

BECOME A RESEARCH ASSISTANT

Want to learn, make a difference, and get a leg up for grad school? Become a research assistant!

Research can transform social policies as well as how we live and look at the world. I love research and often have research opportunities available for motivated undergraduate students to help as research assistants with my ongoing projects. I welcome and look forward to working with students of all races, ethnicities, genders, sexualities, religions, etc.

If you'd like to explore our world, develop marketable skills, and gain invaluable experience for entering graduate school or the job market, please contact me to inquire about becoming a research assistant today!

*Note: Please note that this document is addressed primarily to undergraduate students. I am also interested in working with graduate students. The dynamics in working with graduate students will be similar in a number of ways to what is described here, but may also be different in other ways as graduate students typically have a stronger skill set and more experience which may translate into a different set of expectations, roles, and opportunities. If you are a graduate student and are interested in working with me, please contact me at dps26 (at) pitt (dot) edu.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities vary by project, though research assistants may be asked to assist with any number of research tasks, such as but not limited to:

- Research, collect, and compile data
- Copying and scanning of books and other documents
- Conduct internet and literature searches
- Review and summarize journal articles or book chapters
- Conduct interviews or recruiting
- Translate or transcribe data
- Distribute flyers or administer surveys
- Help analyze data

Minimum Qualifications

- GPA of 3.3 or better
- Sophomore, junior, or senior in good standing
- Strong analytical abilities and attention to detail
- Works well with others and also independently with minimal or no supervision
- Self-motivated, dedicated, organized, and reliable
- Prior coursework in sociology

Preferred Qualifications

- GPA of 3.6 or better
- Junior or senior in good standing
- Successfully completed a sociological research methods course
- Enjoys life, is creative, curious about the world around them, and has a sense of humor
- Familiarity with or interest in current research project topic areas
- Experience with the computer programs used in the project (e.g., Excel, Word, SAS, SPSS, etc., see me for details)
- Majoring in sociology (ideally planning to enter the field professionally via graduate school)

*Note: Everyone who meets the minimum qualifications will be carefully considered, though individuals with preferred qualifications will receive greater preference.

Training & Time Commitment

Research assistants will receive free training as needed to complete research tasks. Time commitments vary by project (though three to five hours a week is about average) and are typically negotiable. I'm committed to training and I will make sure you're comfortable, competent, and supported in any procedure before you try it alone.

Working with you and training you hands-on to perform research is a sizeable time commitment for us both. Only those who are 100% confident that they can commit to the time required and are able to participate for a minimum of one semester will be considered. This will require adapting your schedule to ensure your availability for research duties every week while also navigating your personal and academic demands. Please think about this very carefully before inquiring.

Compensation

Like most undergraduate research positions, my research assistant positions are unpaid.

As a research assistant you will, however, receive valuable research training and experience above and beyond what you would receive in a research methods course. This can give you an edge when entering the job market or applying to graduate schools and will further strengthen your ability to conduct independent research. You will also receive personalized attention and one-on-one mentoring. Upon successful completion of duties, I am also happy to write a letter of recommendation or provide feedback to other faculty members who might be writing letters of recommendation on your behalf. More advanced students may also be invited to serve as co-authors on conference papers generated by the research project(s) on which they work, when appropriate and negotiated ahead of time.

Additional Information

A key question that I will ask you is to indicate how we might be a good fit. To get a sense of this, and as I would encourage you to do for any faculty member you might be interested in working with, the first thing to do is to take a look at my work. You can find details about my research on my website and you should take a close look at my curriculum vitae.

Being a good fit means:

- Sharing my general research interests
- Sharing specific research interests in one of my current projects
- Being interested in research I have published
- Being interested in the methods used in my work
- An interest in working with me personally
- Feeling like we would work well together
- A strong mind
- Self-motivation
- A strong and unwavering sense of commitment
- An interest in pursuing graduate education in sociology
- You have done the legwork to research other faculty members' work and determined that our interests are the best fit

You don't need to hit 100% on all of these, but a good fit generally means an honest self-appraisal and being able to genuinely check off half or more of the above (the more the better!).

Not Sure/Outside Students

Not sure which project interests you most, but still want to help? Are you a student at another university? No problem. Just contact me and tell me a little about yourself and let me know what interests you and we can discuss the options available. Also note that I am always open to hearing new ideas and proposals should you be interested in a project that I am not yet working on but which is related to my major interests. Additionally, if your interests or abilities are better suited to the work of another faculty member, I am very happy to make a referral.

To Apply

Before applying, please contact me at dps26 (at) pitt (dot) edu to check to see if I have any research opportunities available.

If I have opportunities available, I will ask for you to send me the following information:

1. Your legal name and preferred name
2. Your contact information

3. Your major and related coursework
4. Days and times of availability
5. An indication of which research interests/projects interest you
6. A brief (about 100 words or less) description of any prior research experience you have
7. A brief indication about your professional goals
8. Your GPA
9. Please also indicate how you meet the qualifications listed in this position description and how you think we might be a good fit.
10. A copy of your c.v. or resume as a PDF file or MS Word (.doc or .docx or .pdf) attachment

Please itemize these in your response to me, using the number system explicitly shown above, so that I can easily identify when you are addressing which of the above items.

If we appear to be a good fit, I will contact you to schedule an interview to discuss your interests, plans, my research, and how we might work together.

I look forward to hearing from you!