

## Freelance Research Assistant Positions: danah boyd, 2020 Census Book Project

I am seeking ~3 research assistants to provide support on my current book project about the 2020 U.S. census (title still tbd, under contract with University of Chicago Press). These freelance positions will each require approximately 80-100 hours somewhere between July and October.

For the last four years, I have conducted ethnographic fieldwork inside the U.S. Census Bureau and among census stakeholders; I have also conducted over 100 interviews with informants involved in this process. I am currently writing a book on my findings to examine the technical, social, and political production of data. The book focuses on how government officials at the Census Bureau averted a series of near-disasters to produce the Constitutionally required data only to face significant threats to the legitimacy of the work.

As a researcher and writer, I start with empirical data and build from there. I have already produced a first draft that is rich with empirical material. In subsequent drafts I am seeking research assistance to thicken my engagement with relevant literatures and currently scholarly debates. Much of my writing implicitly invokes different literatures, but I need to ensure that these conversations are legible to scholars from different fields. I am looking for RAs who are familiar with the literature that I'm engaging with, can push me to ensure that I am actively and strategically engaging with said literature, and can point me to literature I am less familiar with. This book crosses multiple disciplines and multiple literatures – and it is quite likely that I have significant gaps in my knowledge that I should contend with. In short, these RAships are a form of deeply engaged peer review.

I am looking for RAs who are already well-versed in at least one of the literatures I'm engaging with through coursework, qualifying exams, dissertation writing, or their own publications. The key literatures that are woven throughout this book include:

- STS. Lots on infrastructures and sociotechnical imaginaries with a mix of SCOT, feminist STS, and occasionally some ANT (sans Latour ::wink::).
- Organizational sociology. Much of this is a public-sector orgs ethnography of the Diane Vaughn or Janet Vertesi style. I'm also looking at organizational failure and resilience, and organizational communication.
- History of statistics/politics of numbers. Think Porter, Daston, Gallison, Hacking, Bouk, James Scott.
- Public administration (and some administrative law), with a U.S. bent. Think Dan Carpenter, Pamela Herd, Don Moynihan, Elizabeth Popp Berman, David Pozen.

I am also picking up assorted other literatures along the way. Right now, I connect haphazardly to literatures on “partnerships,” activism, and multi-stakeholder engagement; legitimacy, agnotology, and conflicting epistemic constructions; network power; and various threads connected to political science. All of this needs to be strengthened in future drafts. (Needless to say, I'm also engaging deeply with census-related histories, including those concerning the history of race and the census, but I am not looking for help in this area.)

**Responsibilities.** RAs will be asked to read the partially written book with an eye towards the literature they're responsible for (e.g., "sts" or "organizational sociology") and engage me in both written (aka email/trackbacks) and oral (aka Teams/Zoom) modes. They will be asked to challenge my use of the literature, flag where I should be engaging with the literature better/differently/more, and suggest additional literature for me to engage with based on their own knowledge of the debates. I will also ask the RAs where to place certain literature/arguments based on their read. RAs may be encouraged to write footnotes and commentary based on their knowledge; some of this may be used in the final book (with credit). RAs might also be asked to track down specific literature or trace the lineage of certain arguments. RAs are not expected to have any knowledge about the census (and it may be better if they do not). Think: non-anonymous paid peer review where you get to flag all the missing literature!

**Compensation and Logistics.** These are hourly contractor positions, paid at \$25/hour. My expectation is that the basic work will take 80-100 hours; additional hours may be available depending on the quality of the work. Ideally, the work will take place in August or September, although some early work is possible in July and there may be additional work in October. As freelancers, RAs will need to invoice me for their hours and will be responsible for their own taxes, equipment, library access, healthcare, etc. (Freelancers are also responsible for the knowing their jurisdiction's rules on accepting contract pay.) The hours are flexible, although I ask RAs to keep me abreast of their progress. Those who complete the work in a satisfactory manner (and anyone whose work is directly used) will also be acknowledged in the book.

*Please note: I am hiring these contractor positions directly; these freelance RA positions are not associated with any organizations with which I am affiliated. I cannot support visas, provide library access, or otherwise offer organizational support.*

**Qualifications.** These positions are intended for RAs who are already well-versed in at least one of the relevant literatures. Qualified RAs might have taken their qualifying exams in these areas or written extensively on related topics. I do not expect any one RA to be familiar with all of the various academic literatures; I am looking for complementary RAs with diverse knowledge sets. Preference will be given to those who approach literature from a citational justice perspective. While these positions are envisioned for ABD PhD students, those with equivalent experience are welcome to apply. Postdocs, alt-ac scholars, and other post-graduate school researchers may find this work to be a fulfilling complement to their own work.

Ideal qualities include:

- Depth and breadth of relevant scholarly literature in at least one of STS, sociology, public administration, or related fields. Know the literature and the debates.
- Reliable with strong organization and written communication skills, as well as attention to detail. You provide the schedule and stick to it.
- Comfort challenging my interpretation/analysis and pushing me to go deeper/rethink my argument. The Reviewer #2 you wish you had.

- Able to easily explain the key arguments of a scholar's work in a way that makes the ideas shine. Relish the inner professorial desires.
- Familiarity with Zotero, Microsoft Word, Dropbox, and relevant research library search engines. Know your tools.

**To Apply.** Please send the following information to me at [danah-censusRA@danah.org](mailto:danah-censusRA@danah.org)

1. Cover letter that includes why you are interested and describes your experience and which literatures you are familiar with.
2. CV that reflects your experience as a scholar.
3. A document that reflects the relevant literature that you know well. This could be your qualifying exam reading list, a syllabus you taught/TAed, a paper you wrote with a relevant bibliography, an annotated bibliography, or equivalent document.

**Deadline.** I will begin reviewing applicants on July 1, 2022 and continue accepting applications until the positions are filled.

**Questions?** Do not hesitate to reach out to me directly at [danah-censusRA@danah.org](mailto:danah-censusRA@danah.org) If you would like to see if this project is substantively of interest to you, I am happy to share a draft of the introduction in advance.