# Architects Practicing as Interior Designers:
An Analysis of Motivations, Expertise, and Perceptions

Very little has been written, much less published, on architects' motivations, their expertise and the perceptions of architects practicing interior design. That is, the assumption has simply always existed that architects should certainly engage in interiors work. It is only recently that the field of interior design has reached a point of complexity where some are beginning to question this notion.

Anecdotal information lends credence to research questions that explore architects', **motivations**, **expertise** and **perceptions** surrounding architects practicing design. The research is exploring questions such as why is practicing as an interior designer so widespread in the architecture industry? Does it indicate an increasing shift in whom or what provides interior design services? What is it about an architect that compels him or her to provide services typically associated with an interior designer – components outside the customary scope of architectural planning and building core-and-shell detailing? Is it a component of their education or is it just "in their blood", an innate desire to have control over all matters of design rather than specialize in any one specific area? Perhaps it is simply a matter of economics or a contractual necessity to keep all design services under one roof. Whatever the rationale, there are various and compelling reasons underlying this mode of professional practice that are still either inadequately defined or poorly understood.
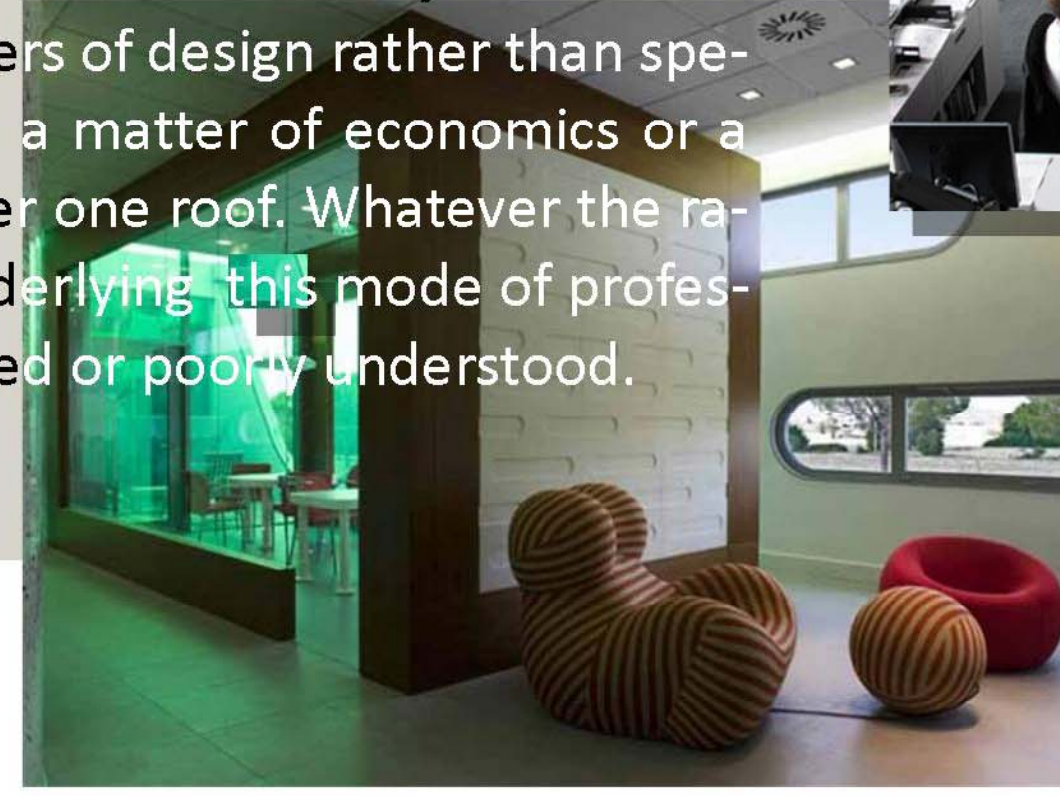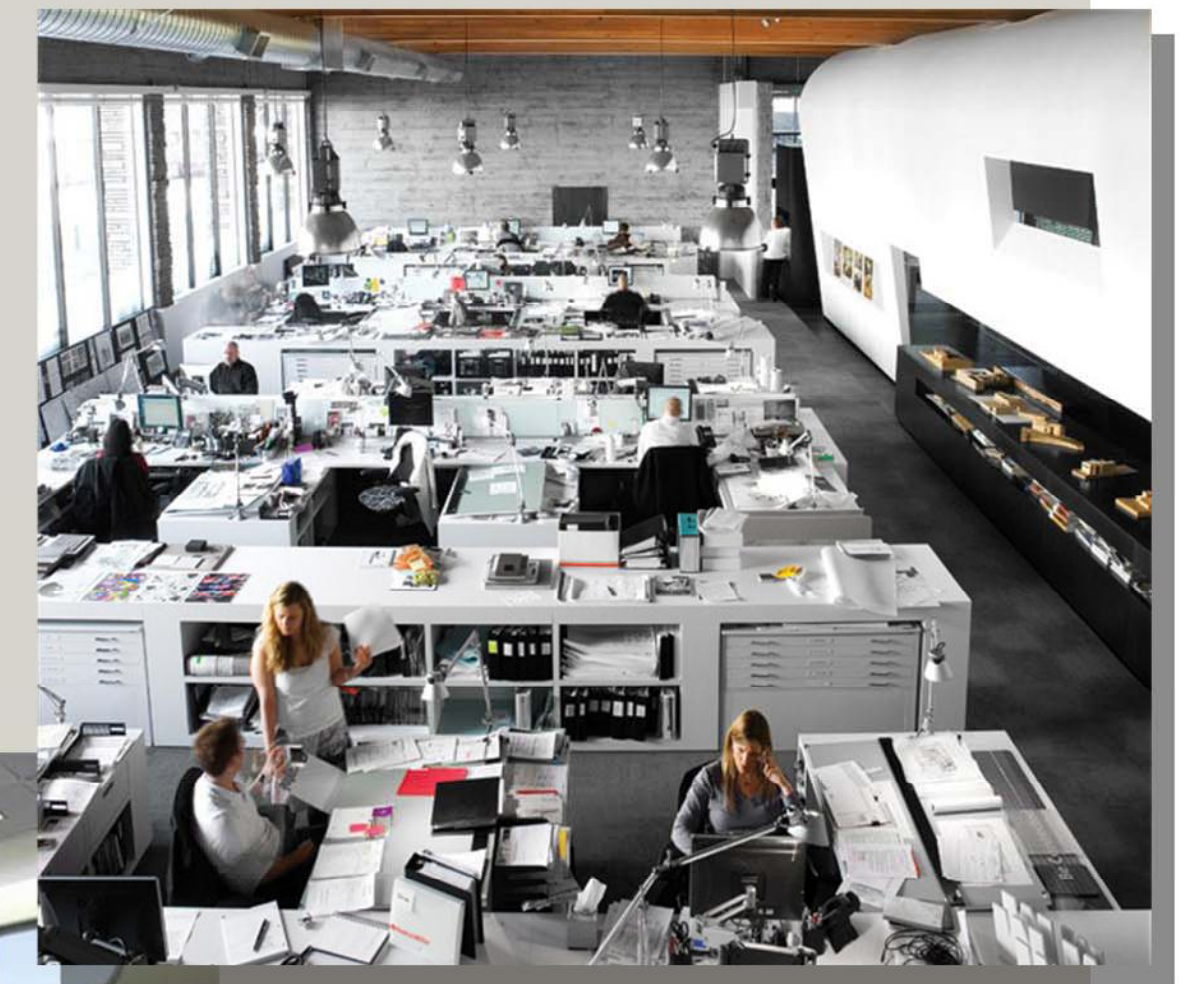
Initial Survey Observations

Of the 72 respondents who started the survey, twelve indicated they hold an NCIDQ certification and/or other required or optional registration or license. Six of these respondents hold only an NCIDQ certification. Of these 6, five are licensed architects. Four respondents indicated they hold only a required or optional registration or license. All four are licensed architects. Two respondents hold both an NCIDQ certification and other required or optional registration or license. Both are licensed architects. Eleven of these twelve ("The Twelve") are licensed architects.
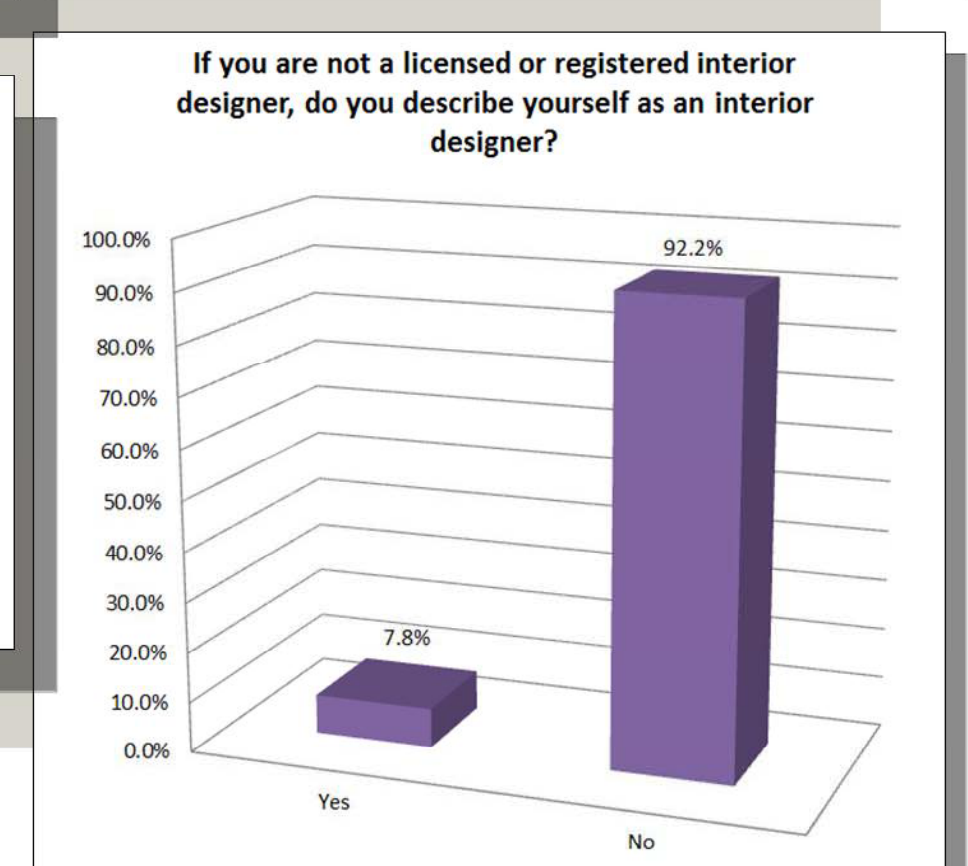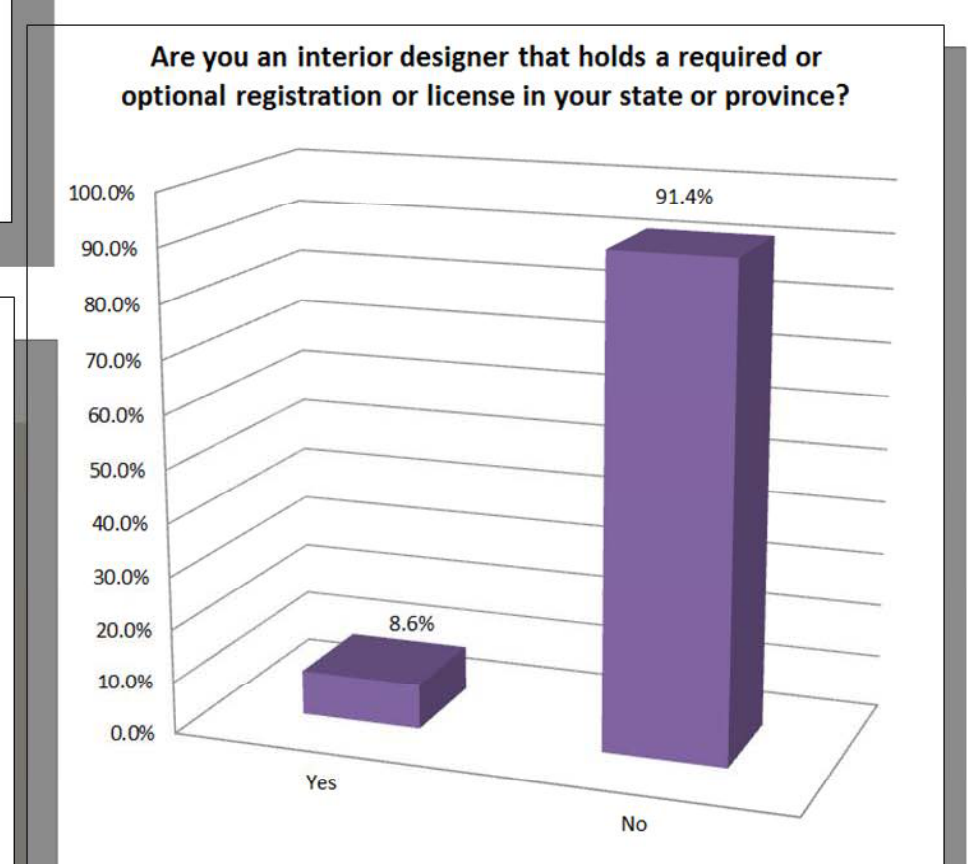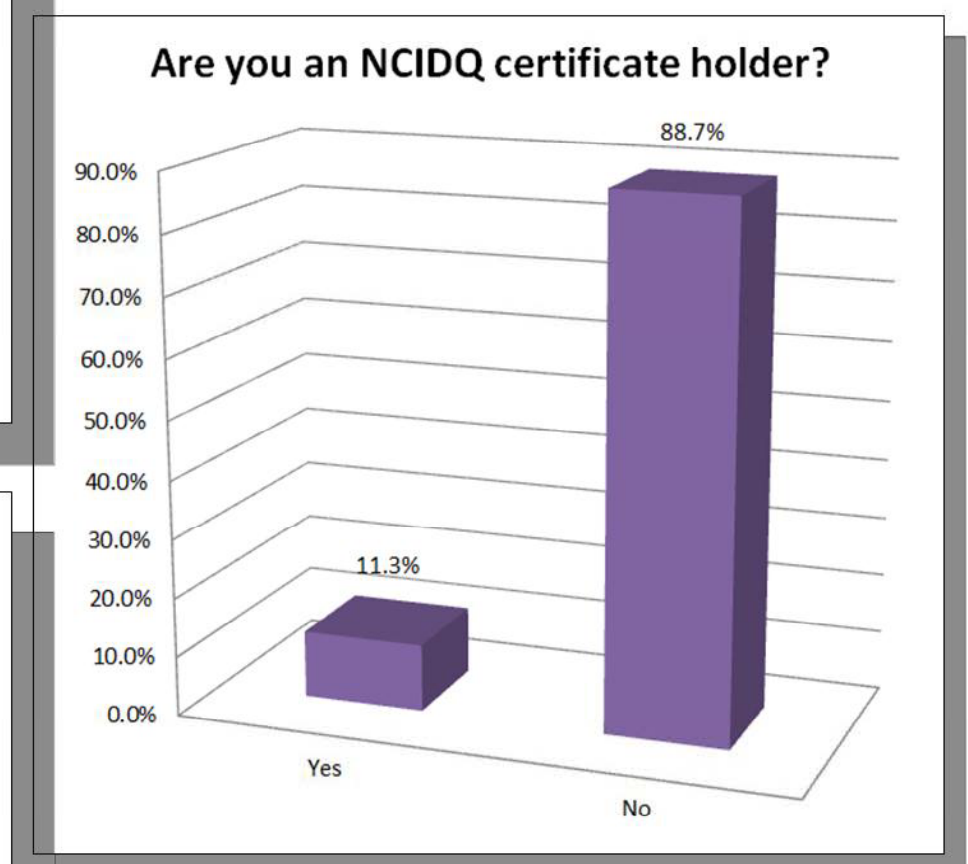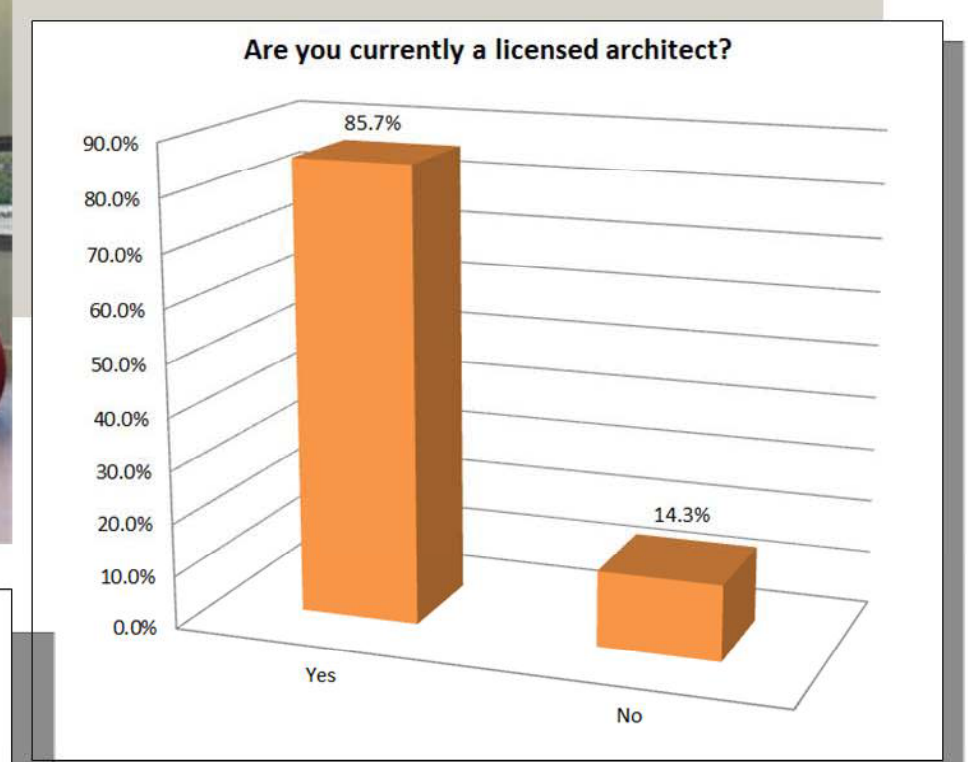
Of the 12 respondents that hold an NCIDQ certification or other required or optional registration or license (as an interior designer) only one chose to describe themself as an interior designer (Q10), stating their reason as *"Scope of services we offer."* Six of the twelve stated *"No"*. The remaining 5 respondents did not answer Q10. However, these five responded "Yes" when answering Q6 and Q8 regarding certification/licensure/registration as an interior designer. Of these 5, four "Agreed" or "Strong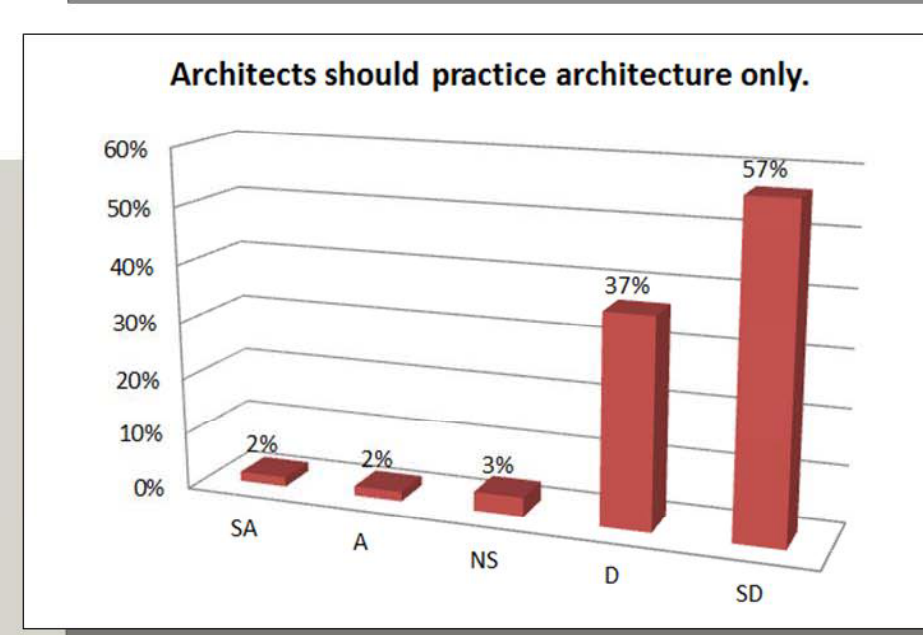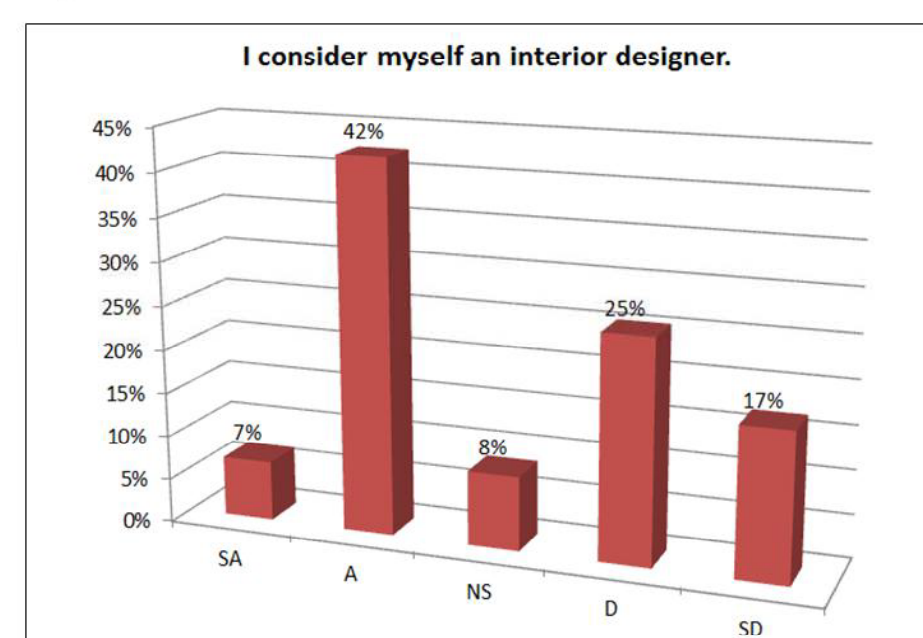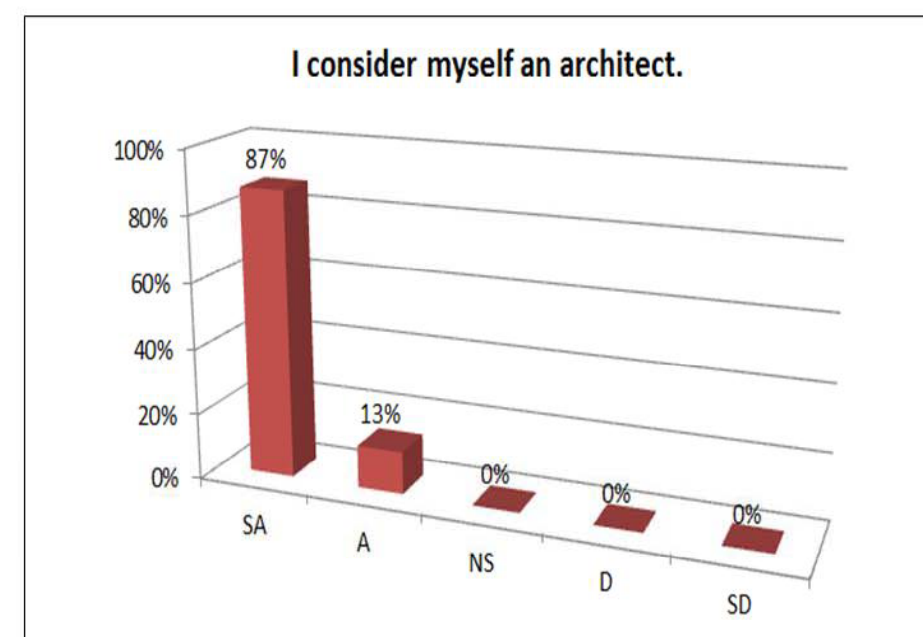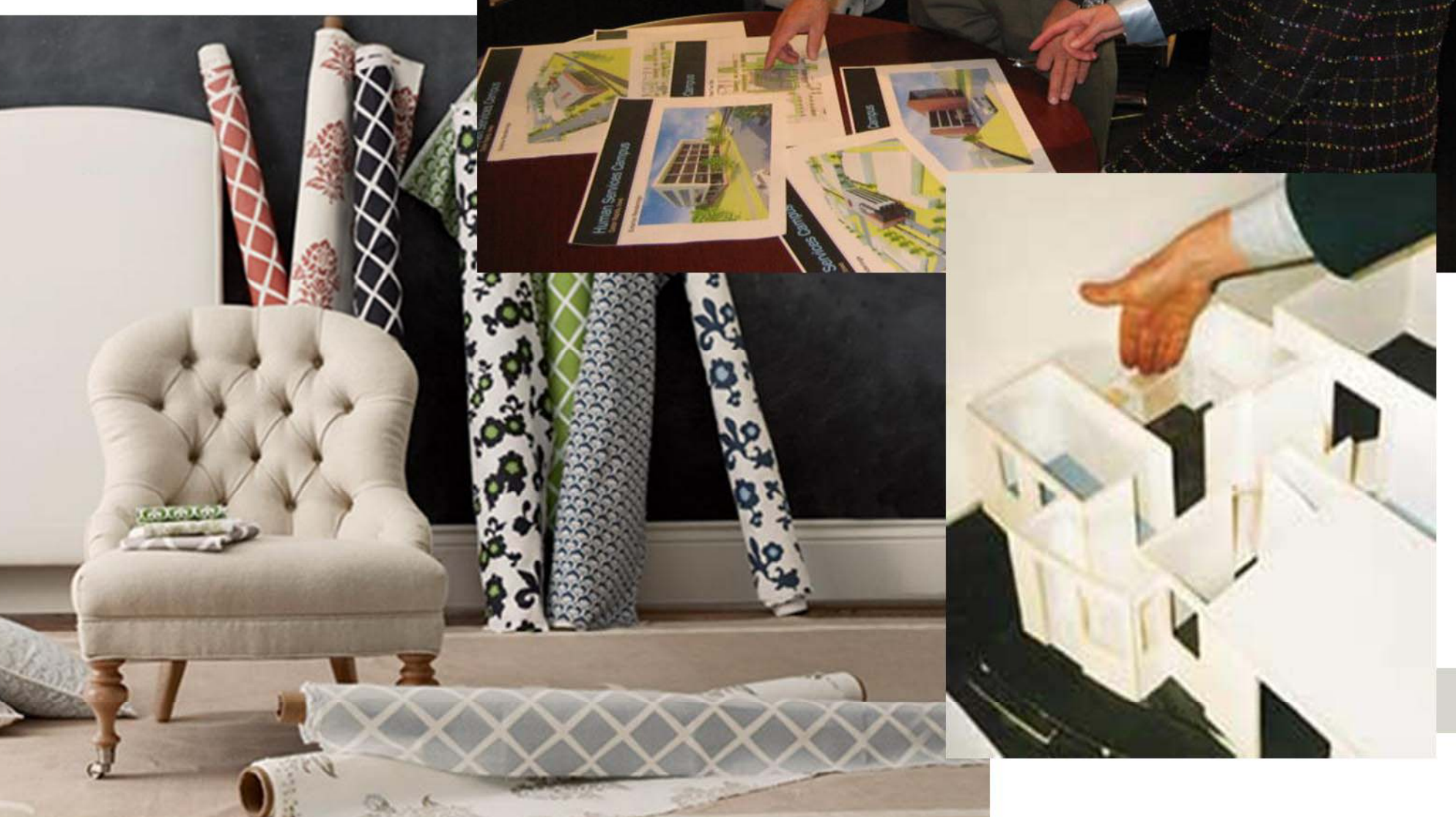ly Agreed" when asked if they considered themselves to be interior designers in Q21 (See below). One answered "Not Sure."

Of the eleven licensed architects that hold one or more certifications, licenses, and/or registrations as an interior designer, only one answered in the positive ("Yes" to Q10) when describing themselves as an interior designer.

Items of Note

Four respondents chose to describe themselves as interior designers (Q10) even though they are not certified, licensed or registered as an interior designer. All four are licensed architects. *Of particular interest to the PI is that these four licensed architects who are non-certified, unlicensed, and non-registered as interior designers have described themselves as interior designers. This is independent of Q21 wherein respondents were asked to respond to the statement "I consider myself an interior designer" which takes place later in the survey beyond the demographic-based survey questions. All four respondents either "Agreed" or "Strongly Agreed" with Q21.*

The one unlicensed architect of "The Twelve" holds only an NCIDQ certification but chose NOT to describe themself as an Interior Designer. They responded to Q12 (*Why not?*) stating *"Because I have a degree in Architecture."*

Are you currently a licensed architect?
- Yes: 85.7%
- No: 14.3%

I consider myself an architect.
- SA: 87%
- A: 13%
- NS: 0%
- D: 0%
- SD: 0%

Are you an NCIDQ certificate holder?
- Yes: 11.3%
- No: 88.7%

I consider myself an interior designer.
- SA: 7%
- A: 42%
- NS: 8%
- D: 25%
- SD: 17%

Are you an interior designer that holds a required or optional registration or license in your state or province?
- Yes: 8.6%
- No: 91.4%

Architects should practice architecture only.
- SA: 2%
- A: 2%
- NS: 3%
- D: 37%
- SD: 57%

If you are not a licensed or registered interior designer, do you describe yourself as an interior designer?
- Yes: 7.8%
- No: 92.2%

Architects should practice interior design.
- SA: 40%
- A: 40%
- NS: 15%
- D: 3%
- SD: 2%

Moving Forward

This study (and the larger context of this author's research program) may permit architects, interior designers, design clients, design educators and design students to better understand the difference between architecture and interior design, how the two correlate, where the gaps and overlaps occur, and if an architect is best suited to provide interior design services. Additionally, research findings could better equip design educators in formulating pedagogies, educational design fundamentals, course work and curriculum load, instructional techniques, graduate studies, and industry implementation. Upcoming events include in-person interviews with respondents, data record publication, and extended discourse via papers and presentations of the individual factors of motivations, expertise, and perceptions.

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