

Shaheen Amir

ANTHROPOLOGIST OF TECHNOLOGY · MIXED-METHODS RESEARCH · AI EVALUATION & GOVERNANCE

Research and program leader who bridges qualitative and quantitative research. Fifteen-plus years turning deep human context into products, strategy, and the responsible evaluation of AI — across Microsoft, Intel, and the State of California. Equally an operator and a researcher: builds the programs, panels, and evaluation practices that let research scale.

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Anthropology

Science & Technology Studies · UC Davis
2018

M.A., Anthropology

UC Davis
2013

B.A., Anthropology

UC Irvine
2009

METHODS

Qualitative

In-depth interviews, contextual inquiry & field studies, ethnography, moderated usability testing, diary studies, card sorts

Quantitative

Surveys (SUS, CSAT, NPS), usability benchmarking, A/B testing, behavioral analytics, statistical analysis, AI & model evaluation (human-in-the-loop)

Leadership

Product & program management, research operations & participant pipelines, cross-functional & executive alignment, coaching & mentoring

TOOLS

UserTesting · User Interviews · dScout · Dovetail · Qualtrics · Ethnio · Airtable · R · SPSS · SQL

AWARDS

ODI Technology Leadership
Microsoft Department Recognition
UC Davis Outstanding Teacher
Intel Department Recognition
Phi Beta Kappa
Magna Cum Laude

EXPERIENCE

Office of Data & Innovation, State of California

2023 – Present

Program Director, Research & AI Evaluation

- Built the state's first human-centered AI evaluation practice: human-in-the-loop pilots across 80+ use cases and 30,000+ employees, spanning \$10M+ in AI programs.
- Stood up statewide research operations — standardized workflows across 200 departments and accelerated proof-of-concept validation by ~50%.
- Created a state research-operations practice from zero, including an 8,000-participant panel (UserTesting, Qualtrics, Ethnio) built to reach residents a public service can't afford to miss.

Microsoft — Teams & Microsoft 365

2019 – 2023

Senior Research & Program Manager

- Owned panel strategy and research operations for 50+ mixed-method studies behind products serving 280M+ monthly active users.
- Directed the Teams-Yammer integration across two rival product orgs; findings tied to +150% Teams and +66% Yammer/Viva growth, with 12–20% gains in engagement KPIs.
- Built an in-house research panel on two custom tools (recruiting and panel management), cutting recruiting time from first contact to accept by 50%.

HumanFront.io

2018 – 2019

Founder & Principal

- Ethnographic research consultancy helping organizations build people-centric innovation, product, and strategy practices.

University of California, Davis

2016 – 2018

Senior Lecturer

- Taught 400+ students across eight UX-research, data-science, and science-and-technology-studies courses (92% satisfaction).
- Mentored 30+ students into top technology firms; lifted departmental placement by ~20%.

Intel Corporation — Global / Future Innovation Group

2011 – 2016

Lead UX Researcher

- Drove foundational research across \$100M+ revenue verticals, shaping five C-suite investments (big-data AI, AR/VR, high-performance computing).
- Reframed "collaboration" through an eight-week fieldwork-to-6,000-person concept test; helped seed the Microsoft Surface Hub (later a multi-billion-dollar product line); filed 4 patents.
- Cut time-to-market by 20% and increased cross-division research adoption by 35%.

BOARDS

Conference Chair

EPIC 2026 · Chicago

Paper Committee Chair

EPIC 2024 · Los Angeles

SELECTED PROJECTS

Evaluating GenAI for the Public Interest (California). Repeatable human-in-the-loop evaluation of frontier models against real state workflows; five solutions advanced to production; training requests up 300%.

One Roadmap for Two Rival Platforms (Teams & Yammer). Qual-to-quant program across 12 companies; the "circles of trust" reframe aligned two orgs on a single shipped design.

Defining "Collaboration" (Intel). Foundational future-of-work study that anchored a company-wide UX roadmap and seeded new hardware.

Research Operations, Built Twice (Microsoft & California). Participant panels, recruiting tools, and evaluation pipelines built from zero in two organizations.

PUBLICATIONS

Scholarly work published as Shaheen Amirebrahimi.

2026 *The Moral Architecture of Innovation.* Essay on ethics and governance in public-sector innovation.

2018 *Innovate or Die: Silicon Valley and the Tribes that Built the Future.* Doctoral ethnography · Library of Congress / ProQuest.

2017 *Time for a Digital Detox: Burnout, Addiction, and Desperation in Silicon Valley.* EPIC Proceedings.

2016 *The Rise of the User and the Fall of People: Ethnographic Cooptation and a New Language of Globalization.* EPIC Proceedings.

2015 *Moments of Disjuncture: The Value of Corporate Ethnography in the Research Industrial Complex.* EPIC Proceedings.