to Betty, “Architecture students are a little bit crazy, dedicated, and competitive; they love architecture. They are people with great determination and commitment.” Architecture students constantly compare their
designs with the projects of their colleagues and reflect on the progress they have made and their own standing in class. Jeff and Alex agree that architecture students are competitive, but they compete with themselves more than with their colleagues. It is a constant comparison with previous performances and a striving for development. Jeff said, “Everyone wants to achieve higher quality. Most people intend to gather portfolios with their projects. Portfolios are a prerequisite for applying to every M. Arch. program.”

Architecture students seem proud of their tradition of camaraderie. The notion of camaraderie is loaded with meanings. Teo views it as “one big family,” while Alex sees it as “little cliques” in the studio. Alex said, “I think this has to do with the studio environment. There is more camaraderie because of the studio environment. The other majors are just taking tests and reading. Students from other departments meet for a few minutes only before and after classes, and sometimes when they have group projects.”

**A comparison of undergraduate and graduate students**

Since graduate students have already passed through the flamboyant studio initiation, they now can reflect on their undergraduate studio lives with more maturity; this is especially true if they have faced the realities of working in architectural firms for at least a couple of years, and sometimes even longer. According to the graduate students, “Juniors and seniors do not have adequate profes
sional skills and knowledge, and they work too slowly. They constantly have questions and ask for advice. This makes them spend more hours on projects and more time in studios. They also need to work in groups, support each other, and have someone experienced nearby. On the other hand, graduate students ... are more time-efficient because they are more experienced and more focused. They have better work ethics and are more independent. They come to the studio, do their work, and leave. There is no need for sleepless nights.”

The “arkies” viewed by other students

Students in the graduate program who hold BAs in other majors provide the most insightful impressions of studio culture. In the initial periods of architectural studies, these people are still novices in the department. They have not been enculturated yet. They have not acquired the habit of staying in school for more than eight hours, do not bring electrical appliances to school, and do not dream of showers and kitchens on school territory! They hold the view that such conditions will make school a shelter for homeless people.

A student with a BA in fine arts said, “Architecture students are dedicated and hardworking.” In his previous program he recalled that faculty didn’t demand as much. “In fine arts,” he continued, “instructors are more interested in the concept, rather than in the material embodiment of this concept.” He also felt that architecture students
worked in the studio more often because there were other people with whom they could bounce ideas around, and at home there were too many distractions. He further stated that in architecture, studio is the symbol of the program.

Most of the students with non-architectural undergraduate degrees share similar attitudes towards architecture students. “Architecture students work harder then their previous colleagues [from previous majors] because their program is more demanding,” declared another student. Someone else chimed in, “Liberal arts programs are not so demanding. ... The major source of workload is the design class.” Other comments included, “Because students have to spend more time in the studio, they develop camaraderie. They know each other better than in other majors. They know more people in school. ... (In other majors) students are not so devoted; their egos are not so strongly expressed.”

*Hard work and no play?*

What emerges from these interviews is that intensive studio life is not only a result of deep dedication, but that it also reinforces the self-perception for devotion and aspiration. The studio setting is used by students as an arena to reconstruct a world in which they will be proud to identify and project the images they like. The perceptual differences of undergraduate and graduate students reflect the self-illusions that are diligently built by the juniors and seniors, and indicate that the undergraduate studio culture
is a product of a complex process of emulation, showing-up, and building self-identity.

While my first impressions from the observation period supported the notion that architecture students are totally overworked and have no preoccupation other than design and part-time jobs, and that their personal lives are quite modest, a careful scrutiny of studio life began to unveil a lot of procrastination, socializing, and superficial demonstrations of devotion and high work ethics. The truth may be somewhere in the middle (as usual): architecture students work hard, more than students in many other departments, but not as much as they pretend; they still have not become complete workaholics.