

Jesse Dart, Ph.D.

*Anthropologist &
Qualitative UX Researcher*

Portfolio

About Me

I am an anthropologist and writer based in northern Italy. Originally from Illinois, I work in UX research while doing freelance work on the side. My writing is influenced by my training in anthropology as well as my interest in society and culture. I've written for *Monocle*, *The Guardian*, *Roads & Kingdoms*, *The Art of Eating*, *Vice*, *Bon Appetit*, *Petits Propos Culinaires*, *Gastronomica*, *Food & Foodways*, and *Digest Journal*, and more.

My past academic research and writing centered on the lived experience of tech workers, particularly their experience with programs of care, specifically, free food. I am most interested in stories about the social and cultures lives of employees, and life inside companies and corporations.

As an anthropologist, I use ethnographic methods and theories to study daily life, practices and beliefs. I've done field research in various cities in the US, Europe, and Australia. For my dissertation, I conducted over 13 months of ethnographic fieldwork embedded inside two tech companies in San Francisco and London.

I've worked, lived and studied in the U.S., Europe and Australia and received my Ph.D. from The University of Sydney, an M.A. from the University of Gastronomic Sciences and Macquarie University, and my B.A. from Greenville College.



Methods

I utilize a broad toolkit of research methods, including ethnographic. I select the most appropriate method(s) based on stakeholder input and the research questions we're trying to answer.



Passive
Observation



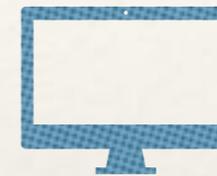
Active
Observation



Focus Groups



User Journey



Digital
Ethnography



Diary Studies



Photos

Examples of Ethnographic Research Methods



Field Ethnography - gives us deeper insights about the target user.

From 1 hour to several days/weeks.



Digital Ethnography - Can be quicker for those on a strict budget/timeframe

Uses digital tools including smartphones/tablets, remote interviews or online community interactions.



Photo Ethnography - Very useful when the presence of an ethnographer would drastically alter people's behavior. A person is given a camera and asked to capture images of their experience and describe them with notes (where possible).

Project #1 – Ph.D. Research

Investigating Corporate Care & Free Food Programs

Challenge: Companies provide free meals and snacks to employees to aid in community building and feel supported, yet, these programs don't live up to their potential. Why?

Approach: As the principal investigator, I designed, gained access, recruited, and executed a mixed methods research project that explored employees' experiences inside the workplace.

Methods: Multi-sited ethnography (London, San Francisco).

Conducted over 70 one-on-one interviews with employees of mid-sized tech companies.

Ethnographic observation in the offices, utilizing audio recordings and photography.

3 Key Learnings:

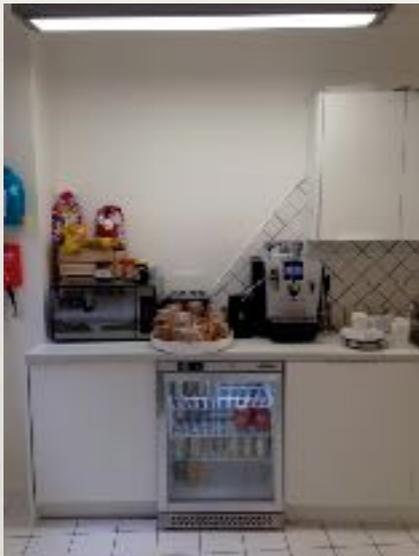
- In order to foster community, companies must focus more on physical spaces for dining.
- Companies should react to shifts in food trends quickly.
- Companies should also encourage employees to get out of the office. Feeling “trapped” was a common theme.

Impact: 8 insights for two companies.

Project #1

Using Photography to Enhance the Research Process

Understanding Physical Space



Cultural Analysis of Food & Meals



Meals actually eaten during fieldwork.

Project #2

Global Patient Experience

Problem

What is the experience that patients with CIDP (Chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy) have at a global level? And how can “the client” support the development of country specific services related to these patients?

Approach

4 Phases

- 1.) Understand (Desk research, stakeholder interviews, digital ethnography).
- 2.) Analyze and design (journey map/ patient models)
- 3.) Validate and Iterate (2 Validation workshops and review meetings)
- 4.) Finalize and Ideate (Final presentations and workshop)

Methods

Desk Research
Stakeholder Interviews
Digital Ethnography with recruited patients in 3 countries
(Capturing the patients point of view.)

Key Insights

- Patients’ Actions (What they do)
- Patients’ Attitudes (What they think)
- Patients’ Emotions (What they feel)
- Patients’ Pains (physical, psychological, social, healthcare system)

Impact

Collaborating with the client to identify country specific opportunities for CIDP patients through workshop sessions.

Project #3

International NGO – Automating Performance Reporting

Problem

What impact would automated performance reporting have on different levels of employees in global offices? How would this improve decision making?

Approach

This study gathered different perspectives about the performance reporting process and the value and extent of automation, i.e. what is worth automating, why, and the use / applicability of information beyond submission of the report. This perspective contributed to identifying automation opportunities in the flow of data traveling in / out of the report and enabling a single planning process.

Methods

One to one in-depth semi-structured narrative interviews with 12 people across 3 continents without any in-context technique. These were conducted via Skype, Google Meet, and WhatsApp calls.

Key Insights

- A need to be efficient in reporting.
- KPI's are confusing.
- Templates are not "one size fits all".
- Skeptical of complete automation and of apps for collecting data.

Impact

Key insights that lead to the development of a trial app to collect performance data and generate reports.
(Currently being tested)

Storytelling...

is at the forefront of what I do. From using photographs to enhance a narrative arc, to looking at the user's journey, my work reflects my skills in understanding people, culture and trends.

Published writing can be found at:
<http://jessedart.com/writing-list>



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