The View From The Studio: Design Ethnography and Organizational Cultures.

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This ethnographic study of designing explores the relationship between the organizational surroundings of the design studio and the way in which design ethnography activities are accomplished, with a focus on the ways in which design practitioners are actively negotiating and redefining the perspectives they use to conduct research work. It proposes the twined cultures of reflexivity and conjecture as frameworks for understanding what it is that makes design ethnography so different, and for reconciling the integration of the ethnographic toolkit within the limitations of daily design practice. Based on findings from a para-ethnographic study of designers at work on an augmented reality project in a large studio, this paper explores the effects of framing design ethnography as research that looks both inward, and at the future – perspectives which serve to contradict traditional expectations of the vantage points offered by this methodological toolkit.

INTRODUCTION

When I ask designers at Studio X what they "do" in a day, I'm unlikely to receive a straight answer. "We make experiences" comes up, accompanied almost always with an eye roll. "I move pixels" or "I draw pictures" is another common answer, offered as an antidote to grandiosity of the field's claim to save the world. The design practitioners that I collaborate with are tasked with creating the future–with anticipating and shaping the conditions in which we will engage with a future digital and material world. The way that they (and others in their field) have adapted the ethnographic toolkit as an inventive and engaging approach to solving problems in the studio is well documented—and much celebrated—as unique and innovative. But how are design practitioners learning to do this type of research, and how do they fit it within the boundaries of *designing* as a practice? Is the implementation of ethnographic methods within design practice tied to either the abilities of the design team (their visual aptitudes, their training and background) or to their attitudes (their willingness to engage with the sticky, the wicked and the complex in an iterative and 'designerly' fashion)? Or could the way they do ethnography instead be a function of an organizational culture that in itself is radically different than that which shaped 'traditional' ethnographic methods?

In this paper, I am using findings from an organizational ethnography of a design studio to explore the relationship between an organizational culture and the way in which design ethnography activities are accomplished by its members. Using perspectives generated through collaborative and para-ethnographic work in a large scale digital design studio, I will tell the story of how a specific team of design practitioners learn to interweave design practice and ethnographic methods to generate a new and unique way of researching. This paper will ask: what effect does the organizational culture of the studio have on the research practices of designers? What happens when we map the prevailing narratives about designer-led research against the lived social structures and social practices of the organizational

culture of a studio space? What frameworks can be seen through the lens of an organizational culture; what practices are rendered more visible or valuable when a designer's methodological depth of field, focus, and viewpoint are shaped by the socio-material arrangements of the studio space?

What emerges from the data is a clear picture of how design practitioners are actively mobilizing two facets of their organizational culture to shape their use of the classic ethnographer's toolkit. Design practitioners engaged with adapting the traditional ethnographic toolkit to their needs and uses tell the story of how the organizational culture of the studio shapes not only their everyday, mundane 'research focused' activity tasks, but also their social practice: including the way that they understand the role, function and practice of their ethnographic research work. In doing so, they offer two key insights. First, they share how a culture of conjecture can reward a design practitioner's bias towards forecasting rather than looking at the present during both data collection and analysis phases of ethnographic research work. Second, they share how their particular studio's culture of reflection embeds a bias towards self-examination rather than engagement with participants outside the design practitioner's community of practice.

The following sections describe the theoretical perspectives used to analyze and contextualize emergent findings from the ethnographic study, the study's use of para-ethnographic methodology, and two initial theoretical frameworks developed in partnership with study participants offered as a way to understand how the organizational culture of the design studio acts to shape the way designers learn and practice ethnographic methods.

THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Organizational Culture

Through an examination of the way in which the socio-material arrangements of the studio shape the form of designer-led research practice, this paper attempts to contribute to the ongoing discussion about how designers work to solve wicked, multifaceted and ambiguous problems (Buchanan 1992). Despite the growing attention paid to the importance of design-led research today, the inside of the studio remains a relatively unexamined vantage point from which to view how design practice actually happens (Murphy 2015). This study aims to address that gap by providing a detailed picture of how design practice, including the use of ethnographic methods in the design studio, is changing. The narrative frames applied to design practice in the organizational setting are deeply informed by the socio-material arrangements of the studio space (Brown & Duguid 2001); Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury 2012), the institutional logics of the studio organizational culture (Oswick & Richards, 2004), and the interactional resources and social practices (Chaiklin & Lave 1993) that come to stand for creative practices in the work of designers (Gunn, Otto, & Charlotte Smith, 2013; Wilner 2008).

As with any organization, "the way we do things around here" at Studio X is simultaneously inferred and invisible *and* materially embodied (Parmelli, Flodgren & Beyer et al. 2011). It is constructed from "knowing how" – from the behaviours, conversations, artefacts and patterns common to the defined group of people that form the living organization or the curriculum and customs of the people who make up the studio itself. Knowing "how" to practice design in the culture of Studio X is not easy - the boundaries for

acceptable behaviours are unmarked on the 'creative' side of the studio, and the consequence for transgressions can range from the social (not being included in the ever present group chat happening on every monitor but yours) to being ostracized from team briefings and brainstorm sessions.

Knowing how to be a designer—how to practice design—within the specific culture of Studio X means more than just a knowledge of docket numbers and client briefs. It means sharing 'how we do things here': sharing the beliefs, values, norms of behaviour, routines, traditions, sense making and perspectives of the organizational culture itself. By applying these values and norms to their daily practice, designers on the creative teams at Studio X operate within what Schein refers to as a "pattern of shared basic assumptions" (1995), each of which are shaped by and act to shape the mindset that dominates the culture of the studio organization.

Design Ethnography

One example of 'how we do things here' at Studio X is the way in which practitioners *practice* design ethnography: the well-established, unique and valuable methodology developed at the intersection of ethnographic research methods and "designerly" ways of doing (Crouch & Pearce, 2012; Gunn et al. 2013) (Charlotte Smith et al. 2016; Anderson 2009). With ethnographic methods becoming ever more integrated into the larger practice of design (Crabtree, Rouncefield & Tolmie 2012; Banks, Gill & Taylor 2014) and with an increased interest in the role of design as a research tool (Charlotte Smith et al. 2016; van Vaggel 2005), it is not surprising to see this term come up as a descriptor for the designer-led research conducted as part of client work at Studio X. For design practitioners in this studio, and in many others, design ethnography has moved beyond the realm of 'activity' - or "more mundane behaviours…everyday work" (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury 2012, p. 148) - and into that of 'practice' - or "forms or constellations of socially meaningful activity that are relatively coherent and established" (p. 148). This evolution of design ethnography from activity to practice serves to validate and value the research form as an essential element of design practice at Studio X and across the industry (Halse & Clark 2008; Tunstall 2008).

However, less attention has been paid to the ways that an organizational culture can support specific practices of design ethnography, or how it can impose boundaries and limitations within this form of research work (Julier 2017; Kimbell 2012). Current examinations of the practice of design ethnography in the studio setting focus primarily on three aspects of its social construction: the *attitudes* that design practitioners bring to their research work, the *abilities* that enable the practice of designer-led research, and the unique aspects of the *approach* that constitute the application of the practice of design ethnography.

First, important contributions focused on the research and problem-solving methodologies of designers shed light on the role of *attitude* in the practice of design ethnography: an attitude which has come to be defined as a designerly way of knowing, or a sensibility—the tacit or embodied 'feel' for the game possessed by the designers themselves (Cross 2011; Dorst 2011) . The second area of scholarly interest focuses on the *abilities* required for the practice of design ethnography. Contributions from this perspective illustrate the ways in which design practitioners are trained in the unique professional and personal skill that marks their community of practice (Duguid 2007) and developed through their enculturation in their community of cultural production (Scott, Bakker, & Quist 2012;

Simonsen et al. 2014) . A final area of focus for those interested in the social construction of design ethnography as a practice form is the unique nature of the *approach* which constitutes the method: the tactics and processes that designers undertake in their work as they solve wicked and complex problems. This point of focus is of particular interest to those invested in mobilizing the popular conceptions of 'design thinking' practices outside of the socio-cultural matrix of studio culture (IDEO 2014; Martin 2009). In this particular study, the key point of focus is the organizational culture which informs and shapes the attitudes, the abilities *and* the approach: the way in which the socio-material intersections at play in Studio X tint the lens through which design practitioners on the creative team see the boundaries and possibilities of design ethnography as a problem-solving method in their daily work.

Using Para-Ethnographic Methods in Creative and Knowledge Intensive Organizations

Since the design teams that participated in this case study are themselves producers of interpretation and analysis through ethnographic methods, this study presents a unique and exciting opportunity for the use of para-ethnographic methods (Holmes & Marcus 2005). In practice, this means implementing two guiding principles for the study methodology. First, it means prioritizing the joint production of knowledge with organizational members who are actively interested in theorizing their own practice. In their role as knowledge producers, design practitioners at Studio X come to their practice every day with an understanding of the theoretical and methodological approaches which influence their own personal perspective, and which define a large portion of their organizational identity. As a community, designers are highly invested in the reflexive description of their own culture and have developed the ability to "play the role of culture analysts themselves" (Islam 2015; Mills and Ratcliffe 2012). This ability to conduct intra-community analysis allows for the inclusion of the 'multiple knowledges' of the research subject outlined by Burawoy, resulting in what he called a 'craft production of knowledge' (1998).

Secondly, the study methodology is guided by the ethnographic methods employed by the design practitioners themselves: through the use of a para-ethnographic approach, design teams guide the data gathering, interpretation and analysis processes and use their own 'toolkit' of practices and actives to structure the stages of field work and thematic analysis. The actor-produced perspectives marked, but not defined, by organizational structures and material assemblages, are treated as "partial visions" (Islam 2015, p. 239) and are analyzed collaboratively by both the researchers and the participants. Design practitioners participate in data sorting and coding exercises on site, and field-notes (including observations from pitch presentations, small team brainstorms, client meetings, hallway interviews and shadowing sessions) are generated in a collaborative online working space used often in client work to enable the design team to provide additional commentary and perspective. Design teams also participate in data analysis by 'translating' organizational documents and work flow structures into participant generated 'process maps' that more accurately represented how they understood their practice forms.

This para-ethnographic approach is made possible by the ways in which designers are already working with theoretical and methodological approaches informed by ethnographic practice – work which primes them to be highly reflexive about their own community of practice within the organization, and their practice as knowledge and creative workers within

a larger cultural segment. As Feyerabend (1975) notes, much of the 'data' generated through participant observation and semi-structured interviews conducted in collaboration with knowledge-workers (such as design practitioners) is by nature informed by theoretical perspectives generated through their participation in a community of practice. For this reason, a para-ethnographic approach is especially useful in allowing designers to participate in making visible the social structure, theoretical perspectives and cultural implications of their working world.

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The studio workplace of Studio X presents an especially rich vantage point from which to examine the impact of the organizational culture of the studio on the research practices of designers. At first glance, Studio X[1] is a contemporary building in a gentrified area of a large Canadian city filled with the expected foosball tables, living tree walls, bar areas, video game centres and nap pods: the embodiment of what we have defined as a creative place to pursue a passion-directed practice (Viorel Pop 2014). But the view offered from behind the client-focused spaces filled with golden trophies and wall mounted portfolio displays reveals a different order at play. It quickly becomes apparent that the organizational culture which provides the parameters for the acceptable practice of design ethnography here is not defined by the recreational facilities and client-facing displays of awards and accolades, but by the white board-walled 'war' rooms filled with design prototypes, coffee cups, lap tops and sketch notes in which design teams spend the majority of their days. With more than 850 workers across 11 offices internationally, the organizational structure of Studio X is complex and multi-layered. What is immediately clear to visitors and organizational members alike is that the creative side is different than anywhere else in the studio. Not only are creative teams spatially divided from accounting, project management, UX and strategy teams (occupying an entirely separate wing of the studio's downtown space), but their reporting and reward structure is different as well.

In total, fieldwork with design teams was conducted over the course of one year-long project,[3] allowing for the exploration of "a particular set of social processes in a particular context" as suggested by Mason (2002, p. 91). All respondents self-identified as members of Studio X, working in the field of graphic, digital and experience design, and participating respondents were limited to those employed as part of the particular design team during the time of the study.[4]

The first stage of working with designers at Studio X to develop an understanding of the role of organizational culture in shaping both the practice of design ethnography, and the deep story of what it means to be a design researcher (Russell Hochschild 2016) included identifying the base activities that design practitioners identified as part of their own extended ethnographic toolkit. Through a sorting exercise, design practitioners documented the various activities that they billed as "research", and worked collaboratively to sort them into alternative categories in order to explore potential themes. This stage of the study served to clarify what design practitioners understood as research, and to differentiate this from the auditing categories provided by the studio culture. 'The way we do things here' is different in each organization, but with this sorting activity design practitioners at Studio X were given a language which frames how *they* engage in ethnographically informed research work. By working together to analyse the individual activities or "more mundane

behaviours…everyday work" (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury 2012, p. 148) listed in their billable time records as evidence of a larger practice form, design practitioners were able to make visible both the culture which shaped their design ethnography work and the biases that this culture naturalized, encouraged and rewarded.

In the second stage of the study, designers worked collaboratively to identify a new definition of what design ethnography meant in their studio space. Semi-structured interviews with individual team members were then conducted with a specific focus on the definitions generated by the team at large. Observational and interview data was coded and gathered into relevant themes using Quirkos and collaborative analysis of data and analytical findings was conducted with the participating members of the design team using Google Drive to encourage reflexivity and capitalize upon existing professional knowledge (Islam 2015).

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Stage 1: Defining Design Ethnography

In the organizational culture Studio X, designers are encouraged to use their allocated 'research' time in a variety of ways. The clearest way in which the research values of the organizational culture are shared and embedded within the design teams is through the accounting and auditing practices they face each day. By categorizing their research practice within the organizationally structured categories of the billable time sheet, designers quickly become adept at focusing on research activities that fall within the acceptable parameters established by the studio's management and accounting divisions.[5] At Studio X, these categories of 'research' included:

1. Concept generation
2. Concept testing
3. Ideation
4. Prototyping

As knowledge workers and researchers themselves, participant members of the design team were able to articulate their performance and practice of design ethnography in ways that were both "conventional and reflexive, reflecting both knowledge of the "common sense" of organizations and the limits of that common sense" (Islam 243). With this in mind as a starting point, design practitioners collected, compared and re-sorted their data as a team. After working extensively with their activity lists, the following two definitions of design ethnography were proposed:

1. Design ethnography is research that focuses on looking back from the future.
2. Design ethnography is research that focuses on looking inward.

Framing their design ethnography practice as *research that focuses on looking back from the future* shines a light on a studio culture of conjecture, and on the ways it rewards a design practitioner's bias towards forecasting rather than looking at the present. Within this framework, design practitioners deny the traditional ethnographic focus on the present and

on current experience. And framing their ethnographic practice as *research that focuses on looking inward* reveals a studio culture of reflexivity - one which embeds and cultivates a design practitioner's bias towards examining their own lived experience rather than towards looking outwards. In this way, design practitioners frame ethnography as best done when taking the self as the primary subject – a perspective that directly challenges core tenets of ethnographic practice.

Stage 2: Analyzing the Organizational Cultures of Studio X

Both of these frameworks impact the perspective, practice and production of the design teams at Studio X, and these mindsets (Dweck 2006) represent a way of understanding the structuring force of the organizational culture within which designer-led research occurs. With each project they take on, the design team at Studio X is tasked with evolving a traditional practice model (notably, ethnography conducted to explore digital technological platforms) into a form of predictive production: creating a setting where new extensions and evolutions of the ethnographic toolkit can be observed and clarified as the design practitioners engaged with "creating the conditions of the future - shaping the requirements for the future" (Designer A 2017).

A Culture of Conjecture − Design ethnography is often presented to clients working with Studio X as a process with clear boundaries and stages: methods of concept generation, testing, ideation and prototyping were audited and accounted for at an hourly rate, and the analysis was complete when a final deck of findings was presented on a wall-sized flat screen at a client-approval milestone meeting held in the boardroom. These categories, and the clarity of this process are rendered irrelevant from the perspective of a designer billing their time. "You don't want to know how the sausage gets made" explained one senior creative director. "We get there. It's just not a straight line". This process of practiced design ethnography at Studio X, messy as it is, would not be possible without the first of two frameworks embedded in the organization itself: to do "research that focuses on looking back from the future" requires an established *culture of conjecture.*

The organizational culture of conjecture at Studio X acts to encourage a bias towards forecasting rather than looking at the present within the data collection and analysis phases of the design practitioner's ethnographic work, and allows design practitioners to revise the boundaries of their practice to include acts of *remembering the future* as a form of research. By encouraging and rewarding the use of a forecasting bias as a way of "making do" (de Certeau 1984) in projects that hold high levels of ambiguity (and low levels of actual data for analysis) a culture of conjecture allows for a unique and different form of engagement with ethnographic methods. Design practitioners approach analysis by rejecting the need to uncover the existing requirements of today's world, and instead employing a bias towards forecasting as a collaborative prediction method to allow design practitioners to position themselves in a hypothetical future. This allows them to extend the boundaries of the ethnographic method, creating an affordance for generating ideas that can be tested and reported on from that 'future' vantage point. When doing "what I guess you can call research if you want" (Designer B 2017), members of the creative team actively operate in the space of the hypothetical and predictive future, working collaboratively to generate ideas for "when this comes out" (Designer A 2017) rather than actively constraining their ideas

within the parameters of the present day. This incorporation of ambiguity within the parameters of the research phase of the project is often presented as a positive feature of the process by the design team: "Who knows what this space is going to be by the time we are done. I guess, well we know. That's our job right?" (Designer B 2017).

In this culture of conjecture, creative team members are expected to dedicate over half of their 'billable' research time to what studio on-boarding materials described as 'moon shot' thinking; forecasting scenarios, proposing imaginary contexts and predicting abstract outcomes for their undefined design solution.

> "You never know how it is going to live out, so you have to work on the idea itself. I mean, we knew this was going to be an experience rather than just a site. We knew it had to live in public, not on a screen. But they don't know what the form is going to be in 6 months. Will we still have any of the VR we've got now? No point designing to, you know within the specs we've got - this baby isn't going to live there" (Designer C 2017).

The shaping function of the culture of conjecture at play at Studio X is supported by the embedded ethos of innovation, unpredictability and risk for which the Studio was renowned. Designers who are able to engage a bias towards forecasting during both data collection and analysis phases of their DE practice are rewarded with larger, more complex, and more high profile projects and are freed of the "wrist work" required of the "pixel pushers" in the lower ranks of the team. And by creating a social license for the allocation of billable hours to practices of forecasting, the designer's ethnographic toolkit is extended to include the 'generation' of findings through acts of "remembering the future" rather than through the analysis of field notes or interview transcripts.

The organizational culture of conjecture also acts as a future-focused lens for designers within their 'research' phases by positioning design practice within an adjusted narrative around what constitutes the labour of design, requiring designers to orient toward design-as-idea-generation rather than design-as-product-generation.

> "We come up with ideas without leaving our chairs - we've got to use our imaginations but you can call that research if you are billing it" (Designer A 2017).

A culture of conjecture (or of 'remembering the future') is also reflected in the way that designers describe their own individual practice:

> "We just jump off what is today - but we aren't designing for today, even if we do it today. So you can't only research today. But how can you, you know, research tomorrow? That's what we are good at" (Designer B 2017)

Finally, this culture of conjecture is also supported by the material space of the studio itself. By creating 'research' studios out of white boards upon which designers are asked to transport themselves "into the yonder…defining for ourselves what might be, then reporting back" (Designer A 2017), rather than spaces where data, transcripts, field notes or video documentation could be reviewed and analyzed, the material culture of Studio X rewards a bias for forecasting over data collection, and privileges the use of "remembering the future" over data analysis and interpretation.

A culture of forecasting—one which encourages looking back from, or remembering, the future—enables design practitioners to engage an important *ability* identified as a key trait of

this community of practice: the ability to conjure or forecast a future state, and to create the optimal conditions for that reality. By creating a culture of conjecture, the organization of Studio X enables designers to include their abductive thinking resources in their design ethnography toolkit, to engage shortcuts in the process of conjure up alternate realities without the expense of scenario builds or physical prototyping, to incorporate performance into their research practice, and to iteratively model-test multiple scenarios for multiple constructed future vantage points without exceeding the allocated billable resources of time and materials. This ability can also be understood as counterfactual foresight (Hines et al. 2017): a practice understood by neuroscientists as one that increases the brain's ability to construct and reconstruct possible realities. By encouraging and activating the redefinition of the social practice of design ethnography as one of 'looking back from the future', Studio X's organizational culture empowers designers to create a change in their understanding of what 'could be', and to transport themselves to worlds that didn't yet exist, allowing them to take creative action and strategic decisions that affected those potential future worlds. This practice creates a space for the designers to better generate strategies that were considered unusual or divergent.

A Culture of Reflection – What is perhaps most surprising about the culture at Studio X is that no one leaves. At least, no one on the creative side. "It's Hotel California in here" one design practitioner explained. "Why would you ever leave? You've got food here, you've got a bar here, you've got your people here…why go out?" (Designer F 2017). It is this aspect of the organizational culture that design practitioners point out most often as both a symptom and a cause of their second proposed framework for understanding what design ethnography means to them: to do "research that focuses on looking inward", you need a *culture of reflection.*

Through the material resources provided, the social structures that are constructed, and the activity forms that are rewarded, the organizational culture of Studio X actively encourages the extension of the ethnographic toolkit to include practices of intra-community introspection and reflexivity. By limiting the amount of acceptable (or billable) time that designers are able to spend with external community members, Studio X creates a culture of reflection: one which encouraged a specific bias towards self-examination rather than engagements with external participants. After all, if there are no hours available in the budget, and you've got a community of practice that can easily stand in for both the users and the clients, why wouldn't you replace the traditional ethnographic approach of 'making the familiar strange, and the strange familiar' with research that relies on the familiar to start with? This culture of reflection validates and values acts of reflection and reflexivity in both the generation of data, and the analysis of findings. But most importantly, it affords design practitioners the ability to use their own community of practice as a resource, the ability to actively use the self-reflective production of empathy as a generator of innovative and creative ideas, and the ability to work quickly and effectively using the material and human resources on-hand to meet budget and timing parameters.

Design practitioners describe the data collection stage of their ethnographic practice not as field work, interview work or participant observation, but as a form of disaster checking for design solutions – a method reliant not on external informants, but on intra-community reflexivity and the reliance on members of their community of practice as participants in the process.

> "We can test most things out ourselves. That is what we have to do - you get to think about who will be using this in the end and then put yourself in their shoes. I know lots of places have time for working with users - I know the whole IDEO thing - but we don't. So we have to ask each other, but it works, yes." (Designer D 2017).

> "Sure, I guess I could get used to bringing in users. But most of the time, it's the client who is our user you know? I mean, yeah yes we think of the people who come into contact with the solution. But the person who we have to think of most is the client. What they sort of think. Good thing, well I do a good impression of the PM on their side. I can be him no problem!" (Designer C 2017).

When working within this culture of reflection to develop the analytical categories in this phase of the study, design practitioners reiterate that they themselves often perform the role of user in lieu of more externally focused research subjects. This is attributed to the boundaries of time and budget that define each project, and to the repetitive nature of many design engagements:

> "I mean come on. How many times, do I really, I mean how often do I have to test something I know will work? I can do that here, we're good at giving the gut check" (Designer A 2017)

A culture of reflection, or of 'looking inward' define both the activity parameters and the practice parameters of research work, and both are highly informed by the organization's larger cultural norms and values. The ability to engage in data collection defined by reflexive practice and intra-community introspection is valued as a "third eye" into a culture, and designers who develop a reputation within the community for being especially adept at this research approach are praised publicly for their "insight" and "understanding" of user groups at studio-wide monthly meetings. In fact, during the fieldwork period, the ability to 'look inward' to generate insight was added as a performance metric on yearly reviews conducted by all team leads. It also serves to validate and value personal experience over the observed experiences of outside participants. Using this framework enables the design team at Studio X to extend their ethnographic toolkit to include the deliberate generation of empathy *without the participation of users or informants* as a research method in their work. This active production of empathy through self or intra-community reflection has been identified by neuroscientists to be a key driver of innovative and creative idea generation (Hines et al. 2017). By including acts of personal and collaborative reflexivity within the framework of 'research', the organizational culture of Studio X creates a space for design practitioners to draw upon their own personal experience to *generate* an empathic understanding of the lives of others. Instead of requiring designers to engage personally with research subjects to understand their experience, the organizational culture substitutes the use of a bias toward self-examination for this form of research work. And by relying on this bias, the design practitioners are able to access their own "… library of life" (as a Senior Creative Director described) as an effective shortcut to generate, test and iterate design solutions for complex and wicked problems. Without the organizational structures fostered by the culture of reflection to support this research work (including the public recognition of individuals who exemplified this skill set and a social license for the position of the designer as a proxy member of the user group) designers would not have been able to extend their ethnographic

toolkit to include the use of intra-community introspection as a methodological asset in the practice of design ethnography at their studio.

CONCLUSIONS

The collaboratively generated findings from this para-ethnographic collaboration highlight the two 'cultures' which actively define the lens through which design practitioners at Studio X viewed data collection and analysis practice. This is, of course, the story of only one team, in only one studio. And to complicate the narrative, this particular story is muddied by the addition of a researcher probing, questioning and complicating a team's daily practice, and their own understanding of their work. And yet, the story of the two cultures that shape the way that designers *do* design ethnography offers a compelling way for me to understand why what happens in the studio looks so different than what happens in the methods textbook.

First, a culture of conjecture rewards a design practitioner's bias towards forecasting rather than looking at the present during both data collection and analysis phases of their ethnographic work. The use of the forecasting bias acts as an important and effective tool for designers conducting research in a culture where they enter the analysis phase without findings, but with ideas - tasked with 'remembering the future' in a room full of white boards and glass walls rather than with sifting through data. Second, a culture of reflection actively embeds a bias towards self-examination rather than engagement with participants outside the design practitioner's community of practice. By limiting the amount of contact creative team members have with the external user community, and by rewarding the use of intra-community introspection as a strategy for reducing valuable billable hours in each project, the culture of reflection present at this studio embeds a bias towards self-examination. Both of these cultural frameworks act not only to extend the boundaries of the research-focused activities that make up the daily work of the design teams, but also to shape the social practice of design ethnography as it is understood by design practitioners themselves. Operating within a culture of conjecture allows design practitioners to reframe design ethnography as research that focuses on looking back from the future. And by engaging in data collection and analysis within a culture of reflection, design practitioners are able to reframe design ethnography as research focused on looking inward. Both of these frameworks serve to extend the classic ethnographer's toolkit to include the use of biases informed by designer's abilities and attitudes while acting as a lens through which design practitioners see the value and validity of design ethnography as a practice form.

The two driving aspects of the organizational culture of Studio X identified in this study–a culture of conjecture and a culture of reflection–are not of course, unique to design studios. Many workplace organizations support, foster and encourage the use of forecasting as a valid form of idea generation. Still more rely on the reflexive skill sets of their employees to continue to innovate and grow. However, few organizational cultures are willing to extend the traditional and normative expectation of what 'counts' as ethnographic methodologies to the extent that the culture of the design studio allows. And yet, the world outside the studio is eager to implement designer-led research methods as a tool for generating innovation, creativity and empathy in the face of organizational challenges. So how can we reconcile the two? When the definition of ethnographic methods expands to prioritize the self over the other, and the future over the present, do our expectations of what perspective ethnographic research can offer still hold?

And what happens when, as is becoming more popular (Brun Cottan 2013), we attempt to move design ethnography *outside* of the design studio - and more specifically, when we attempt to transplant design ethnography in its full practice form, rather than its more simplified activity form? What is required in an organizational culture that does *not* possess a culture of conjecture or a culture of reflection, and yet attempts to implement the practice of design ethnography as an approach effectively for their own research and innovation needs? By examining the function of the organizational culture on the extension of the ethnographer's toolkit, and the structures that make the inclusion of the dual biases of self and intra-community examination and forecasting as valuable research methods possible, perhaps we can better understand the structural requirements for the effective practice of design ethnography outside the studio itself. I believe that to adopt the valuable and unique practices of design ethnography *outside* of the design studio - in health care, in policy development, in industry - in an effective manner, we must fully understand the aspects of culture that contribute to its successful implementation inside the culture of the community from where it takes its name.

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NOTES

1. The field site described in this study requested anonymity for themselves and their clients. As such, the names of the studio itself and the members of the design team participants in this study are pseudonyms.

2. None of the designers engaged on the participating design teams reported any training on ethnographic, participant observation, data analysis or interpretation, thematic coding or field work methods.

3. This portion of the larger fieldwork focused on an augmented reality project being developed by one design team to support an international product launch in partnership with an industry sponsor. Design practitioners involved in this project were tasked with developing an 'experience' to be hosted on an unknown future AR platform, and were challenged to create a new way to test, pitch and composite or storyboard each stage of their work for client feedback and approval.

4. Creative teams consisted of between eight and ten members, led by a single Creative Director. Teams featured up to six designers at junior and intermediate levels, one strategic director, a copywriter and a Creative Director: a professional combination that mirrors the structure of other agencies and design studios of this size in Canada (Statistics Canada 2017). All of the members of the design team are considered knowledge workers, organizational actors with a high level of reflexivity about how they present their culture and their work to outsiders (Islam 2015). As members of the creative class (Florida 2012), the design team works to produce not only digital and print 'designs' in response to client needs, but also ideas, information and perspectives that are at times more valuable than their physical manifestation (Mills and Ratcliffe 2012; Murray 1993). In addition, and of primary importance to this study, they form a group of knowledge workers tasked with conducting ethnographic research, notably without any post-secondary research methodology training[2]. Participants in the design team were 60% female and 40% male, with an average of eleven years of professional experience and four years of post-secondary education. Of note, all members of the design team had been employed at this particular design

studio for five years or more - an anomaly in an industry marked by short term contracts and high levels of career change (Statistics Canada 2017).

5. Designers at Studio X were normally granted 10% of the total billable project time for allocation in one of these four categories under the heading of 'research', though the total number of hours varied due to changes of scope and team size between projects. Junior designers in this particular studio were granted an average of 8% of their total billable time for research work, while senior creative directors were granted up to 65% of their billable time for any of these four categories.[4] With such specific allocations, the organizational priority placed on designer-led research activities in client facing work was made very clear. This did not, of course, mean that design practitioners on these teams immediately embraced these phases of the project: in fact, they often referred to the process of doing work for these phases as "BOHICA jobs" (or 'bend over, here it comes again') as they scrambled to bill their time appropriately, if not realistically.

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