

Researcher, Social Instabilities in Labor Futures Initiative (2 positions)

Job Posting – November 2018

Data & Society is seeking two **Researchers** for their **Social Instabilities in Labor Futures Initiative**.

About Data & Society

Founded in 2013, Data & Society is a NYC-based independent research institute. We operate as a dynamic intellectual nonprofit with strong recognition in the technology, academic, and policy sectors. Our work advances public understanding of the social and cultural implications of data-centric technologies and automation. Through interdisciplinary research and engagement, we work to ensure that knowledge guides development and governance of technology.

About the Social Instabilities in Labor Futures Initiative

The Social Instabilities in Labor Futures Initiative researches emergent disruptions in the labor force as a result of data-centric technological development, with a special focus on structural inequalities.

Open Positions

We are hiring for two research positions in Data & Society's Social Instabilities in Labor Futures Initiative. Successful candidates will conduct original research to advance knowledge relevant to the Initiative's goals. Researchers will focus on one of the two projects described below and help devise a research plan to get at the open research questions that the team seeks to understand. These positions are full-time, two-year appointments with the possibility of renewal.

Candidates with extensive experience may be considered for a lead position at Data & Society. Additional requirements and responsibilities for the lead are outlined below.

Project #1 : Public Sector Labor and Technology Disruption

New data-driven, surveillance, and algorithmic management technologies are being introduced into many workplace settings, often under the auspices of increasing efficiency and accountability. While considerable public attention is given to workers in retail, ride-hailing, and manufacturing, much less is known about how public sector workers are experiencing these workforce transformations. Governments provide critical infrastructure services and targeted services to disadvantaged populations while under tremendous pressure to reduce costs. Increasingly, they're turning to technologies of automation in the hopes of doing so.

The goal of this project is to examine one domain of public sector work to understand how technology is being integrated into public sector workforce dynamics, how these tools affect public sector accountability

and decision-making structures, and how public sector workers respond to the integration of these technologies. We are open to which subdomain of public sector work might be particularly ideal for understanding the integration of technology, but we see tremendous opportunity in publicly funded home care, sanitation, and public transportation.

For this project, we imagine that a researcher would do deep qualitative (including ethnographic) research in a mutually agreed upon domain to help understand the transformations that are underway and the implications of these transformations on workers, clients, community members, and government. Such a researcher would be well-versed in labor issues more generally.

Project #2: Franchise Entrepreneurship and Financialization

Many of the "small businesses" that exist in the United States are franchises of larger corporations. Workers are often encouraged to be entrepreneurial and purchase a franchise to achieve a dream of business ownership. Yet, franchise owners are often beholden to corporate requirements in ways that leave them with limited room to maneuver as parent companies pressure franchise owners to increase revenue, decrease costs, and implement specific technologies or processes. Meanwhile, employees at franchises struggle to make demands on their bosses who have limited flexibility in certain situations.

This project would look at franchise ownership across sectors (including retail and fast food) to understand how franchise owners are positioned in relation to parent corporations and workers in light of new technologies of automation, efficiency, and surveillance. Relevant technologies might include scheduling software, in-store surveillance systems, key monitoring, iPad customer service tools, etc. One goal of the study would be to understand the kinds of pressures that franchise owners face in trying to maximize their profits and appease the parent company, the way in which technologies are marketed to them as "solutions," and how they experience their role as entrepreneur/employer in this highly structured environment.

For this project, we imagine that a researcher would conduct extensive interviews with small franchise owners outside of major urban environments and conduct qualitative or ethnographic research into the practices of franchise businesses. Such a researcher would be fluent in understanding business and economic dynamics, perhaps through the lens of organizational sociology.

This position reports to the Research Lead or to the Director of Research.

Qualifications

- The ideal candidates may be trained in any number of disciplines but should have a strong empirical foundation; be interested in questions related to technology, labor, and society; and be excited to work in a highly interdisciplinary environment that includes computer scientists, lawyers, social scientists, and practitioners.
- Candidates may have a PhD or equivalent experience in any number of disciplines, but should have a strong background conducting qualitative social science fieldwork. Candidates who have strong familiarity with STS, organizational sociology, labor studies, or business sociology are preferred.
- Candidates should enjoy working on collaborative teams, contributing to peer intellectual production, and engaging broad audiences with research.
- Ideal candidates are also committed to social change and oriented to practical applications of research and its implications for practice, design and governance of new technologies, and a strong desire to understanding how technology and power shape our socio-technical society.
- Candidates should have a well-established research track record as demonstrated by journal publications and conference papers, as well as participation on program committees, editorial boards, and advisory panels.

- Candidates should be able to write for multiple audiences and be part of a public-facing research institute.

Additional Qualifications for Research Lead

- Researchers who have at least 3 to 5 years of post-PhD experience, conducted significant research, and published research post-dissertation, either in an academic, industrial research, government, think tank, or equivalent research-centric setting, may be considered for the position of Research Lead.
- Research Lead candidates should have experience supervising junior scholars and overseeing others' research production.
- Research Lead candidates should have experience convening multi-stakeholder groups, interacting with policymakers, or otherwise translating research for practitioners.
- This role reports to the Director of Research.

Responsibilities

- Conceptualize, develop, and conduct a research project
- Publish op-eds and blog posts related to ongoing research for academic and non-academic audiences
- Participate in conferences and workshops in your field
- Participate in outreach and collaboration activities including meetings, presentations, webinars, hearings, and conferences
- Manage a research project budget
- Collaborate with other researchers internally and externally
- Coordinate and attend regular team meetings, as well as collaborate with the broader Data & Society community

Additional Research Lead Responsibilities

- The Research Lead will be responsible for advancing the research strategy in collaboration with the Labor Engagement Lead, Director of Research, and potentially members of the Management team
- Commission research projects from external researchers
- Mentor and support Junior Researchers
- Manage the work of Research Analysts

Practical Considerations

- You will be expected to work from the Data & Society office in NYC at least four days a week, unless traveling for pre-approved fieldwork, conferences, or meetings.
- You will be expected to contribute to the life of Data & Society through active engagement in and hosting of events, seminars, reading groups, and other cross-topical activities.
- The annual salary will depend on the position, seniority, and level of responsibility. You will also receive a laptop and \$2000 for conference travel and materials. Additional research budget will depend on the project.
- You will be offered a generous benefits package including health insurance, paid time off, and paid holidays.
- You must be eligible to work in the United States; we are unable to sponsor visas.

- For the second position, we are open to current faculty wishing to conduct this work during a sabbatical year; such individuals would be given the title of “Visiting Scholar.” Current faculty considered for the Research Lead may opt for conducting research during the first year and finishing the work as a part-time contractor upon return to their home institution.
- Newly minted PhDs may choose the title of “Postdoctoral Scholar” if they intend to return to academia after this position.

To apply, please submit the following to jobs@datasociety.net by December 17, 2018:

1. Cover letter describing your current research agenda, as well as your planned research and professional trajectory, and indicating your desired start date and highlighting any experiences that may contribute to your success in this position.
2. Two journal articles, conference proceedings, book chapters, or equivalent writing samples.
3. CV.
4. The names, affiliations, and email addresses of three recommenders.
5. Brief (max: 2 page) research proposal for how you might tackle one of the two sketched research topics. Your proposal should describe how you understand the need for this inquiry, how you would go about gaining access to the necessary field sites, and illustrate what unique perspective and experiences you may bring to the pursuit of this research.

Feel free to contact jobs@datasociety.net with any questions about the position. Questions about the opportunity or process will not reflect negatively on your application.

The work and well-being of Data & Society is strengthened by the diversity of our network and our differences in background, culture, experience, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, and much more. We welcome applications from people of color, women, the LGBTQIA community, and persons with disabilities.