

Sam Haraway, PhD

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Summary

UX research leader, people manager, and hands-on AI builder with 10+ years of applied research experience and a PhD in Sociology. Runs continuous discovery and evaluative research programs that shape roadmaps for complex, regulated products, turning findings into readouts, journeys, personas, and requirements that teams act on. Builds research operating models, standards, and training that grow a practice and bring research into new client engagements. Created *AI-Research*, a custom multi-agent research system that cuts synthesis from a week to an afternoon while keeping researchers in charge of the analysis.

Experience

Valtech (formerly Kin + Carta)

Sr. Principal, UX Research | September 2024 to Present

- Own a continuous discovery and evaluative research program for a global pharma client's clinical trial design platform, partnering with VP+ leaders to shape the roadmap and requirements, resulting in new features and enhancements that increased product CSAT by 2.7x
- Designed and built *AI-Research*, a multi-agent, custom research system that takes raw interview transcripts through a thematic coding and synthesis workflow to finished deliverables (such as readouts, journey maps, and personas), with explicit human review checkpoints at every stage; accelerates synthesis and deliverables from one week to one afternoon; onboarded 5+ researchers and designers, 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 to August 2024

- Directed discovery, evaluative, and longitudinal research in complex, regulated domains, translating findings into product strategy for senior stakeholders

- Defined research standards and ways of working, guided client-side researcher hiring, and led internal and client research education
- Served as the practice's go-to resource on research process and value for about 10 client teams and sales pursuits, leading to new research roles on accounts that had never had researchers
- Co-authored proposals that led to \$10M+ in won and extended engagement value
- People manager for UX designers and researchers

Sr. UX Researcher | March 2022 to August 2022

- Led mixed-method 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, usability, concept testing, and discovery methods) that enabled designers and PMs to run their own studies; still used as a model of Valtech's research practice
- Supported business development by identifying research opportunities, scoping statements of work, and crafting proposals
- People manager for UX researchers

UX Researcher | June 2021 to February 2022

- Led generative and evaluative research for healthcare and enterprise clients, including one-on-one interviews with patients, donors, providers, and social workers for a platform connecting chronic kidney disease patients with potential donors
- Continued building our West territory research offering through training materials, process standards, and internal enablement

Product Designer & Research Specialist | February 2021 to May 2021

- Built research operating model for agency design teams
- Sold research into SOWs for 3 net new client projects
- Led research planning, execution, synthesis, and delivery of findings, and served as an internal research consultant across teams
- Owned hands-on product design from problem definition and ideation through wireframes and high-fidelity UI

Associate Product Designer | August 2020 to January 2021

- Translated user stories and Jira tickets into wireframes, high-fidelity mockups, and clickable prototypes

- Demoed designs to clients, iterated on stakeholder feedback, and handed off dev-ready designs to engineering
- Created personas, journey maps, and user flows to ground design decisions in user needs

Freelance UX Designer & Researcher

UX Designer & Researcher | January 2020 to August 2020

- Led research and design for four startups and agencies, including usability testing and high-fidelity design for a social media app, evaluative research on a B2C health platform, a research audit and personas for a client-facing app, and analytics-driven e-commerce conversion work

University of California, Davis

Doctoral Researcher & Instructor, Department of Sociology | 2010 to 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 global social change

Skills & Tools

Leadership: People management and mentoring, research operations and program building, research democratization and coaching non-researchers, research standards and templates, executive stakeholder influence, business development and proposals

Research craft: Interviews, contextual inquiry, ethnography, usability and concept testing, discovery and generative research, survey design, UX benchmarking (CSAT, UMUX, SUS), behavioral analytics, statistical analysis, mixed-methods study design, synthesis and storytelling, journey mapping

AI: Multi-agent workflow design, Claude Code skills and agents, MCP integrations, human-in-the-loop analysis design, AI tool evaluation and benchmarking, AI enablement and training

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

Education

PhD, Sociology, University of California, Davis, June 2018

BA, Sociology & Political Science, Coe College, 2009

Certificate, User Experience Design Immersive, General Assembly, Denver, CO, March 2020