Benjamin R. Westlund

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SUMMARY

Mixed-methods researcher with 4+ years of experience conducting qualitative interviews, designing studies, and translating findings into product and design insights. Trained in human-centered design and human factors, currently running generative research and human factors evaluations of AI-enabled products. Focused on rigorous UX research for digital health and behavior-change products.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Assistant *08/24 – Present*

UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health · Chapel Hill, NC

- Serve as user researcher for the UNC AI Fellows Program, conducting in-depth qualitative interviews with faculty and students to surface needs, workflows, and pain points that inform the design of AI-enabled course and classroom tools
- Lead qualitative coding and thematic analysis (NVivo, Dedoose) and design surveys and research instruments

UX Research Project: Explainable AI for Discharge Planning *08/26 – Present*

Team course project, CHIP 711 · UNC Carolina Health Informatics Program

- Led Figma prototyping of two discharge-planning interfaces for an AI readmission-risk model, comparing a free-text plan with suggested actions linked to each risk factor
- Co-developed the interview guide; interviewing nurses, case managers, and physicians and leading qualitative analysis; study compares designs on task time, NASA-TLX, and SUS

UX Research Project: Parent-Child Volunteer Experience (TABLE) *01/26 – 05/26*

Course project, Design Thinking for the Public Good · UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health

- Conducted generative research on a 5-person team redesigning family volunteering at TABLE, a food-security nonprofit, through listening sessions, card sorts, empathy mapping, and co-ideation with families and staff
- Reframed the brief after finding the barrier was logistical, not motivational, with every insight traced to participant quotes
- Delivered three prioritized concepts to TABLE leadership with an assumption-testing plan for a pilot

Research & Program Support Specialist *08/22 – 07/24*

NC Formerly Incarcerated Transition Program (NC FIT), UNC Family Medicine · Chapel Hill, NC

- Conducted qualitative interviews with formerly incarcerated individuals to understand user experiences and barriers to healthcare access during reentry
- Synthesized research findings into reports and insights for community partners, providers, and health systems

Senior Honors Thesis Researcher *08/21 – 05/22*

Wake Forest University · Winston-Salem, NC

- Designed and ran an independent qualitative study of COVID-19 and opioid use disorder: ethnographic observation at a syringe services program, protocol development, recruitment, interviews, and thematic analysis

SKILLS & METHODS

Research Methods: Qualitative interviews · Ethnographic fieldwork · Thematic analysis · Grounded theory · Usability evaluation (SUS, NASA-TLX) · Survey and instrument design · Statistical analysis (Stata, R) · Mixed-methods research · Codebook development

Human-Centered Design: Needfinding · Empathy mapping · Card sorting · Co-ideation · Ecosystem mapping · Journey mapping · Insight synthesis · Storyboarding · Prototyping in Figma

Tools: NVivo · Dedoose · Stata · R · Qualtrics · Figma · Miro

Domain Areas: Substance use & OUD · Reentry health · Rural health equity · Digital health · Health AI · Implementation science

EDUCATION

PhD in Health Behavior · Graduate Certificate in Innovation for the Public Good *Expected 05/29*

UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health · Dorothy Dunn Scholarship · Advisor: Vivian Go

MSPH in Health Behavior *12/26*

UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health · Dorothy Dunn Scholarship

B.A., Sociology – Cum Laude, Honors & Distinction *05/22*

Wake Forest University · Minor: Health and Exercise Science