

HELANA DARWIN, PHD

Senior Mixed Methods User Researcher with strengths in agile methods and vulnerable populations

RELEVANT EXPERIENCE

Senior Mixed Methods User Researcher (Contract), Peacock, NBC Aug 2024 – Feb 2025

Explored users' expectations of, and reactions to, the Peacock algorithm and implementation of AI

- Personalization research for the Peacock homepage, which identified mental models, jobs-to-be-done, use cases, accessibility needs, and opportunities for future-state redesign
- In-depth interviews about users' interest in, and expectations of, a more robust News feature

Identified accessibility shortcomings in the content streaming process

- Contextual inquiry with low-vision Peacock subscribers, as well as users who rely on screen readers

Uncovered unique user needs and desires among teen users that are currently unaddressed through the Kid/Adult binary profile model

- In-depth interviews with multi-profile households and adults who co-watch with minors

Senior User Researcher, JP Morgan Chase Dec 2022 – July 2024

Strengthened the safety of the Zelle platform, decreasing fraud claims by 50% and increasing transactions by 23%

- Developed the first user blocking feature on Zelle, which will serve as the MVP model for other banks in EWS
- Ideated actionable solutions for high fraud rates among elderly and youth populations, informed by VOC data and user metrics
- Enhanced the clarity of educational interstitials and onboarding carousels through rapid iterative testing

Improved the accessibility of Chase online banking features, on both desktop and mobile, through inclusive design

- Conducted generative research through interviews with blind and low-vision users about product pain points
- Addressed WCAG defects in the bill pay flow through rapid iterative testing
- Developed educational resources and internal protocols for inclusive design research within the Firm

Modernized the UI stack on the desktop Chase banking platform, increasing 30-day active payment users and multipayment product users

- Enabled future development with fewer constraints by identifying trends and patterns in user behavior through web analytics, user metrics, and iterative design research

User Researcher, AnswerLab Dec 2021 – Nov 2022

Conducted qualitative research that varied in approach, scale, scope, timeframe and methodologies

- Consulted for B2B and B2C clients from education technology, shopping, social media, and business platforms, including Amazon, Meta, and LinkedIn
- Analyzed user experience, consumer experience, and employee experience to produce storyboards, journey mapping, slide decks, written reports, and personas with actionable insights for product development
- Collaborated with vendors to conduct international research projects in users' native languages

Qualitative User Researcher, HealthCourse, Inc June 2021 - Nov 2021

Demonstrated courses' educational impact for stakeholders through comprehensive mixed-method reports

- Triangulated data from class discussion transcripts, discussion board posts, and course evaluation metrics to identify key themes and syllabus experiences among the enrolled medical professionals

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Researcher, Stony Brook University

Aug 2014 – Aug 2020

Managed four teams of junior researchers who coded interview and survey data for academic publications

- Provided mentorship, coaching, and skill development while collectively refining coding systems

Surveyed 100 bar patrons to understand how gender influences beer selection

- Applied insights to advertisement and branding strategies for Miller Lite and Kelton Brand Marketing

Developed best practices for digital sociological research methods

- Triangulated data from online comments, blogs, and Reddit discussion boards

Social Media Director, Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities Sept 2018 - May 2020

Managed the Center's public presence

- Developed front-end content for Center's website
- Streamlined website's information architecture to improve usability
- Curated relevant social media content for the international Facebook page

Ensured ongoing buy-in from institutional stakeholders through periodic status reports

Course Instructor, Stony Brook University

June 2017 - Jan 2019

Created and instructed 4 Sociology courses for undergraduate students

- Courses included Introduction to Sociology, Sociology of Health and Medicine, Sociology of Religion, and Sociology of Gender
- Evaluated and mentored students as they developed qualitative analytical skillsets
- Redesigned online teaching portals and adjusted information architecture to maximize learning potential

SOFTWARE

Microsoft Suite / Google Suite
User Testing and User Zoom
NVivo / Atlas.ti / MAXQDA
SPSS / STATA / Qualtrics
Figma
DScout
Playbook UX
UserTesting

EDUCATION

PhD Sociology (2020)
MA Sociology (2016)
MA Jewish Studies (2012)
BA Psychology (2008)

RESEARCH IMPACT

Book publication
800+ citations of findings
15 K+ YouTube views
40+ presentations
13 academic publications
20+ research awards/grants

SELECT SKILLS

Usability Testing
Interviews
Focus Groups
Ethnography
Heuristic Analysis
Card Sorting
Contextual Inquiry
Concept Evaluations
Survey Design
Survey Analysis