Dear recruiter,

My name is Yikai Zhao, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in Communication with a dual M.S. in Statistics from Texas A&M University. I am an experienced research methodologist specializing in mixed and computational methods. I also have extensive experience in conducting applied psychometric research from my internship experience. I believe my expertise in research methodology and research experience from internship have prepared me well to work as a UX researcher at Facebook.

As a social science Ph.D. candidate with a focus in statistics and computational methods, I have mastered a broad spectrum of research methods, from causal inferences to predictive modeling. I could utilize miscellaneous computational tools and modeling techniques to conduct research on various forms of data such as image, text, and tabular data. My dissertation research, which applies state-of-the-art deep learning NLP models to conduct frame analysis on tweets, could be utilized to analyze user experience on a large scale from textual data. Further, my research experience in interpretable machine learning methods (e.g. partial dependence, local surrogate, SHAP) is extremely beneficial in explaining user behavior and potentially drawing causal inferences.

Besides training from grad school, my internship experience at Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) has offered me hands-on experiences in conducting surveys from start to end - sampling, questionnaire designing, error adjusting, data analyzing, and final communication to sponsors. More specifically, I have practiced the Tailored Design Method in the planning of survey projects which proved to be a success in increasing the response rate from address-based sampling. The works I collaborated with colleagues at PPRI were turned into two papers and 3 conference presentations. Along this process, I have improved the skills of using diverse computational tools to facilitate better communication of data-driven insights, such as Google Colab, Shiny, and remark.js.

To enhance my contextual understanding of UX research, I have finished all lectures from the User Experience Research and Design Specialization (a series of 5 courses) from Coursera, which strengthened my belief that my knowledge and skills are highly transferrable and applicable to UX research at Facebook.

Steve Jobs once put 'you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future.' As someone who has gained customer insights from a B.A. in advertising, expertise of quantitative methods from an M.S. in Statistics, and social science research experience along the Ph.D. journey, the position of UX researcher at Facebook is the future that my dots are converging to. It would be an honor to work at Facebook and I am excited to learn and grow from Facebook and be part of this diverse and inclusive community.

Sincerely,

November 26, 2019
Yikai Zhao