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To park or not to park

Parking on campus is a necessary part of student life on campus, with cars being allowed for all class levels. The goal of this research is to find out student opinion on the signage the university uses, and how easy it is to find their correct lot, do they help with navigation? So often on campus I hear arguments for or against the signs used to differentiate lots. To achieve this self ethnography, a communications audit, and a questionnaire were used.

The questionnaire yielded results more varied than what was originally thought. When asked how noticeable the signs were they were given two prompts, at day and at night. The results clearly show that at night the signs are less visible to students. They were also asked how noticeable they were in general. The results for this were relatively symmetrical. One interesting observation made was when participants were asked if the signs were helpful with navigation. From 1-5, 2 was the most answered with one

being the least helpful. That being said, with this question all other answers also were chosen. The graph was slightly skewed left.

One point worth mentioning is that when asked if they had trouble finding what lot to park in the majority of respondents answered sometimes. The other majority answered yes they had had trouble, with the smallest number answering no. This evidence makes sense when looking at what was found through self ethnography, to be mentioned later.

The Questionnaire showed a very wide spread response. It seems like not one area in particular is heavily concentrated, there is always some contrast to balance it out.

The second tactic used was a communications audit. Signs were photographed and examined to see how well they communicated with drivers. To start off, all of the signs have a base color of white, which contrasts well with the black, and other highly exposed colors on the signs. The drawback of this is that other parking signs, like those for specific people are also white, at some points the signs blended together. This is also because of their shape. All signs in the parking lots are rectangular with rounded corners, making it easy to get caught up in which one to look at. Giving the parking signs a different shape could lend itself useful for differentiating them from other signs around the area.

The signs themselves are very consistent with an emphasis on the lot name and who can park there. It seems like they put more emphasis on the name of the lot rather than who can park there. Each lot is differentiated by color, and each sign has one rectangle of that color besides a few lots. There are lots with many colors and that can make it hard to tell what colors, because they jumble together. The colors could stand to be more prominent to stand out more, when according to the questionnaire, some people don't even know what color parking pass they have. Perhaps giving the signs a border with their respective colors could help them stand out more.

Self ethnography, the last tactic used. Familiarizing myself with the location of the signs was key to the success of this tactic. Walking around campus there were several things noticed. One being the placement of the signs. In some areas the signs were oriented in a way that makes it harder to notice when driving past. Instead of facing drivers, they are turned sideways so they would have to turn their heads and look, which could be very dangerous on a very busy campus. One lot didn't even have a sign indicating which lot it was.

As mentioned earlier, the placement of some of the signs "hide" them in a sense. The parking lots are sometimes crowded with signs shaped similarly and it can be a bit difficult to focus on the one you need to see, especially if you're new to campus. In

some instances they could also be blocked but shrubs, seen outside the freed and the inn parking lots. You could drive past and miss them in a split second. From a distance the colors could also look very similar. Ohio northern uses red, orange, blue, and green. Red and orange can easily be confused, as well as blue and green.

The parking signage on campus could use some work, shown using a questionnaire, a communications audit, and self ethnography. Students opinions were somewhat neutral leaning towards a more negative stance with the parking signage on campus. Paired with the information found with the communications audit and self ethnography the parking signage could use a revamp. It's consistent but the signs are sometimes hidden and there could be more done to help make them stand out more, for example changing the shape and making the colors stand out more. The signage isn't bad, but an overhaul could lend itself more useful for navigation and safety.