Sam Haraway, PhD

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SUMMARY

Strategic UX researcher with 10+ years of applied research experience, and a passion for clinical and medical spaces. Owns discovery and experience measurement programs for complex, regulated healthcare and life sciences products, framing ambiguous problems into clear research questions and turning evidence into actionable insights, compelling narratives, and recommendations that shape product and design strategy. Deep expertise in mixed-methods research, such as semi-structured interviews, survey design, concept evaluation, and contextual inquiry, with clinicians, scientists, and patients. Utilizes rapid prototyping to express research-driven design concepts, validates them with users, iterates and delivers to product team. Coaches cross-functional team members to run their own research, when applicable, through best practices, trainings, and templates. Created *AI-Research*, a custom multi-agent research workflow that accelerates qualitative synthesis from one week to an afternoon, while keeping researchers firmly in charge of the analysis.

EXPERIENCE

Valtech (formerly Kin + Carta)

Sr. Principal, UX Research | September 2024 - Present

- Owns strategic discovery and evaluative research programs for a global pharma client's clinical trial design platform, spanning discovery, concept testing, usability testing
- Built a UX benchmarking program that combines attitudinal measures (CSAT, UMUX-Lite, SUS) with behavioral product analytics to track experience over time, measuring a 2.7x increase in CSAT after research-driven roadmap changes
- Distills research insights into design and product recommendations and strategic narratives across broad audiences of cross-functional individual contributors and executive leaders
- Designed and built *AI-Research*, a multi-agent, custom research system that takes raw transcripts through a thematic coding workflow to finished deliverables (such as readouts and journey maps), with explicit human checkpoints at every stage
- Onboarded 5+ researchers and designers to *AI-Research*, powering 20+ discovery and usability studies
- People manager for UX designers and researchers, blending candor with empathy to help people do their best work under delivery pressure

Principal, UX Research | August 2022 - August 2024

- Directed discovery, evaluative, and longitudinal research in complex, regulated domains, framing ambiguous problems and translating findings into tangible recommendations and product strategy for product teams and senior stakeholders
- Utilized rapid prototyping to evaluate design concepts during research sprints, provided data-backed recommendations to product team
- Led contextual inquiry of aerospace tooling workflows that guided multi-phased product roadmap features, followed up with continuous testing of design concepts
- Defined research standards and ways of working, guided client-side research hiring, and led internal and client research education
- Served as the Experience Practice's go-to resource on research process and value for ~10 client teams and sales pursuits, leading to $10+ million in net new and extended engagement value
- People manager for UX designers and researchers

Sr. UX Researcher | March 2022 - August 2022

- Led mixed-methods research aligned with key business decisions and product milestones, delivering findings to senior stakeholders and cross-functional teams
- Built a research process and template library (research plans, interview guides, methods best practices) that enabled designers and PMs to run their own studies; still used as a model of Valtech's research practice

UX Researcher | June 2021 - February 2022

- Led generative and evaluative research for enterprise clients, including one-on-one interviews with patients, donors, providers, and social workers for a platform connecting CKD patients with potential donors
- Led user testing of a key provider workflow in a mobile app supporting patient evaluations

Product Designer & Research Specialist | February 2021 - May 2021

- Built first research operating model for agency design teams and sold research into SOWs for 3 net new client accounts
- Led research planning, execution, synthesis, and delivery of findings, and served as internal consultant across multiple projects
- Hands-on UX Designer, turned requirements into high-fidelity designs for development

Associate Product Designer | August 2020 - January 2021

- Translated user stories and Jira tickets into wireframes, high-fidelity mockups, and clickable prototypes for desktop and mobile apps
- Created personas, journey maps, and user flows to ground design decisions in user needs

Freelance UX Designer & Researcher

UX Designer & Researcher | February 2020 - August 2020

- Led research and design for four start-ups and agencies, including usability testing and high-fidelity design for an iOS social media app, evaluative research and design iterations on a B2B health platform, and analytics-driven e-commerce conversion optimization work for desktop and mobile websites

University of California, Davis

Doctoral Researcher & Instructor, Department of Sociology | 2010 - 2018

- Designed and conducted qualitative and quantitative research, including interviews, ethnography, survey design, and statistical analysis
- Hired and managed team of undergraduate research assistants to support my primary research and dissertation projects
- Taught undergraduate courses in research methods, social theory, cultural sociology, and social change

SKILLS & TOOLS

Qualitative research: interviews, contextual inquiry, ethnography, product discovery, concept testing, usability testing, data synthesis, storytelling, journey mapping, personas
AI in research: Multi-agent workflow design, Claude Code skills and agents, MCP integrations, human-in-the-loop analysis, AI tool evaluation and benchmarking, AI enablement and training
Practice & collaboration: Upskilling cross-functional teams in research best practices, building research operations and programs, workshops, people management and mentoring

Tools: *AI-Research* (custom), Claude Code, Codex, Obsidian, GitHub, Figma Make, Figma, Dovetail, Qualtrics, UserTesting

EDUCATION

Certificate, UX Design Immersive, General Assembly (2020)
PhD, Sociology, University of California, Davis (2018)
BA, Sociology & Political Science, Coe College (2009)