

Client management on house projects: facilitating client learning for successful architect-client relationships

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports the findings of a study which examined architect-client relationships on house projects with a focus on the supportive role of architects in helping clients deal with project issues. *Habitus* theory explains that the nature of architecture as a specialised activity places architects within an *architectural habitus*, distinguishing them from clients who are not trained in the field, which is at the heart of the problematic architect-client relationship. An underlying premise was that *habitus shock*, that is, a mismatch between the architect and client's habituses occurs as they enter into a relationship on the house project. Using the qualitative approach underpinned by the constructivist perspective for data collection and analysis, eight in-depth interviews were conducted across five case studies of successful architect-client relationships. The narrative inquiry approach was used to establish the extent to which habitus shock occurred and to describe the stages involved in the client's adjustment process during habitus shock. The findings indicate that habitus shock occurred on all five case studies, which resulted in client learning, enabling clients to function with competency in the unfamiliar environment. Client learning achieved during habitus shock was directly linked to the amount of difficulty experienced. This study has refined our understanding of the architect-client relationship on house projects by exploring more deeply client behaviour and the ways in which clients successfully deal with difficulties on house projects rather than simply identifying the uncertainties and conflicts that occur on projects. The findings demonstrate that client learning during habitus shock is a characteristic of successful relationships. One of the most significant outcomes of this study is that it demonstrated the potential to facilitate client learning during habitus shock to contribute to the development of successful architect-client relationships.

KEYWORDS

Client management, client behaviour, architect-client relationships, narratives, case studies

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1. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1960s, a number of government and industry reports have consistently drawn attention to the low level of client satisfaction with the construction industry as a whole (Gyles, 1992; Latham, 1994; Egan, 1998) as well as specifically the architectural profession (RIBA, 1991; 1992; 1995) arising from the lack of integration in project teams. During the intervening years, the industry has adopted concepts such as partnering, supply chain management and innovative procurement strategies based on an expectation that such initiatives would lead to improved relationships and project performance. Considerable attention in recent years has also been paid to the development of information technologies and information communication technologies to improve project communication. Despite these efforts, evidence shows that dispute occurrence arising from adversarial project relationships is still a major problem facing the construction industry (Gebken et al, 2006), accounting for approximately 40% of all industrial disputes in Australia (Andrews, 2004).

A common approach undertaken by researchers has been to develop prescriptive models suggesting a particular ideal methodology (for example, Cooper et al, 1998; Austin et al, 2000). These models assume that relationships can be systematically controlled and structured to achieve optimisation of design and construction activities to improve project performance. The emphasis has been on the “know-how”, thereby resulting in a lack of deep understanding of the nature and underlying characteristics of relationships (Emmitt and Gorse, 2007). Briefing and design guides, tools and checklists developed over the years seem to have had limited impact in practice (Kamara et al, 2002; Yu et al, 2005), yet the focus of recent research has remained on the development of more prescriptive models.

An increasing number of empirical studies conducted to explain the nature of relationships have provided critical insights into specific behavioural attributes of project participants and how this influences the success of relationships. A range of relationship-types have been explored including architect-client (Cuff, 1991; Cowdroy, 1992), project manager-client (Barrett and Stanley, 1999), project manager-design team (Emmitt and Gorse, 2007) relationships. In particular, understanding client behaviour and its impact on project delivery is an emerging area of interest (Bertelsen and Emmitt, 2005; Boyd and Chinyio, 2006). Past studies on client behaviour indicate the significance of identifying effective ways in which clients experience and overcome difficulties in practice in order to achieve healthy relationships and successful project outcomes.

This paper reports the findings of a study, which was concerned with examining architect-client relationships on house projects with a focus on the supportive role of architects in helping clients deal with project issues. Drawing from sociological and psychological theory, the study examined five successful architect-client relationships, revealing ways in which clients effectively dealt with uncertainties on projects. The study identified that successful architect-client relationships were characterised by client learning and that over the course of the relationships, architects supported clients to learn new skills, helping them overcome difficulties faced on projects. This study has refined our understanding of the architect-client relationship by exploring more deeply client behaviour. In particular it provides detailed descriptions of the way in which clients successfully deal with difficulties rather than simply identifying the conflicts that occur on projects. One of the study’s most significant outcomes is that it demonstrated the potential to facilitate client learning during habitus shock to contribute to successful management of architect-client relationships.

2. HABITUS SHOCK MODEL FOR ARCHITECT-CLIENT RELATIONSHIPS ON HOUSE PROJECTS

Habitus theory borrowed from sociology entails that the nature of architecture as a specialised activity places architects within an *architectural habitus* comprised of unique dispositions, possessing specialist knowledge, skills and education, socially acquired through experience and practice and is continually reproduced over generations (Bourdieu, 1977; Stevens, 1998). The *architectural habitus* is comprised of cultivated individuals claiming a particular architectural knowledge territory as distinctly their own in order to establish a degree of autonomy from other members of the society. The concept of group habitus helps to explain how the architect who is a member of the architectural habitus may differ from the client who is located within a different group habitus. The fact that the architectural field is not known to the client and vice versa is not without significance.

A general implication within habitus theory is that the habitus is fairly stable in that the habitus reproduces continuous generations of lifestyles (Bourdieu, 1977). However, more recently literature suggests that the habitus is more malleable than what was previously accepted (Friedmann, 2002; Waterson, 2002). *Second birth* refers to conditions where the habitus undergoes transformations as a result of fundamental environmental changes and/or educational learning. Similar to the second birth experience, it is proposed that a mismatch between the architect and client's habituses takes place as they enter into a relationship on the house project where the client's habitus may encounter conditions different from those in which they are accustomed to. The client's habitus may be inappropriate to cope with the unfamiliar architectural habitus, thereby resulting in potential discomfort. Generally when clients enter into relationships with architects they are uncertain about what is expected of them or what they can expect from the architect. A client's habitus may be in a state of shock when confronted with the architect who is of a different corresponding habitus and may undergo some form of adjustment similar to individuals experiencing *culture shock* who are undergoing radical change from one culture to another.

The term *habitus shock* is introduced in this study and is defined as the confusion, stress or frustration experienced by clients who find themselves exposed to an unfamiliar architectural habitus and design and construction process as a result of a mismatch between the architect and client's habituses. Figure 1 is an abstract representation of the social space occupied by the architect and client over the course of their relationship on the house project. An underlying assumption is that the architect and client's habituses have a degree of influence over each other during habitus shock. It proposed that the effective management of the client's habitus shock experience can improve the success of the architect-client relationship.

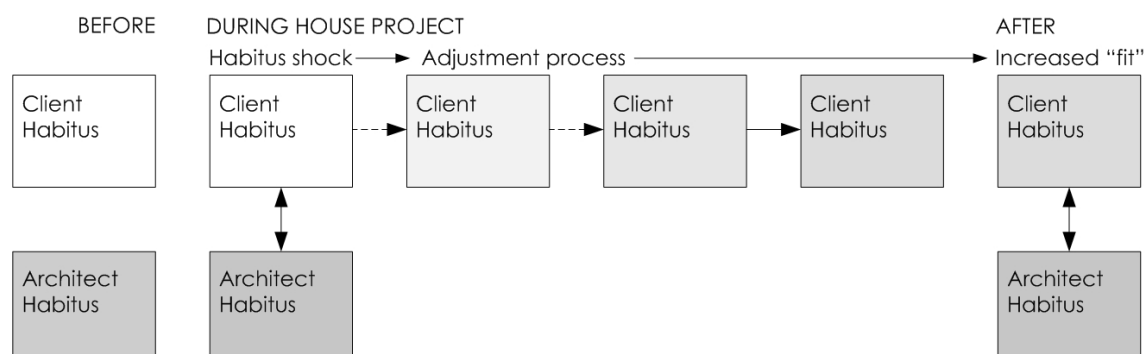


Figure 1: A model for successful architect-client relationships on house projects

It is suggested that the client's adjustment experience on the house project can result in learning which in turn leads to an increased fit between the architect and client's habituses. The closer the fit between the habituses the less likely it is for conflicts to occur and hence the higher the likelihood for the quality of the architect-client relationship to be enhanced. Therefore it is proposed that client learning during habitus shock is a characteristic of successful architect-client relationships, which can be demonstrated in the client's increased adjustment and ability to function competently in the new environment. This study sought to describe and explain the client's adjustment experience during habitus shock on house projects based on the proposed conceptual model (refer to Figure 1).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Due to the exploratory and inductive nature of the model, the methodology was derived from the logic of qualitative research methodology and in particular the constructivist paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A key methodological issue considered was related to revealing the client's behaviour on projects and how this influenced the architect-client relationship. The narrative inquiry approach was considered appropriate for this study because it:

- takes into account the subjectivity of the narrators, that is, the architect and client and also the context within which the narrative is told
- is particularly useful for systematically studying the key events within the client's habitus shock experience and for connecting and seeing the consequences of those events and actions mapped against the five stages of the culture shock process
- provides the opportunity to intimately understand the "insiders view" of the architect-client relationship and in particular, the client's stories of their habitus shock experience.

The face-to-face, individual interview process was the main method for data collection. Eight in-depth interviews were conducted with two architects and their four clients across five case studies. Architects were asked questions in relation to:

- the type of work they conducted and the manner in which they conducted their work in general terms to provide some context to establish their architectural habitus,
- their relationships with clients in general to provide background to the type of clients they worked with and their general approach to managing relationships with clients,
- the specific case studies and the associated relationships they developed with the client for each case. As this study was aimed at examining successful architect-client relationships architects were asked to identify potential case studies which they perceived had achieved successful architect-client relationships.

The client interviews were guided by the architects' stories. The key aim of the client interviews was to allow clients to narrate stories which represented "critical moments" in their experiences on the house project. Clients were invited to tell stories relating to:

- the uncertainties or difficulties they encountered throughout the project
- any standout moments they remembered, whether positive or negative
- their interactions with the architect and how this impacted on their experiences

The story analysis technique was used for analysing the data as it offers a way of connecting different stories to understand a phenomenon and in particular changes that take place over time (Bell, 1993). The story analysis allowed for the examination of how the client achieved learning over time through habitus shock. The first phase of analysis involved the transcription of "rough drafts" of the entire interview to develop narrative segments. The

narrative segments were interpreted to identify the meaning of each individual story. Based on the client's behaviour, feelings or actions described within the stories, each story was then classified into categories according to the primary characteristics of the five stages of culture shock. A common view is that the adjustment process is a stage-based developmental process (Pedersen, 1995), which is commonly referred to as the *U-curve* and is one of the best known process-centred models to describe the culture shock phenomenon (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). The *U-curve* views the adjustment process as one which moves from an initial optimism, elation and excitement through a subsequent dip as the sojourner struggles to fit in to the new culture toward a gradual recovery to a higher and more adequate level of coping and functioning in the new culture (Church, 1982; Shupe, 2007). Over the years the U-curve hypothesis has received varying degrees of support (Chen, 2008). Therefore it is important to describe the process in a balanced perspective when using the U-curve to explore the client's habitus shock experience. For this reason, Adler's (1975) five-stage developmental process model was adopted for this study of the client's habitus shock experience because it is one of the few culture shock models which identifies the potential for both positive and negative consequences that result from culture shock.

The next stage of analysis involved linking the different stories into chronological order. The stories coded into the five stages of culture shock were then "pasted together" to form a "metastory" to demonstrate the client's adjustment process during habitus shock (refer to Figure 3 in appendix 7.1 for an example of a metastory developed for this study).

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Each case study was analysed as an independent unit and subjected to three stages of analysis. The findings reported in this paper are a result of the final stage of analysis, which included a comparative analysis between case studies to ascertain common themes and irregularities.

4.1 Background

Five architect-client relationships formed the five case studies explored in this study. Two practising architects in New South Wales, Australia were selected for this research. As shown in Figure 2, the five cases present a number of similarities and differences in the level of exposure the clients have had in relation to an architect and the associated architectural habitus. Clients 1, 3 and 5 were involved in one completed house project each. Therefore Clients 1, 3 and 5 have had the experiences of being in a relationship with Architects 1 and 2 respectively from the beginning till the end of a house project and have lived in the house after project completion. Client 4 on the other hand was involved with one completed house project and at the time of the interview was in the process of their second project and relationship with Architect 1. Clients 3 and 4 are the same people. However, for the purposes of this study given that the unit of analysis is the architect-client relationship, the two projects and associated relationships were analysed separately as individual units of analysis. The analysis of case study 4 was therefore limited to Client 4's relationship with Architect 1 until the end of the design stage, however, was informed by their past experiences of having been in a relationship with the architect on their previous project, that is, case study 3. At the time of the interview with Client 2 the project was in the process of progressing to the construction stage. Client 2 had only been in a relationship with Architect 1 from the start of the project until the beginning of the construction stage and therefore the discussion on case study 2 is limited to the analysis of the relationship within this time period (refer to Figure 2).

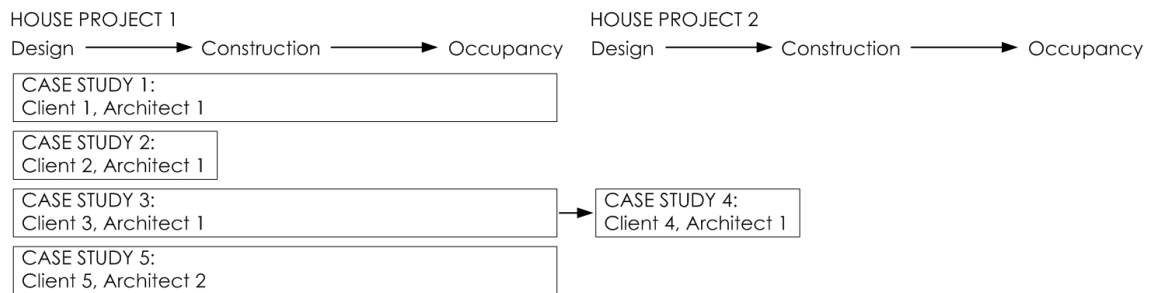


Figure 2: The different characteristics of the five case studies

4.2 Confirmation of project success and habitus shock occurrence

An important part of the client interviews was to confirm that the clients were satisfied with the project outcomes. All case study clients and architects achieved successful architect-client relationships. The architect and client from each case confirmed that they were satisfied with the project outcomes and the way in which the architect-client relationship developed.

The first stage of analysis established whether the clients experienced habitus shock on the projects. The analysis revealed how all five clients encountered habitus shock on the projects. Each client experienced a degree of disorientation at some stage of the design and/or construction process. The degree to which they experienced habitus shock differed across the case studies; however, the analysis demonstrated how they were confronted with a new environment as they entered into the architect-client relationship on the projects. The clients found themselves being immersed in a state of uncertainty with little real understanding of the nature of the design and/or construction process and the associated architectural habitus. Even client 4 who had previously been involved in an architect-client relationship on another house project was confronted with a number of unexpected issues on their second project. Client 4 was, however, better equipped to deal with the uncertainties on their second project and was able to enjoy the design process. This was attributed to the learning Client 4 achieved on the first project when they were exposed to the iterative nature of the design process.

4.3 Habitus shock profiles

From as early as 1955 (Lysgaard, 1955), there have been many attempts to describe the dynamic nature of the sojourner adjustment process when experiencing culture shock. A common view is that the adjustment process is a stage-based developmental process (Pedersen, 1995). This process, which is commonly referred to as the *U-curve* views the adjustment process as one which moves from an initial optimism, elation and excitement through a subsequent dip as the sojourner struggles to fit in to the new culture toward a gradual recovery to a higher and more adequate level of coping and functioning in the new culture (Church, 1982; Shupe, 2007). Within this idealised growth model, the sojourner acquires knowledge and skills, which allows them to adjust to the new environment to achieve a positive outlook of their experiences. The process of recovery towards the more positive elements of autonomy and interdependency may not always be achievable though and it is when this does not occur that the sojourner's adjustment experience results in negative consequences (Pedersen, 1992).

Within each case study, client stories were identified and coded into the five stages of culture shock (refer to Figure 4 in appendix 7.2). Four out of the five clients experienced all five stages of culture shock throughout their habitus shock experience including honeymoon,

disintegration, reintegration, autonomy and interdependency. Client 4 only experienced three stages of the culture shock process, namely reintegration, autonomy and interdependency. The case studies demonstrated that uncertainties and the associated stresses are inevitable on projects and typically occur during the construction stage. However, when describing stories of disintegration, the clients not only explained the situations which led to their feelings of disorientation but also how they eventually escaped the stage. The clients demonstrated a relaxed attitude and had a positive outlook even when confronted with challenges on the project. Furthermore the clients' positive attitude was a result of a more long-term and meaningful understanding of the nature of the design and construction process and the associated architectural habitus. In particular, the client in case study 4 achieved the positive elements of reintegration and interdependency without progressing through the negative stages of honeymoon and disintegration, which was experienced on a previous project.

The five habitus shock profiles in this study showed that the adjustment experience of clients who achieved successful relationships resembles the growth model of culture shock, which results in learning. All clients progressed through the different culture shock stages and ultimately achieved a positive outlook of their habitus shock experience. Relatively few stories in the case studies illustrated aspects of honeymoon and disintegration stages and a significantly higher number of stories demonstrated aspects of the reintegration, autonomy and interdependency stages. The high number of stories found within the reintegration, autonomy and interdependency stages indicate that the clients' adjustment experiences were largely characterised by positive elements of recovery, enjoyment and increased awareness rather than the more negative elements of naivety, stress and discomfort associated with the honeymoon and disintegration stages.

4.4 Client learning & successful relationships

The findings indicated that all clients experienced a degree of disorientation as a result of being confronted with unfamiliar design and construction issues. This is supported by past studies exploring client behaviour where it has been established that clients experience difficulties on projects due to their lack of understanding of design and construction issues (Barrett and Stanley, 1999; Bertelsen and Emmitt, 2005; Tzortzoulos et al, 2006; Boyd and Chinyio, 2006). It has been demonstrated that the client's inability to cope with unfamiliar design and construction issues can hinder the successful delivery of project outcomes. This study has confirmed the difficulties associated with the clients' lack of understanding of design and construction issues and has also identified effective ways in which clients used to deal with uncertainties on house projects to achieve successful outcomes. Primarily the strategies undertaken by clients to cope with uncertainties revolved around the clients acquiring some form of learning to function more competently in the unfamiliar environment. The discomfort the clients experienced as a result of the uncertainties became less over time, indicating that the client's adjustment difficulties decreased over time. The habitus shock experience provided clients with opportunities to develop coping strategies over time, which reduced the level of stress experienced. Therefore, even though the clients were continually confronted with uncertainties, their newly acquired coping strategies helped them develop a sense of familiarity in the new environment to limit the amount of difficulty experienced.

The three key indicators of client learning included the client's acquisition of skills and knowledge in relation to the design and construction process, a more complex worldview of the architectural habitus and an ability to take greater enjoyment in the new environment. Client learning achieved during habitus shock can be directly linked to the amount of

difficulty experienced. The more adjusted the client is to the new environment the lower the level of difficulty experienced and therefore the more positive the adjustment process. Therefore client learning during habitus shock is a characteristic of successful relationships.

4.5 Factors facilitating learning

The analysis demonstrated that there are factors which can facilitate client learning, which impacts on the quality of their adjustment experience and success of the architect-client relationship. In all cases examined, the compatibility between the architect and client's habituses and a high level of trust and reliance on the architect were identified as two key factors which led to clients' increased competency to function in the uncertain environment.

4.5.1 Compatibility between habituses

The analysis showed that the concept of cultural fit is relevant in explaining client learning during habitus shock. Specifically, it demonstrated that the compatibility between the architect and client's habituses contributed to client learning on the projects. This study has not only confirmed the significance of the compatibility between habituses in enhancing the client's adjustment process but has also revealed specific characteristics about the compatibility between habituses which resulted in successful relationships. Three key themes were identified across the cases to indicate the significance of the compatibility of habituses between the architect and client in facilitating client learning during habitus shock.

The first key theme across all cases was the clients' reliance on recommendations in selecting their architect. All clients indicated that they sought to develop an understanding of the architect prior to engaging them to work on the projects. All clients received positive feedback about the architect from friends, work colleagues or family members, indicating that the clients had a general idea of the relationship they were entering as well as the building outcome that would be achieved if they employed the architect. Seeking recommendations offered these clients a degree of assurance, that if people within their social milieu were satisfied with the architect then they would likely be satisfied also.

The second theme revolved around the architect and client holding similar values on how they perceived a professional relationship should function. Ultimately, the architect is engaged as a designer to transform the client's needs into reality. It has long been recognised that architectural design is the architect's key contribution to clients and architects are in an excellent position to apply knowledge on many of the complex design issues surrounding projects (RIBA, 1992, 1993). The architects perceived that as the professional in the relationship they were in the position to contribute to achieving their client's needs while improving the quality of the project and indicated that their clients appreciated the contributions they made on the projects. Findings from this study confirmed that the architects' designs were highly valued by all clients interviewed. The findings also demonstrated that even though the architect had the capacity to contribute to the design, there was still the need for clients to be willing to accept the architect's advice. In all cases examined, the architect was seen as the primary decision-maker on projects where the clients relied on the architect's advice on various project-related issues such as the development application process, detailed design and construction and project management. All the clients viewed the architect as the 'expert' and provided a high level of autonomy to the architect on. Both the acceptance of the relationship as a form of partnership as well as the client's high level of respect and trust for the architect's expertise contributed to the success of the relationships. The architects were only able to improve the quality of the projects because the

clients provided them the opportunity to offer their professional opinion. It was only through this shared understanding and mutual respect for their specific roles in the relationship that enabled the clients to overcome many of the potentially stressful situations on the projects.

The third theme was the high level of compatibility between the architect and client in terms of personal chemistry. Both the architects explained their preference for working with clients who had an interest in the quality of their house and also those who were able to communicate this easily. For these architects, an intimate relationship with the client was key in enabling them achieve the quality and depth of understanding which resulted in appropriate design solutions. Often, the client may not accurately describe to the architect their requirements and therefore where there is a personal chemistry, the architect is better placed at observing and gathering information about the client's personality traits and preferences to develop appropriate design solutions. Similarly, the clients highlighted the significance of the chemistry or bond they had with the architect and how it contributed to their positive experiences on the project. It was through the intimacy and chemistry between the architect and client that the client was able to express themselves with ease and comfort.

4.5.2 Architect's role

The supportive role of the architect was identified as central in leading to the success of the architect-client relationships in all cases explored. A key coping strategy used by all clients was the development of a support system, which revolved around the architect's 'training' role to help them adjust to the new environment. The clients from all case studies demonstrated a high level of reliance and trust in the architect on all project issues, which provided the architect the freedom to develop creative solutions. The availability of the architect acting as a 'tutor' also placed the client in a better position to acquire increased competency to function in the new environment and in turn take enjoyment in the process.

The case studies demonstrated the significance of investing time in developing the architect-client relationship to enable clients to gain adequate trust in the architect's ability to function as a support system. The client stories demonstrated how each client developed increasing competency to function in the new environment where their sense of self-assurance was achieved over time. Different clients adjusted at their own rate and relied on a high level of communication with the architect. The architects also emphasised the significance of investing time and effort in ensuring that the clients felt comfortable and had a good understanding of the design and process. While it may not seem convenient to invest a high amount of time in developing relationships, the case studies demonstrated the benefits of achieving trust between the architect and client outweighed the initial investment of time. In all cases explored, the clients explained how they developed trust and respect for the architect and were of the belief that their needs and ideas were valued by the architect on both professional and personal levels. The clients trusted that the architect knew them and their family on a personal level and was able to propose design solutions based on a clear understanding of their requirements. The clients also placed considerable faith in the architect to manage the project in a professional manner and with the client's interests at heart.

There are two key reasons which may explain why mutual trust and respect were necessary for the success of the architect-client relationships. Firstly the development of trust for the architect was seen by the clients as central in their ability to develop a more relaxed attitude to enjoy their new environment and the uncertainties they experienced. Secondly, the client's trust in the architect enabled the architect's specialist opinion to be used to its full potential. Although the clients were actively involved in the design process they did not make decisions

concerning design and construction issues. The clients from all case studies demonstrated a high level of co-dependency on the architect when making decisions on the project. The client's recognition of the architect's competencies was crucial in giving the architect the freedom required to develop creative solutions. This allowed the clients to acquire increased competency to function in the new environment and in turn take enjoyment in the process.

5. CONCLUSION

The analysis highlighted that habitus shock occurred on all case studies in some form which was represented by clients undergoing a period of adjustment similar to a sojourner experiencing the different culture shock stages. The sequence in which the clients encountered the different stages was, however, not as easily recognisable as the idealised U-curve model. Despite the different habitus shock profiles, all clients progressed through the different culture shock stages to ultimately achieve a positive outlook of their habitus shock experience. The clients who all achieved successful architect-client relationships experienced positive adjustment processes and demonstrated relaxed attitudes even when confronted with challenges on the project. The clients' ability to develop a positive outlook of their habitus shock experiences led to the successful delivery of project outcomes. Client learning achieved during habitus shock can therefore be directly linked to the amount of difficulty experienced and is a characteristic of successful relationships.

One of the most significant outcomes of this study is that it demonstrated that there are factors which can facilitate client learning during habitus shock and that architects play a key role in facilitating client learning. Therefore there are ways in which clients can be provided support to help them deal with uncertainties on projects to achieve successful outcomes. Although the habitus shock experience and the associated uncertainty and discomfort is difficult to prevent, it is possible to prepare clients for the experience. This study simply begins the development of a more detailed understanding of the role that architects can play in providing adequate support to clients. It is perhaps fruitful to ask what can the architect learn about their skills and capacity towards client management? What do we already know about improving the management of architect-client relationships and what role can the architect play? It is suggested that more research on the architect's role in facilitating client learning could provide critical insight into the supportive role required of architects during habitus shock.

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7. APPENDICE

7.1 Example of a metastory developed on the study: case study 5

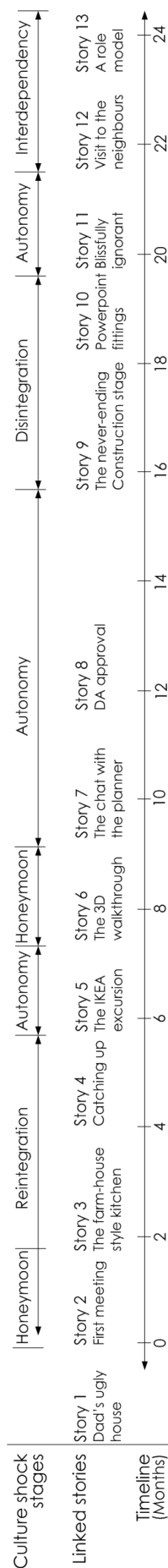


Figure 3:. *Client 5's adjustment process during habitus shock*

The stories cover a period of approximately 24 months from project initiation until project completion. In summary the stories were about C5 developing skills and knowledge to enjoy the new environment she was in. In the first story, C5 explained how she was convinced by her brother-in-law that she needed an architect when he reminded her of her "dad's ugly house" which was built without the use of an architect. The second story shows how, after being somewhat unsure about the potential value of employing an architect, C5 was impressed by A2's expertise and involvement with the university and building advisory body and excited that they had "clicked" at their first meeting. The following two stories highlight how C5 was gradually introduced to the iterative nature of the design process and how she started to develop increased understanding of A2's unique contributions. In Story 5, C5 highlighted how A2 helped her overcome the potentially stressful task of designing kitchen fit-outs by teaching her "how to use IKEA" and they had "the most wonderful time". In the sixth story, C5 remembered being "blown away" the first time she was shown the complete version of the 3D CAD model of the proposed design. The seventh and eight stories indicate C5's continued development of a broader worldview of the complexities that can occur on projects and her increasing appreciation for the role of A2 in not only ensuring the successful completion of her house project but also in enabling her to to enjoy the unfamiliar environment. Stories 9 and 10 demonstrate C5's increasing sense of impatience for the project to finish, as she felt tired and overwhelmed by the need to make decisions on unfamiliar issues such as "powerpoint fittings". In Story 11 she explained how she overcame many of the potentially stressful situations during the construction stage by simply passing over the decisions to A2 indicating the level of trust she had for A2 at that stage. The final two stories demonstrate C5's refined understanding of the value and the unique contributions of A2 in providing her the "individualised" and "beautiful" house she was clearly pleased with.

7.2 Habitus shock profiles of the five case study clients

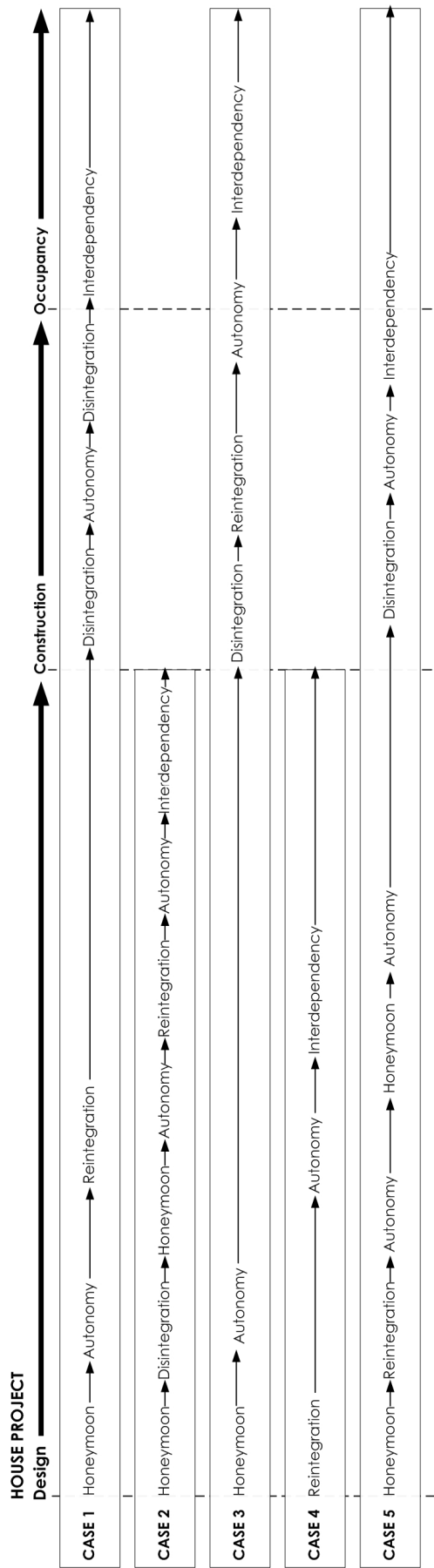


Figure 4: Habitus shock profiles of the five case study clients

In summary, two key observations can be made based on the characteristics of the five habitus shock profiles including:

- the clients' frequent experience of the positive elements of reintegration, autonomy and interdependency and their limited encounter with the negative honeymoon and disintegration stages, resembling the growth model of culture shock, and
- the client's decreasing adjustment difficulties over the course of the project.