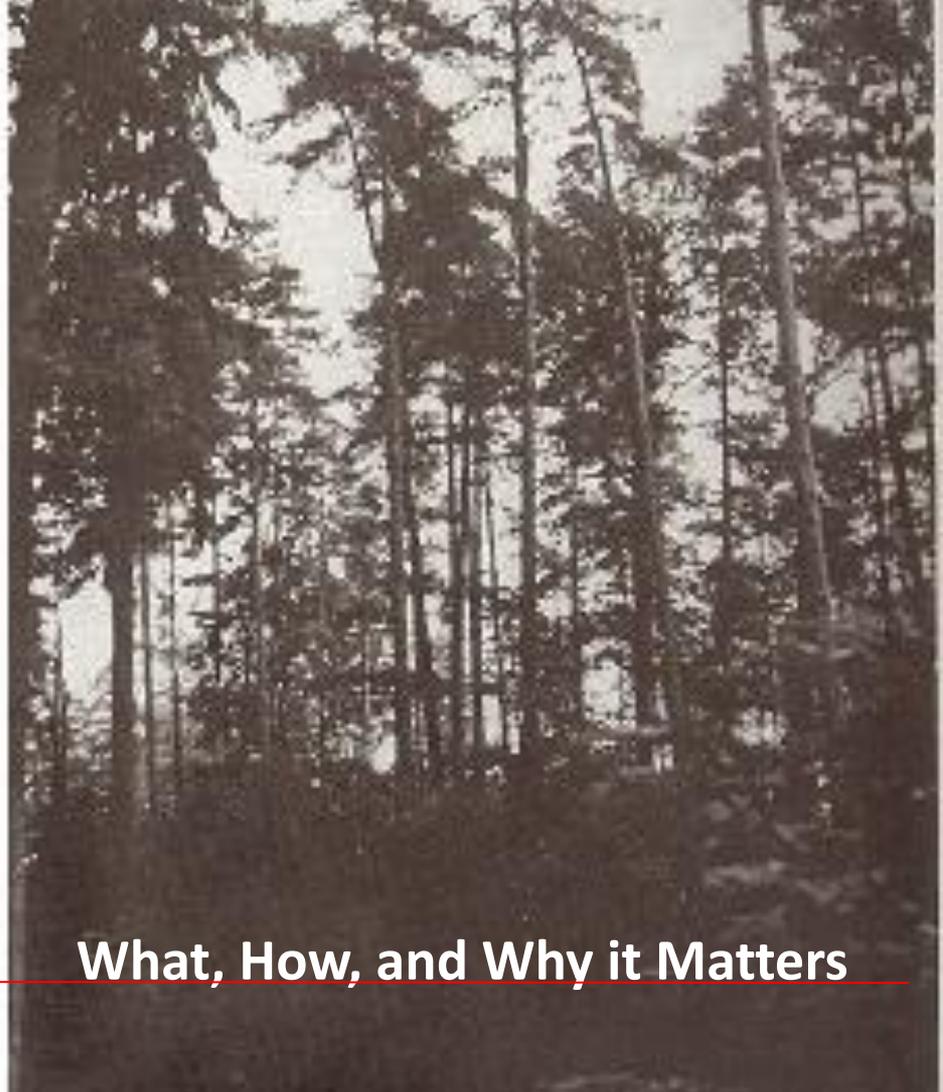


Legibility



What, How, and Why it Matters

Jamie Sherman

Anthropologist | Senior Researcher | Industry Leader

Dry Facts

- Primary focus on media & content creators
- World class qualitative & ethnographic skill set
- Quant and mixed method friendly
- Track record of international and remote research
- 12 patents filed
- Annual+ cadence of published papers and public speaking
- Multiple awards for innovation and business impact

PhD Cultural Anthropology (Princeton 2011).

My dissertation was on the relationship between self-transformation projects in a bodybuilding gym, and the larger social and cultural dynamics of gender, body, and race.

Senior Product Researcher, Netflix Studio Insights May 2021-present

Social Research Scientist at Intel 2012-2021

Co-Chair Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Conference (EPIC), 2021

Check it out! www.2021.epicpeople.org. Oct 18-21





More Facts

1. I grew up in Berkeley, CA
2. I have three older brothers
3. I used to be a theater artist
4. I was a theater *director* before I became an anthropologist

What that *might* tell you

1. Truth to power is in my DNA
2. I ~~never~~ rarely give up
3. I am deeply passionate about collaboration
4. I am interested in the bigger picture *and* the details – the *why* as well as the *how*



What I do really *well*

I drive **high impact** user research **initiatives** into strategy, engineering, and product

I create **frameworks** for thinking about complex, messy spaces

I am a **storyteller**

I am an **experimental pragmatist**

My happy place is working on **hard problems** with **smart people** who **like what they do**

Legibility: What, Why, and How it Matters

- What is legibility?
- Legibility when I'm looking for a new job
- Legibility on the job
- The risks & limits of legibility

legible adjective



leg·i·ble | \ 'le-jə-bəl  \

Definition of *legible*

- 1 : capable of being read or deciphered : PLAIN
// legible handwriting
- 2 : capable of being discovered or understood
// murder sweltered in his heart and was legible upon his face
— Thomas Wolfe

Reader + Text = Meaning



Know your reader

Research goals: understand your ~~market~~ industry and ~~users~~ employers

Informational Interviews are a gift from the universe to you

Keep your research hat on: be curious, be open, turn your assumptions into questions

Do your homework

Be honest (but don't ask for a job)

You are your text

Make your ~~report~~ resume make sense to
~~stakeholders~~ employers

Put yourself in their shoes

Help them understand what they
need to know

Can she help me solve my
problem?

Will she make me
successful?

Will she be a good fit for
my team?





Legibility drives impact

Keep your research hat on!

~~Informational interviews~~ 1:1s are your friend

How can I present my data in ways that make sense to my team?

What *kinds* of data change something for my coworkers?

Org charts = relationships

The Limits of Legibility

What do you miss when you impose order?

What violence is done in organizing (what and who gets left out)?

What is the value of “unreadability” “chaos” and “nuance”?



Illegible Natural vs. Legible "Scientific" Forests
(pages 16-17 of James Scott's *Seeing Like a State*)

A photograph of a dense forest with a fallen log in the foreground. The trees are tall and thin, with a thick canopy. The lighting is soft, suggesting a slightly overcast day. The text 'Thank You' is overlaid in a large, red, cursive font at the bottom of the image.

Thank You