

Mina Rezaei

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Summary

I'm a strategic and creative product researcher with eight years of hands-on experience in design and mixed-method UX research and more than 7 years of academic research in the areas of social sciences, design and technology. I specialize in translating user insights into product direction, particularly in early-stage and ambiguous spaces. I'm fluent in a wide range of qualitative and quantitative methodologies and thrive in cross-functional teams alongside design, product, and engineering. I also bring strong storytelling, planning, and stakeholder management skills to drive clarity, impact, and innovation.

Skills

Programming	HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Python
Presentation	Adobe Creative suite including Premiere, After Effects Procreate, Figma, LaTeX
Research and Data Visualization Tools	Arc GIS, Hotjar, MAXQDA, EXcel, Qualterics, Gainsight, User Testing
Product management	Product board, Asana, Smartsheet
Languages	English (Fluent), Farsi (Native), Arabic (Basic)

Work Experience

Design Research Experience in Tech-Related Projects

Mysaic

Remote

PRODUCT OWNER

Jan 2024 - present

- Led end-to-end design of Mysaic, a customizable product that curates users' favorite elements into a single art frame, offered as canvas, print, and digital formats.
- Conducted competitive and generative research—including analysis of AI art tools and user behavior trends—to uncover market gaps, define target users, and guide product vision, feature set, and go-to-market strategy. Insights informed design iterations and messaging.

Quantum Workplace

Remote

UX RESEARCH INTERN

Jun 2022 - Sep 2022

Improving Conversion Rate across QW Platforms

- Created and executed a research study involving interviews, surveys, A/B testing, usability reports, and synthesis of qualitative and quantitative data, ensuring they are directly relevant to product initiatives. leading to a 20% conversion rate boost for the Best Places to Work survey platform.

Creating Research Repository

- Partnered with product managers and designers and championed research best practices within the product team, establishing the research function and influencing roadmap decisions with user insights
- Established a unified research repository catering to the needs of researchers, designers, engineers, and product managers, contributing to a 4x increase in customer touchpoints
- Established a collection of research templates to standardize the process of research across the product teams.

Hack for LA

Remote

UX RESEARCHER INTERN

Jun 2021 - Sep 2021

Standardizing Research Across HackForLA projects

- Created research plan guides, Interview guides, screeners, and consent form templates for Hack for LA projects resulting in the facilitation of the research process.
- Created research template for generative and evaluative research to expedite the UX research process by UX researchers across Hack for LA.

Social Computing Lab, Computer Science Department, UC Davis

DOCTORAL STUDENT RESEARCHER ON HUMAN COMPUTER INTERACTION

Jun 2022 - Dec 2023

Recreating Experience of Space in Social Virtual Reality

- Designed and executed a research study to assess users' spatial experiences in Social VR. Recruited participants, conducted in-depth interviews, and performed content analysis. Analyzed and synthesized data to generate actionable insights for 3D environment and experience design in Social VR
- Worked cross-functionally with the team on creating user-centered educational products, shared feedback, and developed recommendations

University of California, Davis, Department of Human Ecology

DOCTORAL STUDENT RESEARCHER

Sep 2017 - Dec 2023

Designing and Strategic Planning of Creative Wanderer map-based App

- Led and executed foundational research to shape end-to-end product and design strategy for a novel map-based app that uses films to enhance youth spatial thinking. Activities included generative research, competitive analysis, insight synthesis, rapid prototyping, wireframing, and usability testing—guiding early product direction and MVP definition

Using Human-Centered Design in Creating Youth-Friendly Environments

- Assessed teens' engagement in redesigning the Rocky Hill trail project through interviews, literature review, and document analysis to gauge their level of participation.
- Mentored junior researchers in conducting observations and ethnographic research for the Growing up in Cities, developing protocols for youth presence in public spaces and created behavioral maps.

University of California, Davis, Several Departments

ASSOCIATE INSTRUCTOR, TEACHER AND TEACHING ASSISTANT

Sep 2017 - Dec 2023

Designed and Taught "Sociology of Adolescence", an upper division course at the Department of Sociology, Co-Taught different courses such as UI/UX, 3d modeling, and 2d drawing at other departments

- Conducted lectures on youth-related subjects including Social Media, Online Gaming, and VR/AR/XR impacts. Created course materials, administered exams for a class exceeding 95 students, assessed papers, and offered mentoring support.

Design Research Experience in Architecture and Planning-Related Projects

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans)

RESEARCH AND POLICY ANALYSIS PROGRAM MANAGER-SENIOR LEVEL

2024 - Present

Coordinated and Managed Research Projects Across the Division

- Identified and pursued funding for critical research needs and successfully secured funding for over 10 research projects totaling more than 5 million dollars.
- Created a directory of the research and plans by partnering with different stakeholders to facilitate the research across the division
- Managed contracts with third party research agencies, ensuring research aligns with customer needs.
- Used LLMs to analyze research titles and uncover popular themes, helping researchers generate new research concepts.
- Co prepared a research newsletter to support and encourage research outputs in the division.

Paramadan Architecture, Planning and Design Firm

DESIGN RESEARCH LEAD

Nov 2015 - Sep 2017

Using User-Centered Design Methods in Designing the Built Environment

- Conducted user studies to evaluate spatial experiences through interviews and surveys, analyzed findings, and communicated insights to the stakeholders up to VP levels.
- Fostered leadership support through consistent meetings, presentations to the Executives, and alignment of project outcomes with business and social objectives of the projects
- Managed teams of junior designers and researchers and improved collaboration in the team of designers and engineers.
- Cultivated strong relationships with diverse, executive-level stakeholders and managed multiple concurrent research projects from planning to delivery.

Farnahad Architecture, Planning and Design Firm

DESIGN RESEARCHER

Nov 2014 - Sep 2016

Using Human-Centered Design Research in Designing the Built Environment

- Conducted diverse studies, including interviews, focus groups, and ethnography, improving quality of life in disadvantaged communities across various cities.
- Co-led design research activities, including research planning and the preparation of general plans for multiple cities, including making 3d silhouette of the cities using ArcScene.

Payest Architecture and Design Firm

DESIGN RESEARCHER

Nov 2015 - Sep 2017

Using Human-Centered Design Research in Re-designing a Historic Cemetery

- Led the research by designing an ethnography research study to explore the historical, environmental, and social values of the historic cemetery geared toward improving it as a tourist destination.
- Synthesized research data to craft reports and 3d maps (using AutoCAD 3d) showcasing the cemetery's impact on the neighborhood, leading to the preservation of its historic sections.

Rayab Engineering Consultant Firm

DESIGNER

Sep 2011 - Sep 2014

- Designed landscape, created 3D models, and designed informational pamphlets

Education

University of California, Davis

PH.D. IN GEOGRAPHY WITH A FOCUS ON HUMAN COMPUTER INTERACTION

Davis, CA

Sep 2017 - Dec 2023

Extracurricular Activity

Maptime Davis (Geospatial Skills Workshop Series)

Davis, CA

COUNCIL MEMBER

Sep 2021 - Jun 2022

- Facilitated and coordinated workshops, collaborating with local partners to educate on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and other spatial programming tools for interactive mapping such as D3.

Honors and Awards (Selected)

Berkeley I Corps Cohort:

Remote, UC Berkeley

ONE WEEK NSF-FUNDED VIRTUAL TRAINING AIMED AT TRANSLATING ACADEMIC RESEARCH INTO A STARTUP.

Jan 2021

- Activities: Worked on customer discovery and the business model of the Creative Wanderer App (my startup idea)

Publications (Selected)

- Rezaei, M.,(2025). Explorer's Intangible Power, Communications of ACM, available online: <https://cacm.acm.org/article/explorers-intangible-power/>, a short story about the future of generative AI
- Rezaei, M., Owens, P.E and Wang, HC(2025). Recreating Experience of Space in Social Virtual Reality, Working paper