

Addressing othering in architecture education: Learning ethics and empathy

Keywords: Ethics, empathy, agency, service-learning, engagement

ALEXIS GREGORY, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

Mississippi State University

**“The talent of imagining human situations is more important for
an architect than the gift of fantasizing spaces.”**

Aulis Blomstedt quoted by Juhani Pallasmaa

What is “othering”?

“We define “othering” as a set of dynamics, processes, and structures that engender marginality and persistent inequality across any of the full range of human differences based on group identities.”

john a. powell and Stephen Menendian, “The Problem of Othering: Towards Inclusiveness and Belonging”

How can students be “othered”?

- **project types students are not familiar with and are not part of their everyday experience**
- **not having examples of architects, or clients, who look like them**
- **projects that do not encourage agency**

Sources?

What is ethics?

Tends to be limited to Professional Practice courses and professional ethics

How do we treat clients?

How SHOULD we treat clients?

How do we treat students?

How SHOULD we treat students?

How do we treat each other?

How SHOULD we treat each other?

What are modeled behaviors?

What is empathy?

Lived experience and the understanding of life

Understanding of the human form in relation to space

Physiological aspects of empathy

How to be “attuned” to one another to better design spaces for others

Feeling the experience of someone else

How humans experience the “other” and the existence of others.

Lack of empathy from:

- **Faculty-to-Student**
- **Student-to-Student**
- **Student-to-Client/Community Partner**

- Boyer and Mitgang recommended the creation of healthy learning communities that could help the students empathize with individuals and entire communities. P. 103 – quote directly.
- Students learn early on that they should compete for the attention of the faculty, and are even told by the faculty that they should be in studio all of the time. (Linda N. Groat and Sherry Ahrentzen, “Reconceptualizing Architectural Education for a More Diverse Future: Perceptions and Visions of Architectural Students,” *Journal of Architectural Education*, 49, no. 3 (1996): 175. – quote directly
- Sources?

Methodology

Inherent Bias

Project Implicit at Harvard University (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>)

Agency & Hierarchy

- Students chose the topic to research for their memorial
- Students organized the assignment requirements and readings

Exercises in Role Playing

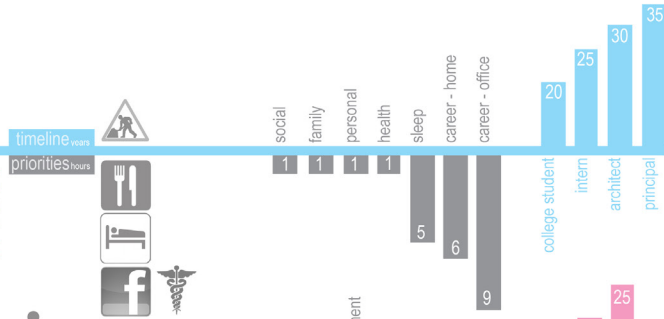
- A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future “Story” chapter; “Write a Mini-Saga”, “Riff on Opening Lines”, “Play Photo Finish”, “Ask Yourself: Who Are These People?”, and “Whip Out the Tape Recorder”
- Protagonist stories

Empathy Exercises

- Student “dates”, acts of kindness, “Hostile Terrain 94” and “Toe Tag” event, visiting Legacy Museum and The National Memorial for Peace and Justice

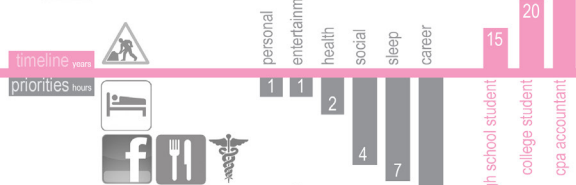
the ARCHITECT

The ARCHITECT is a single woman of 35 who runs her own architectural practice. She is an extremely hard worker with her career being her absolute main priority. She works downtown, but prefers living a ways outside of the city in a more 'cultural' environment. It is not unusual for her to work very late nights, both at her office and apartment.



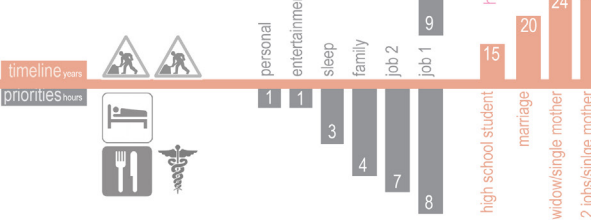
the BUSINESSMAN

The YOUNG BUSINESSMAN is a newcomer to the big city, who just got a 'big job' at a major accounting firm. He is a recent college graduate and very lively individual who prefers a lifestyle mixing both work and play. The city is all new, but he is enthusiastic about embracing the vibrance and excitement that it offers.



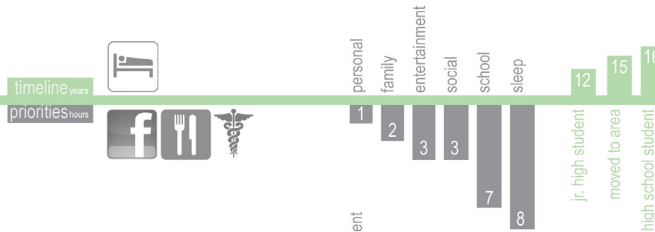
the SINGLE MOM

The SINGLE MOM is about 25 years old, and a native of the city. She got married right out of high school, and lived a happy four years with her husband and daughter. At 24, her husband was murdered, and she was left a single mother to support both herself and her daughter. She works two jobs to ensure she can make her bills, but values her daughter above everything else in life.



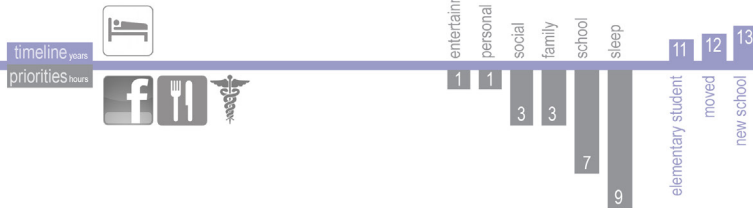
the STUDENT

The STUDENT is the daughter of a 5 person family. She is local high school student who enjoys extra-curricular activities and living an active lifestyle. She still is very close to her family and lives at home with her parents and 2 younger brothers.



the KID

The KID is a 13 year old boy who just started jr. high school. He loves sports and to be outside. He is apart of a divorced family and lives with his dad outside of the city on weekdays.



DESIGN

13

15

25

25

35



THE SINGLE
PARENT

THE ASPIRING
ACTOR

THE PET
OWNER

THE COLLEGE
STUDENT

THE OFFICE
ASSISTANT





Conclusion

Impact

Agency

Self-reflection

Learning about others

Non-traditional approaches to architecture design studio

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