

RESEARCH & CREATIVE ACTIVITY STATEMENT

My research and scholarly work are focused on understanding the relationship between humans and man-made environments. Over the course of six years, the arc of my work has grown to encompass a dynamic range of topics and has been augmented by my interactions as an educator and collaborations with peers.

This body of research began during my MFA thesis entitled *Patterns & Intersections: Civility in the Public Space* (<https://issuu.com/oneilw1979/docs/issuu>). Focusing on interpersonal communication, I wanted to understand patterns of conflict in public spaces and help others reflect and become more cognizant of their surroundings. Subsequently, my interests have shifted from understanding conflict in the public space to addressing formally how the built environment affects the human experience. This direction has taken me down two distinct but inter-related paths. The first involves designing for disabilities and diving into IDEO's human-centered design process to understand how an individual navigates the built environment from a unique perspective. This focused on pedagogical methods to fulfill educational objectives and establishing standards of access through design. The work was published in the *Interdisciplinary Journal of Wayfinding and Signage* (<https://ijsw.shareok.org/ijsw/article/view/11>) and I presented on it at national conferences (*SECAC and UCDA Design Educator Summit*) and was a panelist on Design Incubations *Designing for and Teaching Accessibility* panel discussion (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H_oOfDAzpFE).

The second and newer direction involves understanding how the human body has dictated the design of objects and spaces with which we utilize and interact. This research specifically focuses on the influence of human biometric data on our surroundings and how this knowledge can be applied in the classroom and to the field of design. I created and taught a history course based on this topic and am in the process of writing about the contemporary connections to the history of human-centered design.

My research has been mostly qualitative, including primary and secondary research methods such as user testing, ethnographic research, competitor analysis, and visual exploration. At a broader level, the work encompasses topics such as usability, user experience, data-driven design, and semiotics. My research path has been influenced by my experiences of: 1) preparation for lectures and lab activities, 2) an interactive teaching style in the classroom, 3) intrinsic curiosity of the built environment, and 4) a personally subjective interest in post-war housing and furnishings. Related creative work includes a silkscreen "Neighborhood" series exploring proportions and underlying design principles of mid-century architecture and industrial design. As a side project, I have been working in an oral narrative space to document how educators approach career decisions and the highly personal path to tenure which can be found at www.TellitToNeil.com.

My research is primarily driven by practical considerations and experiences of individuals with their surroundings to better understand the complexities and nuances of this interactivity. A primary means to achieve this requires working directly with people and spaces to gain an understanding of how theoretical ideas evolve imperfectly in real world settings. Quality indicators of my research include acceptances to peer-reviewed journals and national conference presentations and panels. I aim to continue presenting my work and ideas in a broad range of settings that include peer reviewed publications, panels and speaking engagements, local presentations, and web-based content.