

May 23, 2020

Dear Optum Design Research Team,

I am a recent graduate of Pratt Institute's Master of Industrial Design program and I am applying to OptumCare's Service Design Researcher position.

During my undergraduate degree in Anthropology, I developed skills in people-focused research. I learned how to empathize with people and understand different groups through ethnography, field visits, observation, and survey. Now that I have completed my master's degree in Industrial Design, design thinking principles have given me the tools to apply these anthropological lessons in order to solve problems. As I graduate this semester, I am really excited to combine my two degrees in design and anthropology through human-centered design research.

Over the last year, I've been working on my master's thesis project, [Brain Bridges](#). I designed and facilitated 7 co-design workshops in order to involve school-aged children in the design of their material culture. To remove adult biases and truly empathize with today's children, it was critical to involve them in the research and design process as much as possible. To do this, I partnered with KidsTeam at the University of Maryland's Human Computer Interaction Lab. An inter-generational team made up of adults and children, KidsTeam practices a co-design method called Cooperative Inquiry to design new technologies for children ages 7 to 13. To prepare myself to design and facilitate these co-design sessions, I read many publications on the Cooperative Inquiry method. I also contacted and interviewed experts in psychology, childhood development, and Cooperative Inquiry to learn more about these subjects and to contextualize my research within the design field.

Partnering with KidsTeam gave me the opportunity to manage the direction of the research and design as well as lead and work closely with a research team. Before each of our seven co-design sessions, I identified session goals in line with our research questions, designed session curriculum, and prepared visual and physical aids. After each session, I reviewed all of the collected data including design artifacts, audio recordings, photographs, video footage, journal templates, and field notes. From this data, I identified recurring patterns and themes and translated these themes into key insights. I then used these key insights to develop design solutions. Next was an iterative cycle of user testing, feedback, and implementing the feedback to develop an updated prototype.

Working on my thesis project has given me the skills and knowledge necessary to carry out successful design research as well as collaborate with team members of different professions, ages, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Through this project, I have been nominated for WantedDesign's Conscious Design Award, awarded to the best student design projects from design schools around the world. My research team and I have also written and published a paper describing our findings. I will be presenting this paper at ACM's Interaction Design and Children (IDC) Conference this summer.

Further details about my experience in human-centered research and design can be found in my [resume](#) and [portfolio](#). Thank you for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you.

All the best,
Danielle Begnaud