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**DIGITALLY-ENABLED INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND IDENTITY IN
THE ON-DEMAND ECONOMY**

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I examine the ways in which algorithmically managed on-demand work is reshaping occupational role identities and the relationship of workers to the organizations which buy their labor. To do so, I conducted a “netnography” of an anonymous online space created by the ride-hail driver community along with organizational and public discourse about ride-hail work. After a brief introduction in Chapter 1 and a description of my methodology in Chapter 2, I ask in Chapter 3, how do on-demand organizations and the media frame the boundaries of the organizations, and workers’ relationship to those boundaries? What implications do those boundaries have for workers’ meaning, belonging and identity? This qualitative study investigated how organizational boundary discourse and the organization of the work itself constructed sometimes conflicting worker roles that influenced how ride-hailing workers understood the boundaries of the on-demand organization and their location with respect to it. The roles of app user and driver-partner constructed ride-hailing workers as outside the boundaries of the organization, while the driver-bot role constructed them as (non-human) elements of organizational technology. In Chapter 4, I investigate more deeply the ways in which Uber drivers co-construct their own occupational identity, examining the interactions among drivers on the ShareSpot site. In particular, I examine how logics and identity work play out in new institutional contexts where identities are “up-for-grabs.” Through this dissertation I build upon and hope to contribute to the literatures on algorithmic organizing and management, identity work, and institutional logics.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

On-demand economy activity accounts for an increasing proportion of work and consumption. The Pew Research Center found that nearly 1 in 10 Americans in 2015 earned money by taking on work for app-based business and 72 percent of U.S. adults have used at least one of eleven different on-demand services (Smith, 2016). MBO Partners, the Freelancers' Union, and McKinsey Global Institute have each conducted recent large scale private surveys that indicate between 25 and 30 percent of workers have engaged in on-demand work in the preceding month.¹ A study by the Freelancers Union and on-demand economy platform firm UpWork predicted that most of the U.S. workforce will be a part of the on-demand economy by 2027 (Upwork and Freelancers Union, 2017). Thus, platform-based organizations within the on-demand economy (e.g., Uber, Airbnb) play a crucial role in reshaping the nature of work new ways of organizing and the meanings associated with them.

Faced with such uncertain meanings and work contexts, organizations and, indeed, workers themselves, engage in meaning-making and identity work related to this phenomenon. When trying to find meaning and identities in new social structures, people turn to institutions and institutional logics. Institutional logics are “overarching sets of principles that [...] provide guidelines on how to interpret and function in social situations” (Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011). Thus, logics guide thinking, feeling, and action in social situations, both in-person and online.

However, we know little about how societal logics become instantiated and how their associated identities become defined in emerging fields in response to societal changes. One such

¹ Since large-scale public surveys, like those administered by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, tend not to ask about supplemental work, these private surveys are some of the best estimates available for scholars about on-demand workers (<https://www.gigeconomydata.org/>, Cornell ILR Department).

societal change is the rise of digitalization, defined as the way many domains of social life are restructured around digital communication and media infrastructures (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016). While institutional theorists are increasingly attentive to the role and impact of digitalization (Davis, 2016; Hinings, Gegenhuber, & Greenwood, 2018; Hinings & Meyer, 2018; Powell, Horvath, & Brandtner, 2016) on institutional dynamics, much is yet unknown. Recent calls for papers have asserted that “there is no doubt that digitally-enabled institutional arrangements permeate and reshape industries and fields, challenging power structures and meaning systems” (Gegenhuber, Logue, Hinings, & Barrett, 2020). This presents a significant opportunity for institutional theorists to further investigate how multiple actors, including organizations and workers, leveraging digital technologies can “transform the very way that institutions are created, complemented, threatened, or destroyed” (Gegenhuber et al., 2020). Novel digitally-enabled institutional arrangements, defined as digital technologies intertwined with institutionally legitimate practices, values, and actor constellations, are rearranging institutional structures.

This dissertation aims to tackle this question of how digitalization as a societal change reshapes processes of meaning making and identification for workers. New, platform-backed on-demand organizations, such as Uber, Airbnb, and Deliveroo, have already disrupted how work is done by disintermediating the organization from the workers (Sundararajan, 2016) and the labor process itself (Chai & Scully, 2019). These on-demand organizations employ digital technologies called platforms, which act as two-sided markets: people connecting with workers for temporary, fleeting jobs called “gigs.” I focus on how meanings associated with the on-demand economy phenomenon continue to be unsettled. Is a ride-hail organization really a transportation company, a technology company, or something else entirely? What is a driver-partner? Does that designation mean employee, entrepreneur, or independent contractor? Does

algorithmic management optimize the conditions to create a perfect market? Or, instead, does it create something else? When algorithms are the managers and workers are isolated from each other, how do workers make meaning of their relationship to the organization? Investigations by U.S.-based journalists, think tanks, regulators, and law enforcement officials have been inconclusive to date (Katz, 2017a, 2017b; Smith, 2016), even as laws mutate in certain states (i.e., from the AB5 legislation in 2019 to Proposition 22 in 2020 in California). Management research itself continues to grapple with disrupted meanings associated with the on-demand economy (Curchod, Patriotta, Cohen, & Neysen, 2019; Cutolo & Kenney, 2020; Davis, 2015a, 2015b; Garud, Kumaraswamy, Roberts, & Xu, 2020; Karanović, Berends, & Engel, 2020; Kuhn & Maleki, 2017; Phung, Buchanan, Toubiana, Ruebottom, & Turchick-Hakak, 2020). Therefore, it is not yet settled what role workers play in the on-demand economy and how they make sense of their identities in this context.

I address this question by conducting a 14-month “netnography” of an online space created by the ride-hail driver community – the least powerful actors in the ride-hailing field. Traditional means of meaning making and identity, such as organizational socialization, may no longer be available when the organization frames workers outside the boundary. My study suggests that drivers used an online space to engage in meaning making and identity work during a time when their status as contractors, their wages, and their technology were in flux. I discuss in detail the research setting, research methods, and analytical procedures in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 3, I focus on the boundary work associated with on-demand organizations. On-demand organizations, like Uber and TaskRabbit, have ambiguous boundaries and locations of workers. This qualitative study investigates how organizational boundary discourse and the organization of the work itself, constructed sometimes conflicting worker roles that influenced

how ride-hailing workers understood the boundaries of the on-demand organization and their location with respect to it. The roles of app user and driver-partner constructed ride-hailing workers as outside the boundaries of the organization, while the driver-bot role constructed them as (non-human) elements of organizational technology. The different roles implied by the boundary discourse had implications for the drivers' meaning, belonging and identity.

In Chapter 4, I investigate the ways in which Uber drivers co-construct their own occupational identity, examining in more depth the interactions among drivers on the ShareSpot site. In particular, I examine how logics and identity work play out in new institutional contexts where identities are “up-for-grabs.” In analyzing a subset of 323 threads focusing on the driver (mis)classification debate², I find that posts which are not consistent with the market logic attracted “manhood acts” (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009), which are assertions of authority and superiority via sarcastic jokes, insults, and verbal jousting, and involves highly aggressive interpersonal behavior (Hershcovis & Reich, 2013). These manhood acts allowed drivers to enhance their identity in the market logic. By contrast, posts that were consistent with the market logic attracted helping acts when based in attractive identities (driver-partner, app user), which promised autonomy and benefits. Even when posts were based in the market logic, however, they attracted manhood acts when they focused on the low autonomy of Uber drivers, consistent with the driver-bot identity. Eventually, cynicism and fatalism occurred as the posting drivers are unable to find their position within shifting identities. This makes a positive identity elusive and warps the market logic into one of limited opportunity and limited autonomy. For them, the market logic delivered a Hobbesian Jungle where competition is “nasty, brutish, and short”

² By dealing with worker (mis)classification, I mean dealing with whether Uber workers were classified as independent contractors instead of classified as employees. Chapter 4 details my efforts to create this subset.

(Hobbes, 1651) rather than an ‘American dream’ of a meritocratic market where anyone could get ahead by working hard.

In Chapter 5, I discuss the theoretical implications of my dissertation, as well as its limitations and possible future directions. This dissertation aims to offer new theoretical and empirical insights into how institutional arrangements, mechanisms, and processes are being reshaped by a new societal change: on-demand organizations. Broadly speaking, the key takeaways of my dissertation will therefore relate to the following main areas: *algorithmic management and algorithmic organizing, identity, and institutional logics*. For the algorithmic management and algorithmic organizing, my dissertation aims to complicate prior on-demand economy related work by showing nuance in the structures of agency and power under algorithmic management (Curchod et al., 2019; Petriglieri, Ashford, & Wrzesniewski, 2019). For identity work, my dissertation aims to show how adjacent identities can be mobilized collectively through interaction to strengthen nascent occupational identities. For institutional logics, this dissertation aims to contribute to the growing conversation on meanings and institutional logics by showing how two different subject positions within the market logic create very different effects for the subjects.

CHAPTER 2. RESEARCH SETTING & METHODS

Research Setting: ShareSpot

Drivers in the online forum ShareSpot (a pseudonym) used a “watercooler” analogy to describe the space and its purpose, which supported the classification of the forum as a free space. As an example, an experienced driver wrote to a prospective driver: “Welcome to this fine forum, where you actually can learn all sorts of useful information, and you may also find a lot of watercooler chat.” The watercooler is often thought of as an isolated area in a physical workplace that allows for social interaction, office gossip, and covert venting, often away from the eyes of management. Drivers often expressed how they valued ShareSpot as a space to share honestly and express sincere emotions in reaction to the work, the organization, and the customers. Due to the nature of the work, drivers are fairly disconnected from each other, their customers, and their fellow workers. The physical work of the ride (nearly) always occurs alone in their own personal car. Rides are often short distances and durations with few regular passengers, even if they chose to drive regular hours or routes. Thus, drivers participate in ShareSpot to engage in social interaction with their fellow workers and talk “backstage” while isolated in a semi-private space of the internet.

The structure of ride-hail work and its association with platform-based business models (Eisenmann, Parker, & van Alstyne, 2011; Evans & Schmalensee, 2016; Gawer, 2014) places ride-hail workers both at a physical and a legal distance from the organization and one another. Because of this organizational distance, customer interactions are a crucial determinant of on-demand workers’ access to income, and is often “essential or important” to their financial survival (Smith, 2016). Ride-hail organizations use administrative algorithms to monitor and

supervise workers (Davis, 2015b) and drivers must maintain an average of a 4.6–4.7-star customer rating to have continued access to work (Rosenblat, 2016).

Typical Driver Interactions in ShareSpot. Typical driver conversations reflected the perceived distance between ride-hail workers and the ride-hail organization. My ethnographic data and analysis found that while Uber hires third-party customer services representatives, drivers often received vague responses, from outsourced Customer Service Representatives (CSRs), to their inquiries about how to handle rider requests that deviated from suggested practices (e.g., excess passengers/luggage, unaccompanied minors, lost items). Drivers would then post the CSR's responses to complain or for the community to dissect and discuss. This collective discussion revealed that the policies and responses provided by CSRs often differed from or contradicted other similar communications. Often, drivers also offered sarcastic mimics of CSR responses, describing them as “copy and paste replies,” “automated emails”, and “canned responses” in their jargon. This sarcastic mimicry was often posted in response to fellow drivers who complained about difficulties ranging from technical difficulties with the app to sexual harassment and assault. Drivers interpreted this difficulty in reaching support as a signal that the organization and its CSRs were uninterested in resolving their issues.

Drivers also expressed a fear of reprisal for directly contacting the organization about “gray area” work or about deviant requests and practices. These questions included: how to work in a geographic location that the organization entered without regulatory approval; if law enforcement efforts in such areas were a problem and how to evade them; how to park illegally to pick up passengers; if one should agree to wait for a passenger to complete an errand; and if one should accept suspected underage passengers. Drivers understood that acquiring this tacit

knowledge about deviant requests and practices was essential in order to work, and drivers often posed these types of questions in ShareSpot.

Thus, this absence of an organizational involvement in work left many workers operating in uncertainty and ambiguity. This disrupted state of meanings motivated them to enter the online space to improve their own performance. When Googling a question about how to handle a customer or a ride-hail organization policy, ShareSpot threads were the most highly recommended results during the study period and to date. Therefore, this distance encouraged drivers to seek out ShareSpot and other online spaces for “tips and tricks.” This, and the reliance on themselves and others outside the formal organization, also encouraged drivers to understand themselves as entrepreneurs.

In light of this separation between the organization and drivers, ShareSpot also played other important roles for workers beyond a site for “tips and tricks.” Organizational socialization (Cable, Gino & Staats, 2013; Moisander, Grob & Eraranta, 2017; Pratt, 2000) often creates meaning, even for outsourced, contingent, and precarious workers. Yet, most on-demand organizations deliberately spend no efforts on formal organizational socialization (Rosenblat & Stark, 2015), as it would leave them liable to extending employee status to their workers. Informal organizational socialization is also extremely limited because workers in these new forms of organizations are “exiled” outside the boundaries of the firm (Hafermalz, 2020). Organizational socialization is, thus, non-existent. In addition to acting as a replacement for a metaphorical “watercooler,” ShareSpot acted as a metaphorical replacement for both formal and informal elements of organizational socialization.

Akin to an employee manual, ShareSpot was a repository of information. Visitors to ShareSpot could search past posts via keywords. New posters who asked obvious questions (such

as whether they should rent a car through Uber in order to work) were often directed by the community to search for prior posts on the topic. Akin to an orientation program, a Frequently Asked Questions page on the site provided a quick start guide to language, common practices, and norms.

Yet some topics remained perennial. Akin to a lunchroom or an employee breakroom, stories of misbehaving passengers were common on the site. These served as both an opportunity to release anger by the original poster, but also a way for the rest of the community to show amusement, support, or both. In a way, ShareSpot as a space served more than a “watercooler” function; ShareSpot served as a social oasis in a desert devoid of socialization and social life.

First Stage: Netnographic Methods and Observation Period

For this dissertation, I conducted a qualitative “netnography,” or online ethnography of drivers for an on-demand economy organization (Kozinets, 2009; Massa, 2016; 2013). I analyzed and gathered primarily empirical archival material from online spaces for grounded process theorizing (Levina & Vaast, 2016; Metiu & Fayard, 2016) in four stages, iterating between the stages as needed. Online ethnographic methods are epistemologically and ontologically similar to traditional “offline” forms of ethnography. One recent definition describes the basis of netnography as “rather simple”:

“It is grounded by the principle that the perspective of an embodied, temporally, historically and culturally situated human being ... for purposes relating to identity, language, ritual, imagery, symbolism, subculture and many other elements that require cultural understanding, [is] a far better analyst of people’s contemporary online experience than a disembodied algorithm programmed by statistics and marketing research scientists” (Kozinets, Scaraboto, & Parmentier, 2018: 231)”

This allows for some leeway to reach unforeseen findings and a deeper understanding of a distinct collection of people (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007); thus, these methods are well suited to study emergent phenomena such as ride-hailing and digitally mediated work.

Netnographic data emerge in real time and leave persisting empirical traces. Online spaces are rich field sites for unobtrusive methods, full of jargon, conversations, visuals (i.e., application screenshots, memes), and links to media and organizational communication. A multidisciplinary set of general protocols for online ethnographic methods continues to coalesce (e.g., Correll, 1995; Hine, 2000; Kozinets, 2009; Murthy, 2008; Ward, 2001). Similar to offline researchers, netnographers and online ethnographers adapt to the unique contingencies of the field, including the ephemerality of interactions (Bernstein, Monroy-Hernández, Harry, D., André, Panovich, & Vargas, 2011) and the physical distance between the researcher and the online community (Ward, 2001). Online ethnographers and netnographers “focus on acts such as image posting [and] comments on forum threads” (Massa, 2013: 49). Overall, these methods enable researchers to unobtrusively follow emerging events and track rich interactions in their entirety.

To increase my insight as a researcher before formal data collection, I conducted an early observation period of multiple online forums to improve my understanding of the communities and ride-hail work itself (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). I first observed the late hour of rapidly proliferating posts on the forums, the specific language used (i.e., “pax” for passenger; “lulz” for laughter, especially when it is at another's expense), and the range of questions that drivers brought to the communities. Posters used screennames for anonymity. This stage enabled me to analytically distinguish between “noise” and data and to identify relevant interactions during formal data collection and analysis.

Second Stage: Data Collection, Analytic Procedures and Research Question

Next, I collected and analyzed ride-hail drivers' interactions on a social media website during a 14-month online ethnography of digitally mediated precarious work (10/2015-6/2016; 12/2016-5/2017).³ *ShareSpot* (a pseudonym) is an open forum hosted on a popular social media platform. During data collection, *ShareSpot* experienced a period of rapid growth, growing from 4,647 to 8,273 subscribed members in the first period. By end of data collection, *ShareSpot* had around 14,000 subscribed members. Since then, subscriber size has continued to increase, growing to over 28,000 subscribers in September 2018 and to over 46,000 current subscribers (as of May 2020). It has been an ocean of data, with over a million initial posts (top-level, i.e., not including connected comments) since it was created in 2013. Most observed forum participants identified as drivers within North America. Using website metric analytical tools, I confirmed that the demographics of this online space align with large-scale social survey data on ride-hail workers (Smith, 2016).

During each period, I spent at least 10 hours per week observing the space.⁴ I increased observation time if relevant events triggered additional posts. I kept fieldnotes throughout data collection. My initial observations saw drivers seeking and giving advice on issues such as how to respond to passenger requests to deviate from suggested practices (e.g., drive-thru requests,

³ For confidentiality reasons, I have not disclosed the names or links to this website. The names of people participating in the online forum are changed to preserve anonymity. All usernames are pseudonyms to aid anonymity.

⁴ In choosing a qualitative methodology, scholars implicitly take a paradigmatic stance (Creswell, 2013). Recently, qualitative scholars using online data sources have engaged in the comprehensive "scraping" of online data and then sampled, aided by quantitative analysis (Levina & Vaast, 2016). This approach has been described as a structuralist approach (Metiu & Fayard, 2016), where context is minimal and deemphasized in analysis. However, context is a crucial part of understanding meanings and how they are made (Zilber, 2017b) and, thus, emphasizing context was necessary to include to address my research question. Therefore, I chose to use an ethnographic approach, where deep immersion in the online environment and complementary data are prioritized to develop thick descriptions and rich understandings (Metiu & Fayard, 2016) and a constructivist paradigmatic approach to address meaning.

excess passengers/luggage, unaccompanied minors, and lost items) and the corporate dispute process. After a period away from the field to refine my analysis, I then collected the second stage of data.

In both data collection periods, technology and wages were in flux.⁵ The first period also included several worker misclassification legal actions. Because of this, the ride-hail organization directed a significant amount of communication towards the workers concerning organization, its technology, and the economic valuation of work. Similar to a single “extreme case” (Siggelkow, 2007; Yin, 2014), this context allowed for a more readily observed open discussion by the workers regarding the company’s relationship to drivers and the drivers’ financial states.⁶

I also systematically collected organizationally-produced texts during this same period (10/2015-6/2016; 12/2016-5/2017) from the market leader in the ride-hailing industry, Uber (cited as OM). Collecting and analyzing around 500 blog entries and other publicly available media materials allowed me to have additional textual representations of the discursive resources available to workers to understand their work and to illuminate how the organization constructed its boundaries regarding workers.

⁵ As of October 13, 2015, Uber announced that it was rolling out a new application in select markets; thus, interpretations of technology were in flux. Second, Uber made significant technological and wage-related changes in December 2015. To gain more customers and revenue, Uber orchestrated a broad “fare drop” (called “rate cuts” by drivers in *ShareSpot*) across multiple geographic markets. In many markets, Uber achieved this reduction in customer fares by changes to the per mile compensation for Uber drivers. Uber devoted significant efforts towards messaging this change to its workers. The second period captured the shift to “upfront” pricing and a new consumer application, which the company began rolling out in select markets in June 2016 and in all markets by end of November 2016.

⁶ I also collected and analyzed two other sets of supplementary documentary material: (1) autobiographical texts and “how-to” guides on the blog, *TheRideHailDude.com* (a pseudonym), with similar traffic patterns and demographic profile as the communities; (2) promotional and recruitment material (websites, blogs, videos, magazines, books, and leaflets) published by Uber during this period referenced as organizational material, or (OM). Journalistic and popular press media on Uber (collected via Factiva or referenced by the online forum participants), recent books (Isaac, 2019; Lashinsky, 2017), and think-tank policy papers, were used to supplement understanding, but not analyzed qualitatively.

Third Stage: Coding, Data Analysis, and Theorizing

My analysis was heavily influenced by Charmaz's (2014) interpretivist and constructivist grounded theory approach. Initially staying close to the data, I used open and emergent coding to conceptualize themes in the data, grouping similar themes together. This led to gradually grouping emergent codes under specific research questions. I also used the "tabula geminus" approach to coding (Kreiner, 2016) and employed theoretical codes. This abductive approach refined emerging theoretical ideas alongside increasingly detailed empirical analysis (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2007; Mantere & Ketokivi, 2013). Some initial theoretical frameworks were those of institutions and inequality (Amis, Munir, & Mair, 2017) and the concept of free spaces in social movement literature (Furnari, 2014; Kellogg, 2009; Polletta, 1999; Rao & Dutta, 2012).

The final theoretical frameworks were two-fold. The first theoretical framework (Chapter 3) related to work, meaning, and belongingness. The second theoretical framework (Chapter 4) is related to identity and market logics. Specific codes and analyses are presented in more detail in the empirical chapters which follow.

CHAPTER 3. WORK, MEANING, AND BOUNDARIES IN THE ON-DEMAND ECONOMY⁷

At its best, work can be an important source of meaning, belonging, and identity in people's lives. Yet, what happens when work is for an "on-demand" organization? The on-demand organization, exemplified by companies like Uber, Lyft, TaskRabbit, and Deliveroo, is ambiguous in its boundaries and the location of its workers with respect to them. On-demand organizations digitally mediate work between customers, workers, and/or organizations; in other words, a mobile application (app) facilitates services to be "on-demand" by customers. In the United States, private companies in the gig economy have raised billions of dollars in capital.⁸ Consumers have increasingly incorporated on-demand services into their daily lives.⁹ Nearly 1 in 10 Americans have earned money in 2015 by taking on a job or task for an app-based business (Smith, 2016). This rise in on-demand organizations and work accompanies a societal shift toward non-standard precarious (temporary, part time, and contingent) work (Barley, Bechky & Millikin, 2017; Bidwell, Briscoe, Fernandez-Mateo & Sterling, 2013; Cappelli & Keller, 2013; Okhuysen et al., 2013). Thus, on-demand organizations will likely play a significant role in the future of work.

In this chapter, I explore empirically the experience of working for a ride-hailing app, an on-demand organization¹⁰. Companies, like Uber, Lyft, and Gett rely upon a large, disaggregated

⁷ A revised version of this chapter has been published in *Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Vol. 57* (Roberts and Zietsma, 2018).

⁸ The on-demand economy was estimated to have raised between \$9.4-\$15 billion from 2010-2015 (Bloomberg Briefs, 2015).

⁹ Seventy-two percent of American adults have used at least one of 11 different on-demand services (Smith, 2016). Around one-in-five Americans have used four or more services.

¹⁰ Many terms have circulated in academic and practitioner literature for this empirical context and new organizational form. I thought deeply about the terms used in this chapter. Per Associated Press guidelines, I use the term "ride-hailing." One term commonly used is the "sharing economy" (Mair & Reischauer, 2018). I chose not to use "sharing economy" terms in relation to this study because for Uber,

workforce of “driver-partners” and upon an app to deliver a relatively standardized transportation service to customers “on-demand”. I ask: *How are the boundaries of an “on-demand” organization constructed by organizations? How do workers understand their own role and location with respect to those boundaries (if at all)? How will these understandings of roles and boundaries of an on-demand organization impact their experience of work?* To address these questions, I explore the boundary discourse surrounding a ride-hailing firm and the impact it has on drivers’ perceptions of their own roles and the meaning and belonging they experience from work via a qualitative online ethnography.

I found that the organization’s boundary discourse constructed drivers as mostly outside of the organization, as voluntary “*app users*”, and as entrepreneurial “*driver-partners*” being matched with market demand on the app. Yet, the organization’s discourse also constructed drivers as part of the technology of the organization – as “*driver-bots*” delivering a perfectly controlled ride experience. Even if drivers identified with the driver-partner role, they still experienced their day-to-day work as driver-bots, subject to employee-like discipline and control, despite being constructed as distant from the organization as app users. Thus, on-demand workers faced the worst of the three roles: they lacked the benefits of corporate belonging yet were subject to corporate control, and faced substantial limits to entrepreneurial autonomy.

Inherent Challenges in Locating Work and the Worker in the On-Demand Organization

With the increase in organizational practices of outsourcing and off-shoring, the growing reliance on contingent workers, and the rise of on-demand organizations, how organizational

the idea of “sharing” is not accurate. Uber drivers work for a U.S. based on-demand organization, which does not offer the characteristic sharing-related “freedom” to use non-monetary forms of exchange, but operates with a corporate profit-making business model found in the “traditional economy”, albeit through a digital platform operated by the organization. While my findings may generalize to many organizations that are colloquially referred to as part of the “sharing economy” (such as Airbnb), I thus do not use “sharing”-related terms.

researchers view work is evolving (Okhuysen et al., 2013). Accordingly, the meaning of work and the roles provided by work-structures – employment, contractor, temporary worker – can no longer be viewed as self-evident (Vallas & Prener, 2012). Fundamental questions about who and where workers are, as well the meaning of work, particularly for those at the organizational periphery and those at the interfaces between market and organization, still need to be empirically and theoretically addressed (Bidwell et al., 2013; Okhuysen et al., 2013; Smith, 1997). This study aims to shed light on these fundamental questions.

Who are workers in the on-demand economy – and where are they located with respect to organizational boundaries? Existing management theories offers some initial explanations, but are still very limited in this respect. On-demand organizations bypass intermediary organizations to have a direct relationship with the individual worker. Current literature on contingent, temporary, and non-standard work is primarily concerned with contingent, outsourced, temporary, and contracted workers as subsumed under intermediary organizations, such as temp agencies, outsourcing or off-shore organizations, or contracting firms (Bidwell et al., 2013; Cappelli & Keller, 2013; Davis, 2015b, 2015a; Kim & Davis, 2016). Similarly, the ambiguity in organizational boundaries is often framed as primarily due to the prevalence of sub-contracting (Bidwell et al., 2013), not the disaggregated hiring of independent contractors individually. This literature theorizes the on-demand organization and its boundaries as an organization-to-organization relationship, even when the existence of the on-demand organization's growing workforce is acknowledged (Davis, 2015a, 2015b).

Thus, the literature on ambiguous and disappearing boundaries of organizations is blind to the most relevant organization to its model: the on-demand organization. A ride-hailing company, as an example, has a direct relationship with its drivers and engages in organizational

control, yet these drivers are classified as independent contractors and not as employees (Rosenblat, 2016). These literatures do not conceptualize workers as dependent on the on-demand organization (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017). In sum, the phenomenon of the on-demand organization poses a phenomenological and theoretical challenge to my understanding of changes in the social structure of work and organizational boundaries. To this point, I have chosen not to apply an *a priori* definition of organizational membership and boundaries in this empirical study. In accordance with my online ethnographic approach, I choose to take an “emic perspective” (Fetterman, 1989) towards the concept of membership and boundaries in the on-demand economy. In my efforts to produce a grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014) of organizational boundaries, membership, and identity in an on-demand organization, I preferred to let the actors’ words and descriptions speak for themselves rather than forcing prior concepts upon the data.

Work, Meaning and Belonging in the On-Demand Organization

Because on-demand organizations epitomize how work itself, and the locations of workers with respect to organizational boundaries, are changing rapidly, the study of such organizations may challenge other central understandings, such as the meanings, belonging and identities tied to work and organizations. The “days, the jobs, and, ultimately, the lives of employees are the raw materials” that workers use to construct their roles, identities and the meaning of their work (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001: 179). What meanings, roles, and structures of belonging will emerge in the context of an on-demand organization? Prior literature on how work itself informs the meanings, identities, and belongingness constructed by workers provides some insights into these processes for on-demand workers.

First, work can be a source of substantial meaning (Dutton et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Even in the face of “dirty work” (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999), or when work lacks

regular interactions with others (Petriglieri et al., 2019) and stable working conditions and pay (Pratt, 2000), work can still be a source of meaning for workers, albeit through different organizational mechanisms. For instance, organizational socialization (Cable, Gino & Staats, 2013; Moisander, Grob & Eraranta, 2017; Pratt, 2000) often creates meaning, even for outsourced, contingent, and precarious workers. Yet, most on-demand organizations deliberately spend no efforts on formal organizational socialization (Rosenblat & Stark, 2015), as it would leave them liable to extending employee status to their workers. Thus, the “raw materials” for meaning may be even more reliant on the work itself, as the organizational mechanisms for direct influence on worker meaning-making are more limited.

Second, work can be a source of belonging (Valentine & Edmondson, 2014). On-demand organizations deliberately eschew the formal status of “employee”: on-demand workers are legally and formally independent contractors (Kuhn & Maleki, 2017; Lashinsky, 2017). Prior research on non-standard employment largely assumes that workers “lack the expectation of long-term employment,” or long-term belonging (Bidwell et al., 2013: 67), likely derived from long-standing findings that autonomy and freedom from organizational influence are common reasons that people engage in non-standard work (Kunda, Barley, & Evans, 2002) and an important source of satisfaction (Baruch, 2000). If the desire for autonomy and freedom is one of the “raw materials” available for creation of identities, what identities will on-demand workers create?

Finally, separate but closely related to the relationship between work and belonging, work can also be a source of identity (Ashcraft, 2007, 2013). Prior research finds workers reframe their work and identity through engagement with meaning derived from organizational belonging, such as cleaning staff connecting with a hospital’s mission of care (Wrzesniewski &

Dutton, 2001). Yet, today, janitorial work is frequently outsourced (Bidwell et al., 2013), and research on non-standard employees has shown that they frequently experience a sense of fragmentation, discontinuity, and confusion about their identity, the meaning of their work, and their belonging within organizational structures (see Ashford, George & Blatt, 2007 for detailed review). Without organizational belonging available to construct identity, where will on-demand workers turn to for identity? Recent studies provide some suggestions. To find meaning in the face of the daily inadequacies of precarious, temporary, and independent work, seasonally employed tax preparers construct an “expert role” for themselves, by comparing the content of their work to cultural and societal notions of professional work (Galperin, 2017: 224). Similarly, independent creative and knowledge workers, including writers, artists, consultants, and engineers, shape their material surroundings and cultivate their psychological conditions to create a vital work role and a vital self-identity (Petriglieri et al., 2019).

Yet, scholars are still unclear how findings for meaning, identity, and belonging relate to those who work with on-demand organizations, “such as Uber drivers, in terms of how they think of themselves as workers” (Barley, Bechky, & Milliken, 2017). The nascent literatures relevant to the on-demand organization are largely silent. Bidwell and colleagues (2013) also do not talk about the nature of the work itself in their critical literature review of changes in employment relationships beyond contrasting low-skill and high-skill; they also do not engage in the meaning of work itself. In their essay on the impact of big data and the internet on management theories, Colbert, Yee, and George (2016) claim to engage with identity, but only concern themselves with the impression management of gamer profiles, avatars, and personal branding. Kuhn and Maleki (2017: 25) are concerned with worker *attitudes* to the on-demand

organization itself, which is different than worker-constructed meanings of on-demand work itself and their own role.

Technology may also complicate the relationships between work, meaning, identity and belonging. Colbert, Yee, and George (2016) are optimistic about how gamification, a technique to encourage engagement, can alter worker's motivations. Gamification may also alter the nature of the work *itself*. Monotonous and repetitive tasks may be morphed by gamification into meaningful victories; and in doing so, belonging and identification may morph into work addiction. Empirically separating the actions and intentions of organizational technology, such as gamification, from how on-demand work is changed by gamification will be challenging (Barley et al., 2017). Thus, in the on-demand organization where work is mediated entirely through technology, the meaning of work may be significantly altered by technology. In this qualitative study, I aim to illuminate how organizational boundary discourse and the organization of the work itself constructed sometimes conflicting worker roles that influenced how ride-hailing workers understood the boundaries of the on-demand organization and their location with respect to it.

Methods and Analytical Procedures

Using the dataset described in Chapter 2, I focused in this paper on the ride-hail organization's boundary discourse around driver roles and drivers' response to the organization's boundary work. Then, I considered the implications of both for worker identity, meaning, belonging and location with respect to the organization.

The Organization's Boundary Discourse around Driver Roles. In the organizational media (OM) database of organizational texts, I coded statements by the organization that referred to the organization's own boundary, and the location of drivers with respect to the boundary. I

label these statements as “boundary discourse”. I found three ways in which the organization spoke about the boundary between drivers and the organization, creating three different driver roles which constructed the worker identity, meaning, belonging and location with respect to the organization quite differently.

Driver Responses to Organizational Boundaries and Boundary Discourse. In the online ethnography (OE) database, my initial coding identified experiences associated with disconnection and confusion around organizational boundaries, which corresponded to the three roles identified in the boundary discourse. Five additional themes emerged as “surprises” in the data (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013: 303–304). These surprises were crucial to the final analytical leap to theories of identity, meaning, and belonging, as they reflected drivers’ perceptions of their own roles with respect to the organization, the meaning they made of their work, their sense of belonging, and the effects these had on them. While these codes initially appeared as not directly relevant to the research question, these codes were strongly present in the data: (1) drivers critiqued the critics of Uber, saying they were “bitching,” “whining,” “crying” or “entitled”; (2) drivers framed working as unpredictable; (3) drivers framed the work as mindless; (4) drivers expressed cynicism toward organizations; (5) drivers expressed fatalism toward their work conditions.

When iterating back to theory from the initial findings centered around disconnection and confusion, we felt that the meanings of these disconnections and their implications for workers’ experiences of organizational boundaries could be largely tied with workers’ construction of identity and roles (Ashcraft, 2007, 2013), meaning (Dutton et al., 2010; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), and belonging (Valentine & Edmondson, 2014). I take a social constructionist approach to theories of identities and roles. Organizationally derived discourses are a crucial element in

identity and role construction. Roles and identities are crafted not just by individuals alone, but by ‘extra-individual forces,’ including organizational discourses, broader societal discourses and institutional frameworks (Alvesson, Ashcraft, & Thomas, 2008; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). These discursive formations construct particular versions of roles, identities, work, and the organization. Discourses, like boundary discourse, are part of the resources or materials out of which individuals, organizations, and other collectives craft identities, including what people do at work (Barley & Kunda, 2001), interpersonal interactions, local narratives, and material arrangements (Alvesson et al., 2008). Like those employed formally by organizations are encouraged to incorporate managerial discourses into narratives of self-identity (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002), I found that ride-hailing workers interact with the boundary discourse in the process of driver identity construction. Upon further analysis and review of the literature, I found that my findings connected with research on identity and meaning under non-standard employment but also differed in crucial ways, informing my theorizing.

Findings

I found that three specific mechanisms of disconnection in the boundary discourse – extrusion, effacement, and entrepreneurialization – delineated the ride-hailing company’s organizational boundaries and the driver’s role in relation to the boundaries. The disconnection by boundary discourse into roles existed in tandem with the legal and physical distancing of drivers with respect to the boundary of the organization. Legally, drivers are classified as independent contractors. Physically, drivers conduct their work at the edge of the on-demand organization’s boundaries, but not entirely outside it. Their fundamental task – the “*ride*,” or trip– takes place physically in (often, but not always) their own personal car, but the trip is made possible and documented entirely in a virtual organizational space: the organization’s

technology, or “*app*.” In the sections that follow, I describe how the boundary discourse, in concert with other organizational processes of disconnection, constructed three roles for on-demand workers: (1) extruded app users, (2) effaced driver-bots, and (3) entrepreneurialized driver-partners.

The *app user* role constructed drivers as voluntary users of the technology that could start or stop using the app at any time. Text that reflects this role includes: “*Every day hundreds of thousands of drivers use our technology to get millions of passengers from A to B*” (OM). This role extruded (Munro, 1997) drivers as customers, outside the boundary of the organization. The *driver-bot* role constructed drivers as atomized parts of the technology, which performed the ride service in a perfectly controlled way. As such, drivers were within the organizational boundary, but their human characteristics were effaced (Munro, 1997), or disappeared. Text that reflects this role includes: “*Apps like Uber make it more affordable and easier to get around—especially in places where there is little public transport and taxis are nonexistent today*” and

“Moving people—the world’s most precious cargo—from A to B is a huge responsibility. While no means of transportation can ever be 100% safe, we believe that Uber’s technology enables us to improve safety before, during and after the ride in ways that other means of transportation cannot” (OM).

Finally, the *driver-partner* role entrepreneurialized the drivers, or constructed them as entrepreneurs. The driver-partner role frames drivers as a peer, an economic actor equal to the company. As partners, the company connects the driver-partner to rider demand via its app and the driver-partner, in turn, supplies rides. For example:

“... for [name], opportunity is the name of the game. Since making the switch from driving for a cab company, the 24 year old has been on the receiving end of job offers, new friends, and most strikingly, a refreshing demeanor from riders. [...]. For [name], being an Uber driver-partner is about moving people—and him—forward” (OM).

I further describe how the on-demand workers' responses to these roles and experiences of the nature of their work formed the "raw material" for workers to construct meaning and identity from their work. These frustrated attempts led ultimately to expressions of cynicism and fatalism by drivers.

App Users

Boundary Discourse Extruded Workers into the App User Role. The discursive framing of the organization as a technology "extrudes" (Munro, 1997) the driver, constructing the driver's role into an *app user* role, or a consumer of technology. Extrusion is a manufacturing term, which means the deformation of a material forced under pressure through a die to create a shape. Munro (1997) defined organizational extrusion as when, "people or materials" are "drawn into an organization process, yet also become pressed out as a consequence of that very process" (p. S44).

The extrusion into the app user role by boundary discourse arises in part from the conflation of the boundaries of the organizational entity with the boundaries of its technology: the technology is seen to be the organization. Boundary discourse first frames technology as the definitive element of this ride-hailing organization. Boundary discourse often uses "*platform*," "*technology*," and "*app*" as synonymous for the organization's name (OM) and definition: "*smartphone apps that connect riders and drivers at the push of a button*" (OM). Rhetorically, this boundary discourse accomplishes more than merely obscuring differences between the two; it also merges the sets of information, texts, and ideas related to the organization and its technology, constructing one entity which would be accorded its own particular boundaries. Thus, the boundary discourse located the boundaries of the technology and the on-demand

organization as ambiguous, conflating the two entities. Conflating the two entities socially constructs both drivers and riders into the roles of users of technology.

The extrusion of the driver into the constructed role of app user is also more explicit in boundary discourse. Boundary discourse, for instance, summarizes the “*key issue at stake*” in class-action lawsuits on worker misclassification is “*whether drivers using the Uber app should be classified as independent contractors or employees*” [emphasis added] (OM). Boundary discourse also describes deactivation, or the equivalent of firing, as when “*we ban drivers in these states from using the app*” [emphasis added] (OM). Prevalent infographics label calculations of workers as “*drivers [who] use the app*” [emphasis added] (OM) during a specific time or geography. The extrusion to app user is relevant to other organizational processes and structure; for instance, the ride-hailing organization’s “customer support staff” is for all their customers: drivers and riders. This statement, in various versions and iterations, is often used in organizationally-produced media to introduce the expansion of ride-hailing service into a new geographic region: “*If something happens while in the car, whether it’s a traffic accident or an altercation between rider and driver, our customer support staff are ready to respond 24 hours a day, seven days a week*” (OM). Thus, boundary discourse disconnects the driver from the boundaries of the organization by extruding the driver into a constructed app user role.

By locating the app user role outside of the organization’s boundaries, the boundary discourse constructs ride-hailing work as voluntary, erasing drivers’ work beyond engagement with the technology. Driving for Uber, as part of enacting the app user role, is not substantively more work than merely “*turn[ing] on the Uber app*” (OM). A statement by a former White House official, likely targeted to several stakeholders, stated that: “*Eventually, you can imagine a world in which people turn on the Uber app while running errands or visiting friends, making*

a little extra money as they move around town” (OM). The statement also summarized the purpose of the ride-hailing organization: “*Basically, Uber offers extra work whenever you want it, and extra money whenever you need it*” (OM). The boundary discourse frames payment as an “offer” for work at the “app user” driver’s leisure in exchange for “*a little extra cash*” (OM).

Experience of Work as an App User. Driver interactions with “customer service representatives” shaped their experience of the nature of work under the app user role. Boundary discourse directed drivers to address problems to “*customer support staff*” (OM), rendering driver inquiries indistinguishable from rider inquiries. In my analysis of driver interactions with customer support staff, I found that drivers perceived the organization as disinterested in the issues and concerns of their work because (1) communication with the organization was made physically and logistically difficult by distancing and, (2) when finally reached, customer support staff responded with perceived robotic and unhelpful answers.

Communication distancing. To contact the organization or its representatives to answer questions and resolve issues with their work, drivers primarily communicated with the organization’s customer service representatives (CSRs). CSRs are hired as third-party contractors and work in a place that is physically distant from the organization’s employees. Drivers and CSRs are also distanced by technology. Drivers were first only able to contact CSRs through email, and eventually, through the application itself. Phone service, aside from automated responses, was not available at the time of the study. A variation of “*haha*” (OE) or “*you can’t*” (OE) was often the response to queries about the correct phone number to reach the organization, which surprised and frustrated new drivers. Drivers often expressed a desire for human interaction and authority when contacting the organization. As of mid-2016 in the second part of the study, the ride-hailing organization opened “Partner Support Centers” and “Greenlight

Hubs” where drivers could talk in-person to CSRs. CSR centers/hubs were separate and distant from the corporate office locations wherein employees work.

This communication distancing was evident in the data. For example, a driver NoProbLlama posted about how he was unclear on why he was receiving requests to fulfill UberEats deliveries while he was picking up passengers for rides. NoProbLlama claimed he never signed up for the service and was uncertain on how to stop the UberEats requests, as passengers were complaining about the smell of fast food in the car and “dinging him” on the ratings. Another driver, GivingTreeStump stated that Uber “opted-in” all of the drivers to UberEats and to contact the CSRs through the app for resolution. NoProbLlama then said that the directions on the “copy and paste replies” that he received from Uber were inaccurate (“that tab is no longer there”) and he “[couldn’t] reach a real person.” In response, GivingTreeStump replied that “it is almost like they [Uber] don’t want anyone to contact them.” This and other similar instances revealed that drivers did not consider most information from or interaction with the organization to be helpful and instead sought the advice of the community for questions such as how to file their taxes, how to handle drunk or difficult customers, how to use the app, and how to return a customer’s lost item. Analysis of fieldnotes revealed that these types of posts were mundane, with several to a dozen of these advice-seeking interactions occurring each day.

Robotic communication. Second, I found that drivers perceived much of the communication returned by the CSRs as “*automated emails*” or “*canned responses*,” which were meaningless and ineffective in resolving their issues. They often posted their content to the forum (OE). Many workers suspected that their communications were not being answered by “*real people*” initially, but by a software “*bot*” (OE). One driver posted a screenshot depicting a litany of curse words written to a CSR and how it was met with a canned response, arguing this

was evidence of response by bot. Another agreed, stating: *“I know it is a robot because their responses and reactions to the question do not match the problem”* (OE). Some drivers posted ironic messages mimicking the tone and content of those messages in response to other drivers’ posts detailing complaints. On the forum, drivers shared strategies on how to ensure their communications get past the “bot”, such as keyword optimization, to ideally reach a human CSR with authority to resolve an issue. One driver posted: *“I really wish they would just say: "F[***] you. We don't care. Your friendly Uber bot”* (OE). This conflation between human representatives and organizational technology intended to mimic human responses shows how the discourse and the drivers’ experience of work constructed the organization as uncaring and distant from them.

Ultimately, the app user role in the boundary discourse and the experience of distancing and robotic communication at work constructs the position of drivers as outside the boundary of the organization. The mutually reinforcing effects of discourse and experience related to the app user role constructs driver identity as disempowering, transforming workers into powerless consumers. One driver wrote: *“Complaining to an ATM about bank fees does nothing but upset yourself”* (OE). Experiencing work in the app user role constructs the meaning of work as transactional and belongingness as conditional. As consumers, drivers must accept what is offered, unless they can take their business elsewhere.

Driver-Bot Role

Boundary Discourse Effaced Drivers into the Driver-Bot Role. The boundary discourse, by constructing the organization as a technology, also “effaced” (Munro, 1997) the driver into the *driver-bot* role, or atomized elements of non-human, organizational technology. While extrusions shape drivers into new forms through organizational processes, effacements are

“defined as occasions where people or materials are treated as if they are no longer necessary to the process, but neither are they actually eliminated or excluded from it”, according to Munro (1997, p. 44). The effaced role constructed workers as expected to execute organizational requirements and wishes flawlessly, as if they were driver-bots, at the same time as their visibility was minimized or eliminated by boundary discourse.

The boundary discourse constructed only the organizational technology as necessary to producing a ride. Thus, the organization and its technology alone transported riders, not drivers. One statement, likely targeted to governmental, regulatory, and consumer (rider) stakeholders, stated, “*Uber drops people off everywhere in the city at the press of a button*” (OM). Working for Uber also was framed as “putting the car to work”, thus disappearing the driver.

Advertisements stated that prospective drivers “*could make money with their car*” (OM). One statement to potential drivers stated, “*you can put your car to work and be on the road earning money in a matter of days*” (OM). The organization explicitly rejected organizational membership for drivers by conflating organization and technology. One statement to potential drivers suggested: “*Increasingly, people do not talk about “becoming an Uber driver-partner.” It’s a much simpler decision—do I want to make money using my car?*” (OM). Thus, in this discursively constructed role, drivers and their labor were effaced; only organizational technology and mechanical technology – their cars – were within the organizational boundaries.

Experience of Work as a Driver-Bot. I found the workers experienced the effaced driver-bot role in their interactions with technology and algorithmic management techniques. Their fundamental work task – the *ride*, or trip¹¹– is made possible and documented by the driver, the

¹¹ The ride occurs when a passenger submits a request through the organization’s app. The app’s algorithmic dispatch system (the “algorithm”) messages a driver, using their own proprietary and hidden means of selection. This message does not include specific location information about the request. This is by design and to encourage drivers to pick up all passengers, even those in an undesirable location. The

rider, and the “app.” Standardization of customer experience on the scale of the ride-hailing organization’s operations during the time of study required significant organizational control over on-demand workers (Rosenblat, 2016). However, the distant legal, physical, and technical location of work challenged existing methods of organizational control, prompting the implementation of algorithmic management techniques (Rosenblat, 2016), which aimed to align “driver-bot” actions with the economic interests of the on-demand organization.

My analysis suggests that technology, particularly the rating system, further enacted the driver-bot role during drivers’ day-to-day interactions with the application and customers. Organizational media described the rating system as intended to keep “*service quality high*” (OM), “*to provide direct feedback, hold them [ride-hailing drivers] more accountable [than taxi cab drivers]*” (OM), and to produce “*feedback before booking or accepting another ride*” that “*our safety team reviews[...] and investigates any issues*”(OM). The rating system¹² determined which drivers would be designated as active on the system, and thus, able to work for Uber. To be designated as active, drivers must meet an average rating target of around 4.6 out of 5 stars.

I found that drivers recognize that the rating of an individual driver has more factors than constructed as encompassed by the driver-bot role. For instance, I found that drivers perceive

driver has a few seconds to accept this ride request, then physically must locate the customer and pick them up, indicate using the application that the trip has begun, take passengers to their destination, and finally indicate on the app that the ride has concluded. Rides are often short distances with a fleeting duration. Experienced drivers on the forum reported having few regular passengers, even if they drive regular hours or routes.

¹² After each ride, passengers are prompted to rate drivers on a 1-to 5-star scale. Because of the distance from the organization and the driver, the ratings system (the algorithm determining the driver’s overall rating in comparison to others), is incredibly powerful. Ride-hailing organizations designed their rating systems to automatically track, evaluate, and intervene with under-performing drivers. During the period of study, Uber’s three main performance metrics were: driver’s rating, how many rides the driver accepts, and how many times they cancel a ride (OM, OE). Uber required drivers in most of its markets to maintain a high ride acceptance rate, such as 80 percent or 90 percent, and a low cancellation rate, such as 5 percent in San Francisco. If the drivers did not meet these performance targets, the company deactivated their accounts automatically using algorithms. Deactivation effectively suspended or permanently terminated workers because they cannot work without the app.

that riders are generally not educated on Uber’s rating system, particularly its strict cut-off points for drivers. Riders may presume that 4 out of 5 stars is a good rating, but because of the average rating targets mandated by Uber, a score of 4 or 3 is the equivalent of a failing grade. Drivers posted their own screenshots of signs they posted in their cars explaining how the rating system “works” and requests to be evaluated by the rider accordingly. I also found that drivers express concern about the possibility of discrimination and other “unfair” reasons lowering their average rating. For instance, in response to another driver’s concern about his marginal average rating (4.7), one poster asked: *“what is your ethnicity in relation to the people you are driving? Some people are just ignorant assholes. I had a lady yesterday complain to me that her last driver had been black. Sounds like you're doing everything right and just getting some bad breaks...”* (OE). Drivers posted advice to new female drivers on how to reject male riders’ sexual advances without prompting them to rate them lower. For the duration of the study, consumers were not required or prompted to provide an account of why their rating was given – drivers’ human concerns were not considered.

My analysis identifies additional technologies that support the effacement of the worker into driver-bots. My analysis of postings, in support of journalistic reports (Scheiber, 2017), also showed evidence of deliberate psychological manipulation using algorithmic management to incentivize drivers to work. My data included screenshots of behavioral psychology-derived “nudges,” or encouragements, queries, and “tricks” (OE) from the application to encourage drivers to continue working until higher amounts of pay or longer time limits were reached. During the period of study, the ride-hailing organization introduced new payment structures, such as weekly promotions, and product offerings, such as UberPool. All new payment structures and product offerings rewarded drivers financially for the higher volume of accepted and

completed trips and discouraged cancellations or lower volume work, regardless of individual driver needs. The work thus featured temporary, infrequent, opaque and constantly shifting organizational objectives, in which drivers' contributions and concerns were meaningless. Thus, in the construction of the driver-bot role, the work becomes meaningless.

The data also documents how organizationally produced instructional media ignores the human details of their tasks. For instance, UberEats, the organization's food delivery service, was originally designed to provide third-party delivery services to customers from restaurants that allowed take-out food, but did not have a hired driver (Lashinsky, 2017). One new driver for UberEats contacted the forum because "*the training videos and instructional videos online*" available from Uber did not address how to park his car to engage in food delivery in areas with limited parking available (OE). He was concerned about how to pick up and deliver the food without getting physically injured by other cars, without being ticketed by police and getting points on his license, and without having to pay for expensive parking (without reimbursement). Another commonly posted question was how to deal with the personal and legal repercussions for workers of following the protocol suggested by Uber. For instance, drivers expressed concerns about being ticketed or arrested for engaging in ride-hailing work where it was banned. Yet, drivers posted that the app was still allowing such transactions to proceed and even penalizing them for non-acceptance. In this way, organizational processes continued to efface drivers into the driver-bot role by treating the human concerns – such as personal safety – as not necessary to the organizational process of producing the ride. Yet, the very act of ride-hailing requires a human driver in the organizational process of producing a ride.

The driver-bot role is thus constructed as both within and outside the organizational boundaries. Driver-bots are a part of the organization as effaced, but atomized elements of non-

human, technology. In the driver-bot role, however, workers are only treated as within the organization if they can consistently achieve the highest level of mechanical and technical precision in their work. Human concerns, such as racism, sexism, or parking tickets, are framed as irrelevant for the driver-bot role. Work itself is only the result of the operation of the technology, devoid of worker contributions and concerns, rendering the work meaningless to the worker because the worker is meaningless to the work. Overall, this has a dehumanizing impact on identity. One driver wrote with regards to his frustration in resolving payments for additional services not documented by the application: “*I’m just a cog in the machine that they set up*” (OE). Non-human elements of technology do not exist in the same way as people do; thus, their claim to belongingness is absent. Thus, in the driver-bot role, workers are located within the organization only by becoming technology, but the price they pay is to have their humanity erased.

Driver-Partner Role

Boundary Discourse Entrepreneurialized Drivers in the Driver-Partner Role. Boundary discourse disconnected drivers from the organizational boundary by transforming the driver into an entrepreneur through the construction of the *driver-partner* role. The boundary discourse emphasized how being a driver-partner granted workers freedom, autonomy, flexibility, and lack of directive organizational control. Advertisements to prospective drivers said “*Be your own boss. Uber offers flexible, independent work that fits around your life*” (OM), and “*Uber is a new way of working: it’s about people having the freedom to start and stop work when they want*” (OM).

At times, the boundary discourse entrepreneurializes the driver role more explicitly. A statement announcing the ride-hailing organization’s expansion to Egypt stated:

“In Egypt almost 40% of the drivers using Uber were unemployed beforehand. And the app is really helping entrepreneurs build a business. [name], for example, has gone from being an Uber driver partner himself to employing over 80 drivers in ten months—using Uber to generate business. We’re currently investing in training to help more people enjoy entrepreneurial success like [name]” (OM).

Another statement on Uber’s public policy media outlet described the historical parallels between the modern ride-hailing organization and the turn of the century “*jitney*” cab (OM). In both eras, boundary discourse stated: *“with only a small upfront investment, anyone could become an entrepreneur and make money driving people around town” (OM).*

By entrepreneurializing drivers, the boundary discourse constructed the driver-partner role as located broadly in “the market,” outside of the organizational boundaries. Thus, the driver-partner role was subject to market forces, rather than part of the organization. Travis Kalanick, Uber’s founder and then CEO, made other oft-circulated comments that described its organizational boundaries as market (Hwang & Elish, 2015), often saying that organization is *“classic Econ 101”* (Swisher, 2014). Kalanick also stated *“we are not setting the price. The market is setting the price”* and that *“we have algorithms to determine what the market is”* (Brustein, 2015). In my data analysis, I found that the boundary discourse echoes this location of the driver-partner role in a market. Statements stress that the organization’s technology allows *“big marketplaces – driver and rider”* (OM) to meet. The construction of a market location of the driver-partner role also promises better outcomes for workers: *“When these drivers come from the communities they serve, it essentially creates a new market for transportation services. Everybody wins, from the passengers to the drivers to the local economy”* (OM).

The ride-hail organization framed itself as spanning multiple markets. The organization *“can now connect workers with a huge marketplace of customers right away”* (OM), spanning

two “big marketplaces – driver and rider” (OM). Kalanick (2016) explained how the market is designed to work:

“UberX, when we first started, was literally 10 or 15% cheaper than our black car product. It’s now in many cities, half the price of a taxi. And we have all the data to show that the drivers are making more per hour than they would as taxi drivers. What happens is when the price goes down, people are more likely to take Uber at different times of the day than they otherwise would have, and they’re more likely to use it in places they wouldn’t have before. And what that means for a driver is wherever he or she drops somebody off, they’re much more likely to get a pickup and get back in. And so what that means is more trips per hour, more minutes of the hour where they’re productive, and actually, earnings come up.”

Thus, the ride-hail organization is rhetorically constructed as a market within ShareSpot and organizational discourse.

I found that boundary discourse constructed that location of the driver-partner role outside the boundaries of the organization as the determinant of their working conditions, not the organization itself. One statement contrasted the “*flexibility and independence*” of the driver-partner role to the “*typical 40-hour job*”:

“What’s less obvious is that the people who spend most of their time driving with Uber seem to value this flexibility and independence as much if not more than the majority who drive just a few hours each week. That’s because a typical 40-hour job rarely offers the ability to visit an elderly parent, go to a job interview, or tend to family emergencies without asking for permission beforehand” (OM).

Locations inside the organization inherently meant that workers would be subjected to bosses and schedules, with little means for workers to control their own economic environments, and few autonomous domains. As a result, boundary discourse constructed the disconnection of the entrepreneurialized driver-partner role from organizational boundaries as a benefit, not a loss. Disconnection conferred the freedom, independence and flexibility of an entrepreneurial role construction, as well as its meaning of work.

Experience of Work as a Driver-Partner. My analysis suggests that drivers also understood their location outside the boundaries of the organization, which was perceived as crucial to maintaining their autonomy. Many drivers voiced disdain for work that would place them explicitly within organizational boundaries, and thus, control. One driver wrote in a post about possible legal re-classification: “*i don't know why they clamor to be employees, you are going to be handcuffed to a schedule and other BS*” (OE). Another remarked that a benefit of autonomy was the absence of penalty for taking off work unapproved: “*The only thing Uber did when I took a week off was send me hourly guarantees for the next week*” (OE). Workers, in my analysis, constructed the autonomy and freedom of the driver-partner role as only able to be achieved by its location outside the boundaries of the organization.

Prospective drivers wrote in the forum about how they hoped the driver-partner role would be “*worth it*” (OE) financially and personally. Supplementary income and autonomy in work would allow them to fulfill other important identities and roles. Prospective and current drivers wrote about how on-demand work allowed them to spend more time with their children, keeping their small businesses and other ventures afloat, to supplement income from low paying careers in more intrinsically meaningful art and non-profit sectors, to get out of medical and other debt, and to simultaneously fund and participate in their education. Many drivers perceived this experience as having an empowering effect on their sense of identity.

Boundary discourse, by constructing the location of the driver-partner role in the market and outside the organization, suggested to on-demand workers that their own actions should be guided by and rationalized in market terms. However, I find that guiding their work under market terms often frustrated driver efforts at autonomy and independence as much as enabling it. This is particularly evident when the organizational and the individual driver preferences were

not aligned. For instance, full autonomy over work scheduling is difficult to achieve because the payment structure incentivizes work at irregular times of high customer demand, such as after bars close at 2 a.m. In response to a post about reducing rates, one driver posted: *“I would be much better off [financially] making minimum wage...but doing so would mean that I would have an actual job. The only positive thing about being an Uber driver is not having to punch a clock”* (OE). Thus, even with financial disadvantages, the autonomy and freedoms promised by the driver-partner role could be self-fulfilling and empowering for some drivers’ perceptions of meaning of work and identity.

In my analysis, I also found that some drivers responded to the market aspects of the driver-partner role by constructing their work as highly individualized, seeing themselves as a lone economic actor located outside the organization in an idealized and totalizing market. One driver responded to the original poster’s *“rant”* about a perceived unfair rating due to his race:

“If your ratings aren’t as high as you’d like them to be, then it’s up to you to figure out what you can do better. Maybe you need to go above and beyond the call of duty in order to make up for the discrepancy. I’ve always been a firm believer that the only person you can truly depend on is yourself” (OE).

I found that many drivers posted in the forums in an effort to “figure out” what they could do better, or to share that specific knowledge with others. For example, drivers sought and received advice on the financial aspects, such as how to track mileage and expenses for tax purposes and how to ensure payment of cancellation fees. Drivers also traded advice on the service aspects of work, such as the “best” types of music to have playing in the car and how to assess if passengers would like to talk or ride in silence. Thus, the driver-partner role constructed other drivers and the organization itself as peers in the market, as colleagues and competitors.

The driver-partner role’s location in a market also constructed the relationships between drivers as inherently competitive. Many drivers during my study period posted concerns that new

driver-partners will create a “*force of supply & demand [that] will drive the earning down*” (OE). However, I found that the inherent competition and market location of the driver-partner role could also be used by drivers to rationalize poor working conditions and low payments:

“User B: I have concluded that I would be much better off working at Walmart making minimum wage

User Z: That's not surprising. The barrier to entry to uber is set pretty low, lower than walmart. As long as a job or business that's easy to enter, the competition will always drive the price of the service to where most people are on the edge of thinking it's not worth it” (OE).

The experience of work as competition amongst peers was not entirely negative. Drivers posted screenshots of exceptionally high surges that they “*caught*” that day; each attempting to beat the others and congratulating others who had won (OE). Even if more challenging, individualized work was experienced as more meaningful as it was a vehicle for achievement and self-fulfillment. Overall, the driver-partner role is jointly constructed by the experience of work and discourse as having an empowering impact on identity, allowing for workers to belong together as peers in the market with the work made meaningful through self-fulfillment.

In summary, Chapter 3 focuses on the occupational role identities of drivers as constructed in the organizational discourse, through the organization’s boundary work. I found that the organization’s boundary discourse constructed drivers as mostly outside of the organization in a market, as voluntary “*app users*”, and as entrepreneurial “*driver-partners.*” Yet, the organization’s discourse also constructed drivers as part of the organization’s technology – as “*driver-bots*” delivering a perfectly controlled ride product to customers. These findings are summarized in Table 1. The next chapter (Chapter 4) delves into the meaning drivers make of *themselves* in the role and how they come to negotiate their identities. Just

because the organization makes meaning workers in a particular way does not mean that is necessarily how workers see themselves.

TABLE 1
Summary of Findings*

<u>Roles</u>	<u>How Boundary Discourse Acts As A Mechanism of Disconnection from Organization</u>	<u>Impact of Experiences of Work as Role on Perceived...</u>			
		<u>Location</u>	<u>Identity</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>Belongingness</u>
App user <i>Consumer of technology</i>	Extrusion <i>Subsumed in organizational processes; then, excluded and shaped by the very process into new forms</i>	Outside the organizational boundaries <i>External customers</i>	Disempowering <i>I am a powerless consumer.</i>	Transactional <i>I take what they can give me.</i>	Conditional <i>I can take my business elsewhere.</i>
Driver-bot <i>Atomized element of non-human, organizational technology</i>	Effacement <i>Treated as if no longer necessary to the organizational process, but are not actually eliminated or excluded from the process</i>	Both within and outside the organizational boundaries <i>Atoms within larger organization if perfect</i>	Dehumanizing <i>I am erased, just the material tools (i.e., technology, cars) related to my work remain.</i>	Meaningless <i>I am meaningless because only the organization and its technology count.</i>	Absent <i>I do not exist, so I do not belong.</i>
Driver-partner <i>Entrepreneurial equivalent</i>	Entrepreneurialization <i>Treated as entrepreneurs, with the characteristic freedom, autonomy, flexibility, and lack of directive organizational control</i>	Outside the organizational boundaries <i>Free market participant</i>	Empowering <i>I believe that I am the only master of my own destiny.</i>	Self-fulfilling <i>I am autonomous and, thus, able to pursue my own goals and purposes.</i>	Peers <i>I am a collaborator with the organization and a competitor with other drivers.</i>

*Adapted from Roberts and Zietsma (2018). Additional explanations included below in italics.

CHAPTER 4. NEGOTIATING OCCUPATIONAL ROLE IDENTITIES THROUGH IDENTITY WORK IN THE NASCENT FIELD OF THE ON-DEMAND ECONOMY

In Chapter 3, I examined the way that Uber's boundary discourse constructed drivers as either outside of the organization in the driver-partner or app user roles, or as external to the organization as part of the technology itself in the driver-bot role. Furthermore, I explored driver reactions to the roles constructed by Uber's boundary discourse.

In this chapter, I investigate more deeply into the ways in which Uber drivers co-construct their own occupational identity, examining in more depth the interactions among drivers on the ShareSpot site. In particular, I focus on interactions which challenge the three occupational identities constructed by Uber. Since the early days of Uber's existence, multiple actors, including drivers, policymakers, taxi industry advocates and others, have challenged Uber's portrayal of drivers as independent contractors who are outside the boundaries of the organization. These actors have asserted instead that Uber should be treating drivers as employees of the organization. The independent contractor portrayal is consistent with a market logic (Friedland & Alford, 1991, which I lay out in depth in the findings section of this chapter), implying that the only relationship between drivers and Uber is a transactional relationship based on market exchange. The *driver-as-employee* portrayal, by contrast, is associated with the corporate logic (Friedland & Alford, 1991), implying that Uber has employer obligations toward Uber in exchange for drivers' work to accomplish Uber's objectives under its supervision. Notably, this driver-as-employee portrayal has been pursued in the courts and in the media, and has been vigorously rejected by Uber itself; yet, it remains the subject of debate to this day. The ShareSpot site also has continued to have some posts by people who have clearly internalized a driver-as-employee role identity.

In this chapter, I examine interactions among drivers on ShareSpot which feature this debate between those drivers who hold the driver-as-employee role identity as valid, as supported by the corporation logic, and other drivers who advance arguments based in the market logic, consistent with the three identities I observed in Chapter 3. In doing so, I focus on the following question: *How do on-demand economy workers negotiate their occupational role identities in a new institutional context?*

In the sections which follow, I outline relevant theory on institutional logics and identity work, and raise questions about how logics and identity work play out in new institutional contexts where identities are “up-for-grabs.” I then analyze a subset of 323 threads in which participants advocating a driver-as-employee occupational identity based in the corporation logic negotiated with others advocating the three identities based in the market logic, tracing the identity work undertaken in these interactional threads. I found that market logic-inconsistent posts attracted virulent “manhood acts,” assertions of authority and superiority via sarcastic jokes, insults, and verbal jousting with a high level of incivility. These manhood acts allow drivers to affirm a valued identity based in the market logic. By contrast, market logic-consistent posts attracted helping acts when based in attractive identities (driver-partner, app user), which promised autonomy and market logic benefits. Even when posts were based in the market logic, however, they attracted manhood acts and uncivil responses when they focused on the low autonomy of Uber drivers, consistent with the driver-bot identity. Eventually, cynicism and fatalism occur as the posters are unable to find their position within shifting identities, making a positive identity elusive and warping the market logic into one of limited opportunity and limited autonomy. For them, the market logic delivered a Hobbesian Jungle where competition is “nasty,

brutish, and short” (Hobbes, 1651) rather than an American dream of a meritocratic market where anyone could get ahead by working hard.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Logics in New Institutional Contexts

Friedland and Alford (1991) introduced the concept of institutional logics into organizational studies to emphasize the importance of societal context in individual, as well as organizational, behavior. To them, society is composed of multiple institutional orders, each with its own central logic and “a set of material practices and symbolic constructions” (Friedland & Alford, 1991: 248). In everyday social life, social actors are embedded in these overarching meaning systems, such as the logic of market, corporation, or community. Institutional logics not only guide what social actors want and how they act, but also who or what they are (Lok, 2010). Institutions and institutional logics are important because they prescribe and proscribe behavior (Thornton, Ocasio & Lounsbury, 2012), identify what is good and right (Friedland, 2018), and enable people to imagine their futures based on expectations of how things are – what is valued and legitimate (Voronov & Vince, 2012).

While societal logics carry broad meanings, field-specific instantiations of societal logics provide more specificity regarding meanings and practices (Lounsbury, 2007; Reay & Hinings, 2009; Thornton, 2002). Logics give those embedded within them the ability to attribute and provide explanations for the actions of themselves and others, and as such, they are essential to people’s understanding of self (Berger & Luckmann, 1967).

However, how do institutional logics guide actors on who or what they are when institutional contexts are new, such as in an emerging field? New institutional contexts are not “void” or empty of institutional arrangements. Rather, new institutional contexts, often arising in

interstitial spaces between existing institutional fields (Furnari, 2014) are built from elements from a variety of institutional spheres, often creating a “thicket” of conflicting and contradicting institutional elements (Garud et al., 2020). In the new institutional context of an emerging field, it is also not certain which logics would pertain. The accessibility and availability of logics are unclear (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012), and the situational cues which could trigger one logic or another (Malhotra, Zietsma, Morris, & Smets, forthcoming) may be ambiguous. Contradictions may exist (Seo & Creed, 2002), underpinned by multiple logics which can persist within a single emerging field without a single “winner” logic dominating (Purdy & Gray, 2009). This can leave members of the field to experience uncertainty, ambiguity, and/or conflict.

For example, the dynamics of logics within the emerging field of the on-demand economy and its implication for how workers make sense of themselves are unclear because the phenomenon is relatively new. Often referred to as the “sharing economy,” it is unclear how community norms and market and corporation logics, or some combination of those norms and logics, will play a role in the on-demand economy (Frenken, Vaskelainen, Fünfschilling, & Piscicelli, 2020; Reischauer & Mair, 2018). The on-demand economy is part of a larger trend towards digitalization, or the way many domains of social life are restructured around digital communication and media infrastructures (Brennen & Kreiss, 2016). Digitalization is also permeating and reshaping existing industries and fields, unsettling traditional organizational and institutional contexts and the logics that govern them. The travel industry, for example, has been upended by the shift from expert-based logics to crowd-based logics (Scott & Orlikowski, 2012). Platforms are also part of this phenomenon of on-demand organizations because their technology makes on-demand organizations possible. On-demand organizations are largely structured as platforms with two sides, often with labor providing services to buyers on the other “side”

(Eisenmann, Parker, & van Alstyne, 2006; Sundararajan, 2016; Vallas & Schor, 2020). Recent scholars have argued that “the advent of platforms holds the potential to cause a macro-level change by reconfiguring the *essence* of the institutions of the market, the corporation and the state, and their interrelation [emphasis added]” (Frenken et al., 2020). Therefore, established norms (Thornton et al., 2012), practices (Gumusay, Smets, & Morris, 2020; Smets, Jarzabkowski, Burke, & Spee, 2015), and role identities (Goodrick & Reay, 2010; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006), which comprise such unsettled logics, may in turn also become unsettled.

Identity Work and Logics

Individuals’ interests, identities, and values are constituted by the logics in which they are embedded (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Logics as meaning systems, thus, shape occupational role identities.¹³ New members of occupations are socialized into the occupation via interaction with other occupation members (Goffman, 1969; Snow & Anderson, 1987), and together they enact the occupational role identity into being. People situate themselves within new institutional contexts and logics using *identity work*, involving active efforts to create and enact a valued role identity.

People do identity work to create an esteem-enhancing identity, or positive identity (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Dutton et al., 2010). Identity work in pursuit of positive work-related identities has been theorized as important in explanations of individuals' creativity and adaptation to new settings, as well as their abilities to deal with adversity and stress, satisfaction and enjoyment (Dutton et al., 2010; Kreiner & Sheep, 2009). For instance, homeless people, who are at the bottom of status systems, use identity work in an attempt to generate higher-status

¹³ Occupational identity differs from organizational identity in that “it answers the question “Who are we?” by way of *what* we do rather than *where* we do it” [emphasis added] (Ashcraft, 2013: 13).

identities that provide them with “a measure of self-worth” (Snow & Anderson, 1987: 1354). People with low status identities are not the only ones that use identity work to craft higher status identities; those with ambiguous status identities attempt to craft higher status identities, as well. For example, despite their aspirations to professionalism, management consultants have a highly ambiguous social status and use prophetic rhetoric to craft themselves as intelligent elite (Kitay & Wright, 2007). Furloughed airline pilots, still grappling with the eroded status of the piloting occupation and their lack of work, have crafted multiple possible identities that confer different levels of autonomy (Fraher & Gabriel, 2014). Thus, autonomy and status are valued aspects of identity that people will do identity work to achieve.

Primarily focusing on individuals (Brown, 2015), research on identity work provides insights into the range of activities to create, maintain, repair, or revise identity (Snow & Anderson, 1987; Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003). Although most studies suggest that individuals conduct their own identity work, some researchers have shown ways that other social actors influence another’s identity through processes of identity regulation (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) or identity conditioning (Lok, 2010). However, only a few studies have investigated identity work at the collective level (e.g., Langley et al., 2012; Reay, Goodrick, Waldorff, & Casebeer, 2017; Schwalbe & Mason-Schrock, 1996). For example, Reay et al. (2017) showed how the collective professional role identity of family physicians was changed through a process of reinterpreting multiple logics and their relationships. This research stream emphasizes the importance of collective action in creating the meaning systems that define identity, particularly in cases where ambiguity exists (Corley & Gioia, 2004).

Challenges for Identity Work and Logics Related to New Occupations

With the decline of the traditional employment relationships and the rise of new technologies, new occupations are arising with ambiguous relationships to meaning systems (Barley et al., 2017; Curchod, Patriotta, & Neysen, 2014). These include such roles as “tax preparer,” “social media influencer,” “personal concierge,” “entrepreneur coach,” “content creator,” “health coach,” and “Uber driver” (Barley et al., 2017; Brake, 2014; Freberg, Graham, Mcgaughey, & Freberg, 2011; Galperin, 2017; Kessler, 2014; Murphy & Kreiner, 2020). Just as members of all occupations, including janitors (Gold, 1964) and cooks (Fine, 1996), construct occupational identities from the unique details, contextual variations in their jobs, and multiple meaning systems (Barley et al., 2017; Barley, Bechky, & Nelsen, 2016), members of new and emerging occupations also will construct their occupational role identities based on the unique details of their work, contextual variations, and the logics that seem to pertain them, though it may not be clear which logics should apply and how.

Much of the extant research in institutional theory has focused on how professional and other logics relate to professional or occupational role identities. Professional role identities have been established as fairly strictly tied to logics, either tightly connected to a single dominant logic (e.g., Rao, Monin, & Durand, 2003) or how field-level actors in different occupations hold role identities associated with different logics (e.g., Reay & Hinings, 2009). However, more recent work suggests a looser coupling between logics and occupational role identities (e.g., Lok, 2010; Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006; Reay et al., 2017). Therefore, logics will play a role in the construction of new and emerging occupational role identities in new institutional contexts in emerging fields, but it is unclear how tightly or loosely they will be coupled to logics.

In new institutional contexts, it is not clear how new occupational identities will become defined, especially when the logic of the field itself is under construction. For example, due to the varying conditions of work and ambiguous perceptions of status, cooks working at local high status restaurants drew on multiple meaning systems associated with professionals, artists, businesspeople, or manual laborers to develop their occupational identity (Fine, 1996). Tax preparers in low-wage job conditions used their interactions with clients to create a “pseudo-professional” occupational identity based on expert authority (Galperin, 2017). Independent creative and knowledge workers, including writers, artists, and consultants, used the crafting of their material surroundings to create their psychological conditions for a viable identity (Petriglieri et al., 2019). In each case, workers had access to higher status cues within meaning systems to craft their occupational identity.

However, many of the members of new occupations associated with the on-demand economy are not high status, such as Uber drivers (Phung et al., 2020) and eBay sellers (Curchod et al., 2014). Most have very little autonomy and power in their role identity because they are managed by algorithm (Kellogg, Valentine, & Christin, 2020; Vallas & Schor, 2020). For instance, eBay sellers experience a huge power asymmetry between themselves and eBay as an organization with which they ostensibly “do business”, but by which they often feel like they are managed as workers, with little room for autonomy (Curchod et al., 2019). One way they have found to express their own autonomy is by evading the platform rules, such as meeting potential customers in person to increase those customers’ ratings of them on the platform. Another way eBay sellers have found to express their autonomy is their use of an organizationally-provided online forum to figure out how to advocate for themselves and get organizational policy changed. Autonomy is a crucial element of job satisfaction and worker well-being (Deci,

Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017). However, not all on-demand economy workers have the ability to evade the rules or advocate collectively (Rosenblat, 2016; Rosenblat & Stark, 2016), and as discussed in Chapter 3, Uber drivers have much less ability to influence their working conditions than the creative and knowledge workers described by Petriglieri et al. (2019), or to exercise autonomy like the eBay sellers described by Curchod et al. (2019).

What happens when workers are drawn into platform work by the promise of a valued occupational identity involving entrepreneurship, autonomy and freedom as the Uber discourse in Chapter 3 promised, but find themselves managed tightly by algorithms with limited scope for autonomy? As seen in Chapter 3, three very different role identities for Uber drivers emerged from organizational discourse and driver's work interactions: app user, driver-bot, and driver-partner, each of which is associated with different perceptions of autonomy and status. While a driver-partner has the higher status and autonomy of an entrepreneur, an app user also has status as a customer, with the expectation under the market logic that customers will have some influence on the organizations with which they transact. Thus, both identities have some value. The driver-bot identity, on the other hand, has no autonomy or status associated with it; the human driver disappears and becomes part of the technology, suggesting it would be a less valued identity. The fourth identity which featured in the posts selected for analysis in this chapter, the driver-as-employee identity, features different criteria of worth based in the corporate logic rather than the market logic. Employees and employers have mutual obligations to one another, forming a psychological contract. Employers are expected to provide income and some security to employees in exchange for their loyalty and efforts to fulfill the employer's mission. Autonomy is foregone in exchange for organizational membership, which carries its own status and obligations.

In the early phases of emerging occupations, the occupational role identity must often be negotiated into being through interactions among occupation members and their constituents. With diverse occupational identities “up-for-grabs” in a new institutional context, we might expect that occupation-holders would do identity work to advocate for, and connect themselves to more valued identities as a means of presenting and seeing themselves more favorably.

I build on these concepts in answering my research question: *How do on-demand economy workers negotiate their occupational role identities in a new institutional context?* In this chapter (Chapter 4), I explore these ideas by investigating drivers’ interactions in the ShareSpot online community of Uber drivers. I theoretically sample on identity negotiation interactions by selecting for analysis those threads which deal with worker (mis)classification to understand debates and negotiations about occupational role identity. By dealing with worker (mis)classification, I mean dealing with whether Uber workers should be classified as employees or independent contractors.

Specific Methods and Analyses

Coding Procedures. In addition to the methods in Chapter 2, specific methods and analyses occurred for this chapter. For Chapter 4, the unit of analysis for coding are the threads, or interactions between members of ShareSpot. Collected threads revealed how drivers reacted to events related to the worker (mis)classification debate regarding whether Uber workers should be classified as employees or independent contractors. To collect threads, I relied upon the search functions for certain events and key words and phrases (e.g., “employee”, “independent contractor,” and “IC”), which were discovered inductively from analyzing initial threads. Overall, the theoretical sampling yielded 323 threads corresponding to discussions on the topic most relevant to our research between 10/2015-6/2016 and 12/2016-5/2017, with a 6-month

period out of the field for reflection and analysis. This sample comprised 19 percent of the total database between 10/2015-6/2016 and 12/2016-5/2017 of 1717 threads. I respected emerging guidelines for online data collection and analysis in particular by respecting the online community's terms of use at the time of investigations, using pseudonyms, and collecting data manually rather than automatically (e.g., through a script) (Allen, Burk, & Davis, 2006).

I first open-coded interactions where actors disagreed on a course of action and used logics to rhetorically support their position. I initially labeled these interactions as conflict, and later as “logics debate.” Originally, I entered the field expecting to find efforts to foment collective resistance and/or mobilize workers (Curchod et al., 2019). However, my first surprise in the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was the absence of worker organizing or even collective expressions of dissent. During coding, I also found an overwhelming prevalence of the market logic; one of the main logics constantly at play was the market logic. Alternative logics for the on-demand economy, such as community and corporation logics, were also in the data, though not as prevalent (Frenken et al., 2020).

Worker (mis)classification debate. During this time period, legal issues also plagued Uber and other ride-hailing companies. Multiple municipal and state regulatory agencies were investigating Uber for worker misclassification, suggesting that Uber classified workers as independent contractors when they were being treated as employees. This debate looms large in ShareSpot and drivers reference it often.

Toulmin’s model of argumentation and institutional theory. In addition to logics, a key initial theme in analyzing the data was that drivers online were frequently debating “the rules of the game” for working for Uber. This led me to the concept of “backing” within the Toulmin Model of Argumentation (Harmon, 2019; Harmon, Green, & Goodnight, 2015; Toulmin, 1958).

According to Toulmin, all arguments contain at least four components: data, warrants, claims, and backing. At a basic level of argumentation, people reason with others by asserting a claim (conclusion) and then justifying it with data (evidence) and warrants (explanations for why the data support the claim). A fourth component is the collectively understood assumptions – or backing – that provide the “rules of the game” for the argumentation. People can leave the backing implicit and talk within the rules of the game; they can also make the backing explicit and talk about the rules of the game themselves. Harmon proposed that Toulmin’s linguistic concept of backing is “literally the linguistic articulation of an institution’s taken-for-granted assumptions” (Harmon, 2019: 547).

FINDINGS

The Market Logic Within the Ride-hailing Institutional Field

The ride-hailing institutional field, at the outset of this study in 2015, was a relatively new phenomenon and a nascent institutional field. Drivers lacked the traditional identity targets available to employees of an organization, members of an occupation, and members of a profession. First, drivers lacked organizational socialization and interaction to provide the opportunity for organizational identification. Ride-hail work and its association with platform-based business models (Eisenman, Parker, & Van Alstyne, 2011; Gawer, 2014; Evans & Schmalensee, 2016) places ride-hail workers at a physical and legal distance from the organization and one another, disrupting traditional organizational identification pathways. Second, at the time of the study, drivers were in a legal limbo on their employment status, as well as the legality of their work in certain jurisdictions. Throughout data collection, local and state courts, judicial bodies, and regulatory bodies were weighing in on if drivers were independent contractors or they were employees that were misclassified. Cities and

municipalities also were “banning” Uber or declaring it an illegal cab company. Third, by expanding from black cars to the “everyday” driver for UberX, Uber expanded from those with an existing occupational identity – a professional driver – to multitudes of everyday people who lack identification and socialization into the identity of a driver. Thus, the organization, the industry/field, and ride-hail worker each were a discursive space open for defining; the words, meanings, and symbols were yet to be attached and defined.

Institutional logics guide action and thoughts, as well as pattern behavior within an institution and institutional field. When faced with a new type of organization, the logics that guide drivers was initially uncertain. Using pattern inducing methods of qualitatively capturing institutional logics (Reay & Jones, 2016), I used “bottom up” processes to identify patterns of logics. I found that the market logic was the dominant logic within the discursive space, though the corporate logic was also prevalent. Table 2 shows the content of the logics found in ShareSpot and the prominence of their multiple elements in my analysis, as adapted to my context.

The market is one of the central institutions and logics. Friedland and Alford (1991) define institutional logics as: “symbolic systems, ways of ordering reality, and thereby rendering experience of time and space meaningful” (1991: 243). Due to the globalizing neo-liberalizing project, one of the most pervasive root metaphors of recent times is “the market” (Logue, Clegg, & Gray, 2016). Logue and colleagues state that “the only possible societies that can be imagined...are those with efficient markets so the remit to extend them everywhere has the highest form of legitimation...it is an institutional fulcrum on which all else depends” (Logue et al., 2016: 1600). In a nascent field, it is not clear what a market logic would specifically entail. In times of logic uncertainty, cultural narratives play a role in shaping everyday understandings.

Therefore, prior theory would suggest that people would pull from larger cultural narratives when working out the local variant of the market logic (Hehenberger, Mair, & Metz, 2019; McPherson & Sauder, 2013; Swidler, 1986).

TABLE 2

The Market and Corporation Logics and their Elemental Building Blocks in ShareSpot

<i>Logic Elements</i>	Market Logic	Corporate Logic
Root Metaphor	Transaction	Corporation as hierarchy
Basis of Attention	Status in market	Status in hierarchy
Basis of Strategy	Increase efficiency profit	Pursue firm growth (Increase size and diversification of the firm)
Basis of Norms	Self-interest	Employment in firm – recruitment, retention, training and well-being of employees
Sources of Authority	Shareholders and owners (entrepreneurs)	Board of directors; Top management
Economic System	Personal capitalism – effort/reward calculation	Managerial capitalism
Sources of Identity	Unclear (Faceless)	Bureaucratic roles
Sources of Legitimacy	Share price	Market position of the firm
Informal Control Mechanisms	Industry analysts	Organizational culture

* Categories are derived from Thornton (2004) and Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury (2012). Elements are adapted as necessary to the ride-hail context.

Categories shaded dark gray were prominent in my analysis. Categories shaded in light gray were present, but less prominent.

In its instantiation within this community, the market logic was closely associated with a form of neoliberal ideology, American Corporate Capitalism (ACC) (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016; Clegg, 2014; George, 2014; Kasser, Cohn, Kanner, & Ryan, 2007). An ideology is a set of beliefs and values that are relatively coherent and enduring and can serve to justify a way of organizing a society (Knight, 2006). The key assumption underlying ACC is that it is most advantageous at a system level for workers, consumers, corporations, and shareholders to pursue their self-interest as much as possible (George, 2014; Kasser et al., 2007; Smith, 1776). Competition and laws of supply and demand drive the system. Some of the beliefs and values underpinning ACC include the “pervasiveness and desirability of the pursuit of self-interest, the benefits of competition and market exchange, consumerism and materialism, the sanctity of private property [...], the importance of economic growth, and the appropriateness of using a profit/loss criterion when making decisions and evaluating options” (George, 2014).

ACC also encompasses the belief that people can get ahead through their own hard work and effort and the value of individualism. This advances the myth of being self-reliant and working hard because anyone can make it if they work hard enough, especially as an entrepreneur. The ACC ties the market logic to the ideology of the ‘American dream.’ The ideology of the American dream espouses the ability for any individual to “make something” of oneself (Gill, 2013; Hochschild, 2016). Coined as such in 1931 by John Truslow Adams, the American dream ideology believes in the democratization of market opportunity and entrepreneurial success across a rigid hierarchy of class and nation. Thus, the American dream is embedded in the market logic, particularly the meritocracy of the market: that “through hard work, innate talent, and a little bit of pluck and luck, anyone can achieve anything” (Gill, 2013:

337). This “self-made man” identity was associated with the American dream, thus, acted as a vehicle for values associated with self-reliance, economic growth, and personal progress.

Identities are also shaped by logics, especially the taken-for-granted elements of a logic. The market logic underpins the types of arguments (the backing) that is available to ride-hail drivers as they craft their identities through interactions with one another (Harmon, 2019; Toulmin, 1958). Under this ACC variant of the market logic, a good person is associated with virtues of an entrepreneurial self: active, self-managing, risk-taking, and aligned with the needs of the market (du Gay, 1996; Vallas & Cummins, 2015). A bad person is entitled, lazy, and may be dependent on others for survival.

The following sections detail the elemental categories or building blocks, which represent the cultural symbols and material practices particular to that order. Table 3 summarizes the logic elements of the market logic with representative exemplars to show the logic variant within ShareSpot.

Basis of strategy: increase profit. For market logic, the basis of strategy is to increase profit (Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). Drivers often referred to the ride-hail organization is governed by the desire for economic efficiency and profit maximization at all costs. In response to a driver encouraging drivers to “move on” from Uber if it’s not working economically for them, one driver said: “Everything we want will cut into Ubers profits why should they lose money when its [sic] not necessary?” (4-26-2017 OE). In another exchange about CEO Travis Kalanick getting into a heated argument with a driver over falling pay rates, the following exchange occurred:

TABLE 3

Summary of the Logic Elements of the Market Logic

Logic element	Market Logic	Exemplar
Root metaphor	Transaction	
Basis of strategy	Increase efficiency profit	YouCrazyCluck: Passengers should have the option to bid on rides instead of surge and prime time. BinoBingo: Sidecar tried that. Sidecar went out of business. Pax [passengers] are animals. They are cargo. They would want YOU to pay for the privilege of driving them. CostcoWater: They'd [payments] go even lower than they are now (2-28-2017 OE)
Basis of norms	Self-interest	<p>“I don't think Uber really gives a shit if drivers are making money except to the extent that they can continue keeping drivers on the road.” (4-18-2017 OE)</p> <p>If I'm going to wait in a queue for an hour, in order for that to be even remotely worth my time, I need an AIRLINE PASSENGER who wants to be picked up FROM THE AIRPORT and be taken TO THE CITY. But of course Uber wouldn't take the needs of its workforce into account. Just more hamhanded/ironfisted layer-of-control bullshit instead of useful features designed to help drivers turn a profit; which is why we're fucking here: NOT to turn THEM a profit and fuck our bottom line. (5-18-2016 OE)</p>
Basis of attention	Status in market	“UberX is the Walmart job of the driving industry. It's cheap, it convenient, easy, and fairly reliable. And as long as that keeps happening Uber is going to have no incentive to change. This means they will always place the pax over a UberX driver, because UberX drivers are always replaceable. There is always going to be someone willing to drive”

Table 3 (continued)

Logic element	Market Logic	Exemplar
Source of authority	Shareholders and owners (entrepreneurs)	<p>Svk33: They do this to stay competitive [sic] until driverless cars take over, at which point the whole uber business tactics have to be switched. They are currently planning this and they are not even disguising it. Working at uber was never designed to be a long term solution, so i don't get much of the complaints people make here on a daily basis: Take uber as a transitional solution while you find a real job.</p> <p>Eyechewzaname: it's matters not, my dude! the few who invested early will artificially inflate UBER's valuation into the fucking stratosphere (as they've been doing), pivot @ the moment of IPO, cash out upwards of \$B's [billions] vs. hundreds of \$M's [millions], then they'll be forced @ the whim of corporate analysts (& shareholders) to create actual workforce stability!</p> <p>Svk33: I'm confused by what you're trying to say (don't mean to be rude but it sounds like you said 2 opposite things at the same time).</p> <p>Eyechewzaname: what I meant was, eventually (after all the LUDICROUS \$\$\$ has dried up) they'll be forced to act accordingly b/c looming lawsuits w/ huge contingencies attached (payouts, damages, bad PR) are hell for a publicly traded company. T/K [then CEO Travis Kalanick] can act however he wants now b/c it's a privately funded company, investors won't tolerate shenanigans from their CEO if they're paying for it</p> <p>Svk33: Ah yeah I agree with you for sure. (2-11-2016 OE)</p> <p>Mirefly: Uber might not survive, but ridesharing is here to stay.</p> <p>Tucsonbrayden: Since Uber has not made a profit to-date (no really, they haven't made a dime since they opened) they will stay operating as long as their shareholders and investors want them to. As soon as the money is pulled the gig is up. However with them being heavily invested in autonomous vehicles, if that goes right, they could be around for a long time. But seeing how that's been going so far, I wouldn't be surprised if they are gone within 5-10 years. Doesn't mean that the technology or business model won't stay around though. I think people are so used to uber-like services that it's not going away.</p> <p>KevinReems I agree 100% with everything you said. The concept is here to stay. Uber may not last long though. Personally I hope that Uber does fail. (5-14-2017 OE)</p>

YouCrazyCluck¹⁴: Passengers should have the option to bid on rides instead of surge and prime time.

BinoBingo: Sidecar tried that. Sidecar went out of business. Pax [passengers] are animals. They are cargo. They would want YOU to pay for the privilege of driving them.

CostcoWater: They'd [payments] go even lower than they are now (2-28-2017 OE)

As evident in the above quote, YouCrazyCluck hoped that greater exposure to market competition would raise pay rates and, thus, increase their profit. Yet, BinoBingo and CostcoWater disagreed by saying that riders do not value rides enough. The basis of strategy for the drivers was to increase their profit and assume others, like riders, would want to minimize costs as well.

Economic efficiency also governed driver's understanding of how Uber makes decisions. One driver wants to use his "clean, safe, but older" car that has passed other car inspections to drive, but was confused why Uber barred him from using it:

YaBasicSteve: Why does Uber have the car age limit at an arbitrary year like 2002?

Dlc8: Older cars tend to be unreliable. Of course that's a generalization and not applicable to every car, but it's the best they can do. Having an office to inspect older cars would be an unnecessary expense, seeing as they can get plenty of drivers already.

YaBasicSteve: This is the most reasonable response. (4-26-2017 OE).

In the above exchange, drivers interpreted Uber's behavior with reference to the basis of strategy of the market logic: Uber wants to minimize costs by not inspecting cars.

Economic forces like supply and demand also determined how drivers understand their position with respect to each other and the organization. One driver said in response to

¹⁴ All usernames are pseudonyms to protect participants' anonymity.

discussion on the forum with regards to recent cuts in pay: “Uber can't really raise pay rates for drivers [...] Besides the company operating at a loss, if they raised rates for everyone there would be way too many drivers for anyone to make money” (4-18-2017 OE). Another driver in that same thread said, “The last thing we need are more drivers, meaning less rides, which is exactly what would happen if pay rates went up (unless they stopped taking new drivers at times, which sounds insanely hectic)” (4-18-2017 OE). Other economic forces also played a role: “The barrier to entry to Uber is set pretty low, lower than Walmart. As long as a job or business that's easy to enter, the competition will always drive the price of the service to where most people are on the edge of thinking it's not worth it” (6-2-2016 OE).

Basis of norms: self-interest. The basis of norms for market logic is self-interest. One driver said: “I don't think Uber really gives a shit if drivers are making money except to the extent that they can continue keeping drivers on the road” (4-8-2017 OE). Another driver said: “Uber’s corporate motto is ‘Growth at all costs’. Uber didn't need to lower fares to stay in business, they lowered fares to impossible lows to keep getting new riders and more rides” (4-8-2017 OE). These quotes illustrate that drivers described how organizations like Uber are only interested in their own financial well-being.

Source of authority: shareholder activism. In the market logic, the source of authority is shareholder activism. In a discussion about possible changes if Uber was “forced to recognize drivers as employees,” one driver, Polonium, questioned the authority of other drivers to determine their working circumstances:

“You want benefits? You want higher pay? You want more hours and overtime? Why don't you get a real job? A job that pays well? You drive people around. You're not worth what you think you're worth, and Uber pays you as such. You're disposable. You're replaceable. You're nothing to this company. Why on Earth would they decide to keep you hired? Want to be treated as an employee?”

Maybe they'll pay their employees a fair wage and not you a fair wage because you're a pain in their ass.
Or maybe they'll fire you. 6 months of UC [unemployment compensation] is cheaper than paying you a "fair wage".
Travis started this company. Why's he not entitled to billions of dollars? Have you ever started a company? Vested everything you have into it? *Who are you to have a say in the matter? Are you a shareholder? No, you're not.* [emphasis added] Shut up and drive and appreciate what you get paid or GTFO. There are a thousand people who can replace you in a heartbeat.
Go get a real job that pays well and provides benefits and everything else you're looking for. This company isn't it. Leave” (10-15-2015 OE).

As none of the drivers were a founder or a shareholder, they do not have any authority to have a voice in the organization. This quotation by Polonium also referenced the American dream of “self-made” capitalism and entrepreneurial success with “Travis started this company. Why’s he not entitled to billions of dollars?”, and shareholder (market) capitalism associated with ACC by asking “Are you a shareholder? No, you’re not”.

In response to a news article entitled “Brazil judge rules Uber drivers are employees, deserve benefits,” Deviate said:

“I've always wondered what Uber's business model would be if they were found to have employees rather than contractors. It is almost common knowledge that they can't afford to pay drivers as employees due to the sheer scale of the costs. They already lose billions of dollars per year. They can't scale that up to losing even more without investors cutting off the supply of funding” (5-8-2017 OE).

This quote illustrates the authority of shareholders and their power to shape organizational actions. In this case, Deviate speculates that if drivers are made employees, Uber will not be able to meet their growth goals to “scale that up” without losing even more without private shareholders (“investors”) limiting or ending funding.

Basis of attention: status in market. For market logic, the basis of attention is status in market. The three role identities – app user, driver-bot, and driver-partner roles – each denoted a different status in the market. High status in the market logic is conferred when one can be

independent, self-sufficient, and wealthy. The driver-partner has the highest status and the driver-bot has the lowest status. The driver-partner role in the market logic takes the role of an entrepreneur. The app user takes the consumer role in the market logic. The driver-bot in the market logic is a factor of production, just operated on by others with no free will to dictate their circumstances. For example, one driver attempted to circumvent the driver-bot role and assert a driver-partner role by posting a new, punitive “proposal” for “general practices for rating riders.” The driver’s reasoning was that: “Rather than riders feeling like you are their personal slave, they should know that riding in your car for such low rates is a privilege that is easily revoked and behave accordingly” (11-14-2015 OE).

The Market Logic Consistency of Initial Posts

In response to the market logic governing the space, I decided to look at the market logic more intensely by “zooming in” to the worker (mis)classification debate. After creating a subsample of posts related to the worker (mis)classification debate (n=323) using keyword searches within my larger OE database, I looked at each initial post as the interaction and conversation starter. I classified initial posts in two ways: logic consistent with the market logic and logic inconsistent with the market logic.

Some initial posts were logic consistent with the market logic: the content of the post is consistent with the market logic described above and did not challenge the existing ways of doing things. For example, one initial post asked for drivers to report to the community the “Biggest tip you've ever gotten?” This initial post was logic consistent because it was about increasing profit and valuing materialism. The content also did not question the current way of doing things. One common type of market logic consistent initial post dealt with the performative (Austin, 1962; Butler, 1997; Callon, 1998) aspects of the ride-hail driver identity.

These performative posts center around questions about how to behave in a particular context (“What would you do in this situation with a passenger or customer service representative?”) or how to perform a particular task (“How do I clean a passenger’s urine from my car seat?”), and questions from new drivers seeking general advice for how to perform the role (“What are some tips and tricks for a new driver?”). Another type of market logic consistent initial post is when drivers posted their high total payouts for a ride or for periods of time, like days or weeks. These are market logic consistent because they align with the values of the market logic which is to direct activity to the most profitable outcomes.

Some initial posts were logic inconsistent with the market logic: the content of the post challenges the market logic as instantiated by Uber and the nascent ride-hailing field and the existing way of doing things. The content of the post can challenge the market approach by introducing other logics, such as the corporation logic. For example, market logic inconsistent posts can take the form of open letters to the organization or to the driver population at large calling for action. In a post titled “Silent Protest Don't Accept Pool Rides!”, one driver challenged the current “auto-play” feature of Uber that automatically accepts a new shared “pool” ride before the last one is concluded:

“Since the states don't have our back we can't take the abuse anymore!!! To protest the new lower pool rates and inhumane abuse from Lyft and Uber EVERYONE should not accept pool rides under ANY circumstances! I was stuck in a pool ride for hours and kept getting the auto accept of all the pings and I had passengers in my car the whole time [...] I was unable to use the restroom for hours and it was pure hell because of this! Now Uber like Lyft auto accepts every pool ping once you accept the initial pool ride, which doesn't give the driver the ability to take breaks. We are not given the opportunity to not accept more pools since they are automatically added to the queue. This is not humane and we should have the right to use the restroom without fear of deactivation!” (6-3-2016 OE).

This post was market logic inconsistent because it questioned the existing way of doing things by asking for drivers to refuse to accept a category of rides, pool rides, that picked up and dropped off more than one rider at a time. Some examples of market logic inconsistent initial posts within the dataset include questions about the value of the work (“Is driving is “worth it” financially, emotionally, and/or socially?”), open letters to the company calling for action or changes in policy, and the posting of a news article related to the worker (mis)classification debate or related to an organizational action. In other words, market logic consistent initial posts sought guidance for how to work within the market system that Uber has created; logic inconsistent initial posts challenged the market system and its assumptions of governance over the space.

Identity Implications of Initial Posts

Because they are working out identities in interactions (Goffman, 1969), whether a post was market logic consistent and its prescribed role identity had implications for the ride-hail driver identity. Each presented affirming or threatening identity aspects. Thus, market logic consistent and market logic inconsistent initial threads also were associated with different roles, referring to the role identities I described in chapter 3 (driver-bot, driver-partner and app user) and a new role identity, driver-as-employee. Each logic-role identity configuration had different implications for the identities that drivers perceived for themselves as ride-hail drivers.

I looked for combinations of logic-role identity configurations in the data and assessed their identity implications. Of the eight possible combinations, two were identity affirming, five were identity threatening, and one did not appear in the data. These combinations are summarized in Table 3 and described in the text below.

Identity affirmations. Two different logic-role identity configurations – market logic consistent- app user role configuration; the market logic consistent-driver partner role

configuration – were experienced as identity affirmation by those holding the market logic.

Identity affirmation is when a statement reinforces an identity that the recipient finds to be true.

The *market logic consistent-app user role configuration* resulted in identity affirmation. Under a market logic consistent initial post, the app user role depicted drivers as customers who have relative market power within the exchange. For instance, in the market logic consistent initial post titled “How uber reimburses us for our time and labor”, a driver wrote in, confused about the low reimbursement payment that he received from Uber after someone vomited in his car (5-21-2016 OE). Other drivers helped explain that he was not very savvy with how he requested reimbursement: instead of putting in a blanket request for reimbursement, he only requested the amount of money the cleaning supplies cost him. This showed a focus on the performative aspect of being a driver and working within the existing market logic, allowing a role for autonomous agency: if the driver only requested reimbursement in the right way, he would be paid fairly.

The *market logic consistent-driver-partner role configuration* resulted in identity affirmation, as well. If workers were embedded in the market logic, then the driver-partner role also gave them significant standing in the market logic as entrepreneurs. Under a market logic consistent initial post, the driver-partner role depicted them as free actors who are autonomous, self-reliant market participants in a meritocratic market. For example, one driver posed a question in his logic consistent initial post: “Do you conceal carry while driving? If so, what do you carry and how?” Drivers who carried concealed weapons, such as handguns, wrote in with advice on how to carry weapons without getting in trouble for breaking Uber’s policy (5-22-2016 OE). Many of them referenced their role as independent contractors as the reason they can choose to carry weapons; Uber ultimately in their mind had no control over their work practices.

Identity threats. When these five different logic-role identity configuration were used – market logic inconsistent-driver-as-employee role configuration; market logic inconsistent-app user configuration; market logic consistent-driver-bot configuration; market logic inconsistent-driver-bot role configuration; market logic inconsistent-driver-partner role configuration – they were experienced as an identity threat by those holding the market logic. An identity threat is defined as “an experience appraised as indicating potential harm to the value, meanings, or enactment of an identity” (Petriglieri, 2011).

The *market logic inconsistent-driver-as-employee role configuration* resulted in an identity threat. When a market logic inconsistent initial post references employee as a role, it puts drivers in the same positioning as other service workers: those who are subject to the whims of an employer. In a market logic consistent post with the driver-as-employee role titled “Gig Economy Workers Need Benefits and Job Protections...NOW!” with a link to a *Wired Magazine* article, one driver said “I just don’t want LYFT or UBER telling me ‘when’ I ‘have to’ drive b/c [because] it kills flexibility for part timers and becomes a regular job. Then the whole business model for these rideshare company goes to shit & no one makes any eff’ng \$\$\$ [money]!” (1-1-2016 OE). The driver-as-employee role is inconsistent with the market logic and it is perceived as an identity threat since it threatens autonomy.

The *market logic inconsistent-app user role configuration* also resulted in identity threat. Under market logic inconsistent initial post, the app user role depicted drivers as price-takers, forced to accept the prevailing prices in a market and lacking the market share to influence the market price on their own. In a market logic inconsistent initial post with an app user role titled “Is anyone else in the bay area getting this BS?”, a driver reported people were requesting rides for elderly people who needed additional help and telling them there was no need to tip (4-10-

2017 OE). Drivers complained that they were not getting any additional payment for “extra work” helping seniors to and from the car.

The *market logic consistent-driver-bot role configuration* was also experienced as an identity threat because workers were turned into factors of production, or resources to be inputted into the market whose humanity was irrelevant. For example, in the post titled “There's only so many times I can hear the same question in one day”, a driver provided a meme. The post had a picture of cartoon character Spongebob Squarepants responding to a passenger's question “So, how long have you been driving for Uber?” by repeating the question in a mocking tone to show disdain.¹⁵ The point of the post is that drivers are human and get bored with the same questions asked repeatedly. One driver who appreciated the meme said: “I'm not an ass to my clients. I go with the conversation with a smile. I'm venting on the internet specifically so that I don't direct that attitude to those in my car” (5-13-2017 OE). This shows that drivers face expectations to enact with technical precision the constant service work with a smile and the human toll it exacts from them.

Under a *market logic inconsistent-driver-bot role configuration*, workers noted the human limitations of acting like an extension of the technology itself and complained. This threatens their sense of self. In response to an article about “How Uber Uses Psychological Tricks to Push Its Driver's Buttons,” one driver said,

“I suspect that you'll find the happiest business owners are the ones with the longest employee retentions. But those are businesses. Uber is essentially a quant driven financial product which has zero capacity for compassion for humans, especially those which serve as rider and driver datapoints, but also within their organization. Humans generally don't appreciate being viewed as, or seeing themselves as, robotic resource elements for manipulation” (4-2-2017 OE).

¹⁵ <https://time.com/5647509/best-spongebob-memes/>

Under a *market logic inconsistent-driver-partner role configuration*, drivers were depicted as frustrated entrepreneurs, hamstrung by working within an organization and having no control over its policies and procedures. In response to a market logic inconsistent initial post with a link to a *MIT Technology Review* article about how Uber controls its drivers despite claims to be a neutral platform, one driver wrote about his dissatisfaction with the recent rate cuts:

Undertoe: I would not have cut my own rates by >50% [greater than 50 percent] if I were in any way my own boss. I don't know many bosses that would go to their store and have a "50% [percent] off everything!" sale when business was already growing very well. I guess by ceasing driving I was my own boss? (12-1-2015 OE).

Identity Work in Response to Initial Posts

Identity work occurred in response to initial posts. Identity work is when actors are “engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003: 1165). A nascent field like the ride-hailing field, where institutions such as occupational role identities are unclear, has a prevalence of tensions and surprises, which prompt feelings of contradiction, confusion, and self-doubt. These in turn tend to lead to examination of the self. Thus, identity work would be “more necessary, frequent and intense” in ShareSpot (Brown, 2015: 25). I saw two major categories of identity work in response to initial posts: helping and manhood acts (insults, sarcastic jokes, and verbal jousting).

Helping. Helping was another way for drivers to do identity work. Drivers helped one another by sharing specialized knowledge and applied work expertise, often in response to a plea for help or in response to a complaint. For instance, a new driver, peakingduck, writing a post titled “Question on writing miles off” asking for help. In the post, peakingduck asked “if I decide I'm done working for the day when I clock out, are the miles that I drive from where pax

[passenger] was dropped off back to my house tax deductible?” (4-1-2016, OE). However, the responses to this question were far from straight forward. Each respondent driver demonstrated their capacity for helping through their specialized knowledge about how to file taxes as an independent contractor. Yet, the participants disagreed about how peakingduck should proceed.

STLSportsFan engaged in further identity work thorough a claim of specialized knowledge. STLSportsFan stated his “22 years of contracting” to further persuade peakingduck to follow his advice. STLSportsFan also used claiming specialized knowledge to bolster his analogy that the occupational role identity of a ride-hail driver was adjacent to an independent contractor that acts as a salesperson or an “air conditioner tech.” Claiming specialized knowledge was a way to activate other adjacent identities to build up the status and autonomy of the ride-hail driver occupational role identity.

TangoUber defined the scope of the role identity more narrowly and confined it only to existing knowledge about when one is working as a ride-hail driver. Insurance coverage and miles tracked by Uber for tax purposes only count miles when a driver has an active passenger in the car. Drivers are not paid when a driver is driving towards a passenger or away from another passenger. Therefore, TangoUber defined the miles that one can count as a tax write off for reimbursement as only the miles when one is working for Uber.

Manhood acts. All three other acts of identity work –insults, sarcastic jokes, and verbal jousting – fall under the category of manhood acts. Manhood acts are a part of identity work in that they borrow the high-status identity of “manhood” to assert superiority. In identity work, one key cultural resource (Swidler, 1986) is the gender institution (Martin, 2004). Masculinity is an identity that results from a configuration of practices (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009) and the meanings given to those practices by others. In the U.S. and other Western nations, all men of all

classes are under immense social pressure to conform to hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1987), an ideal type of manhood which prescribes strength, dominance, aggression, independence, rationality, physical vigor, competition, and emotional detachment. Men construct their hegemonic masculine selves through identity work that signifies adherence to gendered ideals using dramaturgical manhood acts, or practices that communicate a masculine identity to others (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Yet because hegemonic masculinity is a cultural ideal and sometimes contradictory to itself (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), individual men can only signify adherence to masculine tenets using the material and symbolic resources they have at their disposal.

Online community spaces such as ShareSpot have also historically been white and male-dominated in population (Milner, 2013). These spaces have therefore been masculine, if uniquely masculine. Although these online community spaces started with a “nerd”-type masculinity (Kendall, 2000), the masculine identity of the nerd has been partly incorporated into hegemonic masculinity since the 1980s (Milner, 2013). Social surveys from The Pew Research Center show that most Uber drivers were men (Smith, 2016), so many have their physical male identity as another material and symbolic resource. Women also can only find acceptance within the group if they perform masculinities according to the social norms of the online community space (Milner, 2013). Therefore, masculinity is part of the cultural toolkit for occupational role identity creation (McPherson & Sauder, 2013; Swidler, 1986). Because the ride-hail driver identity was uncertain, attaching it to the male identity was one way for drivers to enhance the role identity of a ride-hail driver, and by extension, enhance their own identity.

In the case of ride-hail drivers, specific material and symbolic resources are at their collective disposal for identity work. The symbolic resources include the market logic, reference

to other independent contractor occupational or professional role identities, and the work practices that align with masculine ideals: autonomy via the independence of drivers to work ostensibly “when they want,” even if they are incentivized to work at particular times by the algorithm, and the successful competition within the marketplace of drivers to gain income. The drivers’ manhood acts of insulting, sarcastic joking and verbal jousting were symbolic resources used by drivers to assert their dominance and thereby enhance their status.

Insulting. Explicit insults were particularly evident when participants disagreed over an interpretation of the driver role as either an independent contractor or an employee, often in response to news articles. For instance, when a driver posted a link to a news article about a possible Uber driver union, the initial post was a market logic inconsistent initial post and assumed the role of the driver as an employee. Within the thread, the conversation quickly devolved into insults:

MrSandMan: Right now, you are Uber's chump and you getting nothing when you retire.

GiantsFan: F*cking morons, if you want a JOB, go get a JOB! Stop shitting on our IC [independent contractor] status, we don't WANT YOU. (5-5-2016, OE)

MrSandMan is stating that other drivers are being fooled, or being made a chump, by Uber because they are not smart enough to realize they are working for “nothing.” GiantsFan called those who disagree with their worker status as independent contractors “f*cking morons” for denigrating independent contractor status.

Sarcastic jokes. Sarcastic jokes also were prevalent on the forum. For example, in the following exchange, a participant inquiring about the time of a strike is met with sarcastic jokes about its effectiveness:

Happymarriedman [Initial Post]: When is the strike? Just curious, getting conflicting information. This [website] says the weekend of 10-22-15. This

[different website] says 10-16-15. Any insight? Is it different from market to market?

jeffA: Start today and we'll let you know when it's done. *[sarcastically]*

Throwaway123: We promise. *[sarcastically]*

level1player: Realistically, never. There will be people who don't drive certain days, but that's not a strike. It's just another day they don't drive while other people do. For a strike to work, most people need to know its going on and agree to it. (10/15/2015, OE).

At the time of the post, drivers were facing dwindling earnings. Some blamed the recent “rate cuts” by Uber in order to lure more customers. Others blamed an oversupply of drivers for driving down the surge pricing. The sarcastic joke, in this instance, is that jeffA and throwaway123 are encouraging happymarriedman to stop working for the benefit of themselves, not him. Level1player explains that the structure of ride-hail work prevents a strike because it is difficult to tell who is choosing not to work for personal reasons and who is choosing not to work for political reasons.

In this case, sarcastic jokes supported identity work both by creating an in-group who “gets” the joke and an out-group who is the butt of the joke because they failed to understand reality (in this case, dictated by the market logic). The jokes attacked a logic inconsistent position within the worker (mis)classification debate in an indirect way. Humor at work has been shown to provide pressure to conform to expectations (Hatch, 1997; Roy, 1959). It is notable that the joke was sarcastic. Sarcasm is the use of irony to mock or convey contempt as a form of verbal aggression (Haiman, 1998). In this case, sarcasm brings with it an awareness of ironic situations, such as the inability of organizations, media, and fellow workers to recognize a strike if workers can choose not to work for a variety of reasons. Sarcasm further distanced participants from each other, similar to other forms of verbal aggression like verbal jousting and insults.

Professionals in psychology and related fields have noted that sarcasm tends to be a maladaptive coping mechanism for those with unresolved anger or frustrations (Haiman, 1998).

Verbal jousting. Verbal jousting is another way to do identity work around manhood. Drivers engage in verbal jousting, which involves the act of arguing and fighting with another person with words and insults. In addition to insults, verbal jousting may also include sarcastic jokes at the other's expense and are usually a heightened exchange with only a few participants (two to four) in the thread. In response to an article titled "Uber isn't sure if it can 'remain a viable business' without building self-driving cars," Past-time and STLSportsFan began to verbally joust:

Jpbatman: Given that Uber is ranked at the bottom of self driving car technology companies, and how far away self driving cars are, and their burn rate, I'd say they are just about tits up.

Past-time: Anyone with half a brain that works with technology could of [have] told him this self driving crap is one Dumb move. Duh

STLSportsFan: Fortunately, they didn't ask you, because you do have half a brain. Self-driving TNC cars are about 1-3 years away. This year is even possible. You do know they are already in service now, live, with no driver controls, yes?

Past-time: I love people with no experience with electronics try to chime in to look smart lol. Computers have been around for more then [than] 60 years, our phones, computers smart tvs all experience the exact same issue. And what is that exactly? Bugs, glitches, etc. Everyone at some point has have to restart their computer or phone because it froze glitched or just spazzed out. When a phone does it, no problem. When a two ton viechle [vehicle] does it, lol your [sic] fucked. [...] stop with the sci-fi flicks and news article, you can ask anyone that works with technology, it's a huge pile of shii-

STLSportsFan: [...] My background is telecommunications, automation, and some programming. I'm not an expert in self driving cars, but I do understand the technology. Oh, and it's not my opinion, it's the opinion of almost every expert and major player. Almost every major auto company and technology company disagrees with you. [...] I'm not addressing two ton vehicles, I'm talking about the first self-driving TNCs. These will be geo-fenced level 4 glorified golf carts with speeds governed until they prove themselves. They will still be driverless and taking our fares. Soon after these are introduced, within a year or two, there will

be a tidal wave of newcomers. By 2022 there should be a least a dozen companies with fleets of various sizes operating in the US and more around the world. [...] (4-8-2017 OE).

Past-time insulted people who think that self-driving cars are possible by writing that “Anyone with half a brain that works with technology could have told him this self-driving crap is one Dumb move.” STLSportsFan made an insulting joke in response by saying “Fortunately, they didn't ask you, because you do have half a brain.”

Both STLSportsFan and Past-time also made identity claims with respect to their experience with technology. Claiming specialized knowledge also occurred when STLSportsFan said that he has a background in “telecommunications, automation, and some programming.” Again, these identity claims through claiming specialized knowledge are also efforts to build up the status and autonomy of the ride-hail occupational role identity.

When faced with different logic-role configurations in ShareSpot threads, drivers experienced them as either identity threats to the self or identity affirmations for the self. Each configuration, however, had specific implications for the resulting identity work: the occurrence of helping or manhood acts. Table 4 summarizes the identity implications of the initial posts, including each logic-role identity configuration and its implications. Furthermore, identity work involved activating other adjacent identities (masculinity, specialized knowledge) in order to build up the status and autonomy of the occupational role identity.

Attracting Manhood Acts

Market logic-inconsistent posts when paired with a lower status identity attracted virulent “manhood acts,” assertions of authority and superiority via sarcasm, insults and verbal jousting to affirm an identity based in the market logic. For example, D3Nerd wrote a logic inconsistent-driver-bot initial post titled “I don’t understand Uber”:

TABLE 4

Summary of the Identity Implications of Initial Posts

Logic-role configuration	<u>Logic Consistent with the Market Logic</u>	<u>Logic Inconsistent with the Market Logic</u>
<i>Employee</i>	Null set	<u>Identity threat</u> <i>Loss of independence, autonomy</i>
<i>App User</i>	<u>Identity affirmation</u> <i>Customers with market power</i>	<u>Identity threat</u> <i>Price-takers</i>
<i>Driver-bot</i>	<u>Identity threat</u> <i>Factor of production, resource</i>	<u>Identity threat</u> <i>Demand for human rights</i>
<i>Driver-partner</i>	<u>Identity affirmation</u> <i>Entrepreneur, Independent</i>	<u>Identity threat</u> <i>Frustrated entrepreneur, Threat to autonomy</i>

“What I don't understand about Uber you're expected to give good customer service, put alot of miles on your car, surge more than 90% of the time disappears when you drive to a surge area and all of this for zero tips! Since the invention of the taxi service drivers get tips but not with Uber! Ashton Kutcher who apparently is a investor in Uber said on the Jimmy Kimmel show they don't allow tips because it's unsafe for drivers lol... So digitally accepting tips like with Lyft puts drivers in harms way, in what way???? I think what puts drivers at risk is not having a tipping feature on the app and passengers figure they only get cash tips

How are we supposed to make a living or make it worth it with such low Mc Donalds wages. At least when you work at Mc Donalds you don't put wear on your car or have to pay for gas. Also who the hell makes \$1000-\$1500 a week part time like what you see in some Uber ads and they say people average \$35 an hour? Isn't that false advertising and why isn't drivers taking them to court for false advertising? People buy new cars who drive for Uber or lease Priuses from Breeze for \$800 a month for a chance to make close to Minimum wage am I missing something here? [...]” (4-5-2016 OE).

Verbal jousting then occurred between hurricanejustice, dizzyllama, and Eustis around minimum wage and how much Uber workers average in take home pay.

Eustis: So go work for McDonalds. [...] Including bonuses, I've met both criteria for three weeks now. Without bonuses I'm getting between \$18-20/hr, varying by how good of a week it is.

If Uber doesn't provide an opportunity valuable in your life, then move on.

dizzyllama: Show us. And tell how many hours and miles (from leaving your house to returning) to make that. Be honest about it all. Let's see what your actual profits are.

D3Nerd: I highly doubt you're getting \$18-20 hour net after including depreciation of car based on miles driven, gas, maintenance and repairs to vehicle and after taxes. After all those expenses you'll be lucky to make \$4-\$7 an hour

D3Nerd and Eustis then disagree on what the minimum wage is in California.

Eustis: You shouldn't lie about that [what minimum wage is] to a California resident. The highest minimum wage in the state right now is \$12.25, which includes SF. Oakland is at \$12. The state as a whole is \$10 right now with a fifty cent raise later in the year. Net on \$12.25 hourly wages is \$9.19 counting only federal taxes. \$7 is right on after state taxes.

It's apparent you do nothing but sh*t out numbers and pretend you're right

D3Nerd: Uber employee, the state min wage was raised to \$15 so F*ck You. yes it will take a few years to fully implement but if it could be done now it would. Even though the min wage is \$12.25 in the city of SF Most starter jobs pay around \$14 an hour which is still below the \$15 min wage which will be fully implemented in a few years. I bet very few if Any Uber drivers after all expenses makes even \$12.25 an hour. It doesn't change the fact that Uber deceives new drivers by telling them people make over \$1000 a week working part time or \$35 an hour which is 100% bullsh*t since almost no one makes that. These poor people buy new cars and get shafted financially for believing these deceiving ads.

In addition to cursing at each other, D3Nerd also referred to Eustis as an “Uber employee,” making a sarcastic joke that Eustis’ views are so favorable to Uber, he must be employed by them. These manhood acts enable the workers to augment their identity. Next, responses encouraged the original poster to affirm an identity based in the market logic:

Venticoffee: uber's in the business of supply and demand, if min wages go up uber prices will definitely go up because not many drivers will still drive when

they can make more with minimum wage. If uber makes less than minimum wage, then only people who can't find a job otherwise will work at uber, or people that aren't very financially literate to account for expenses.

Sek1981: Driving requires ZERO skills and the baseline pay reflects that. You can make good money with Uber if you have a brain. Sadly, most drivers don't have brains. If drivers can "figure it out" there's no reason that you can't make \$35/hour net. That's a bad week for me, I usually average 45-50/hour. It's like any other job, the smart ones come out on top. The rest get the leftovers.

Another type of logic-role configuration of post attracted manhood acts: the oppositional pathway under the market logic inconsistent-driver-partner role configuration. In these types of posts, drivers were depicted as frustrated entrepreneurs, hamstrung by working within an organization and having no control over its policies and procedures.

Even when posts were based in the market logic, however, they attracted manhood acts when they focused on the low autonomy of ride-hail workers. In a logic consistent-driver bot initial post, zilch00 posted a news article titled "Armed robbery suspect uses Uber as getaway car." This post focused on the low autonomy of ride-hail workers by highlighting the powerlessness of ride-hail drivers to control the safety of their vehicle. Sarcastic jokes, a manhood act, was the most common response to the initial post:

SuccubusFault: 5 stars: passenger was ready and waiting when driver arrived.
[...]

Ridehail2016: "Weekly Feedback: 1 Star! Allowed Police to stop the vehicle!"
[...]

Pepp4884: This morning I got a ping to an apartment complex and there were 5 cop cars there investigating a burglary. I think the suspect was trying to hail uber for getaway. He never came out or answered the phone.

Barry1023: Plot twist : no tip

Attracting Helping Acts

By contrast, market logic-consistent posts attracted helping acts when based in attractive identities (driver-partner, app user), which promised autonomy and market logic benefits.

DogByte wrote in a logic consistent-driver-partner initial post titled “How long do you wait?”:

“So say you show up to pick up a rider, app says it's told the rider you've arrived, after a couple of minutes, they don't come out. You text, no response. You even call, no answer. How long do you wait before you just leave? 15 mins? 30 mins?” (10-15-2015 OE).

Responses came in from multiple drivers with answers to DogByte’s question:

TheLloydDob: No more than the 5 minutes required. Anything longer is a massive waste of time. Time is money in this gig. Waiting is the worst thing you can do.

MrEden: No cancellation fee in my market.... So 5 [minute wait] and that's it!

Ben_Stiller: If there is no answer, five minutes on the dot and get your \$5. If they answer, I'll wait up to 10 [minutes].

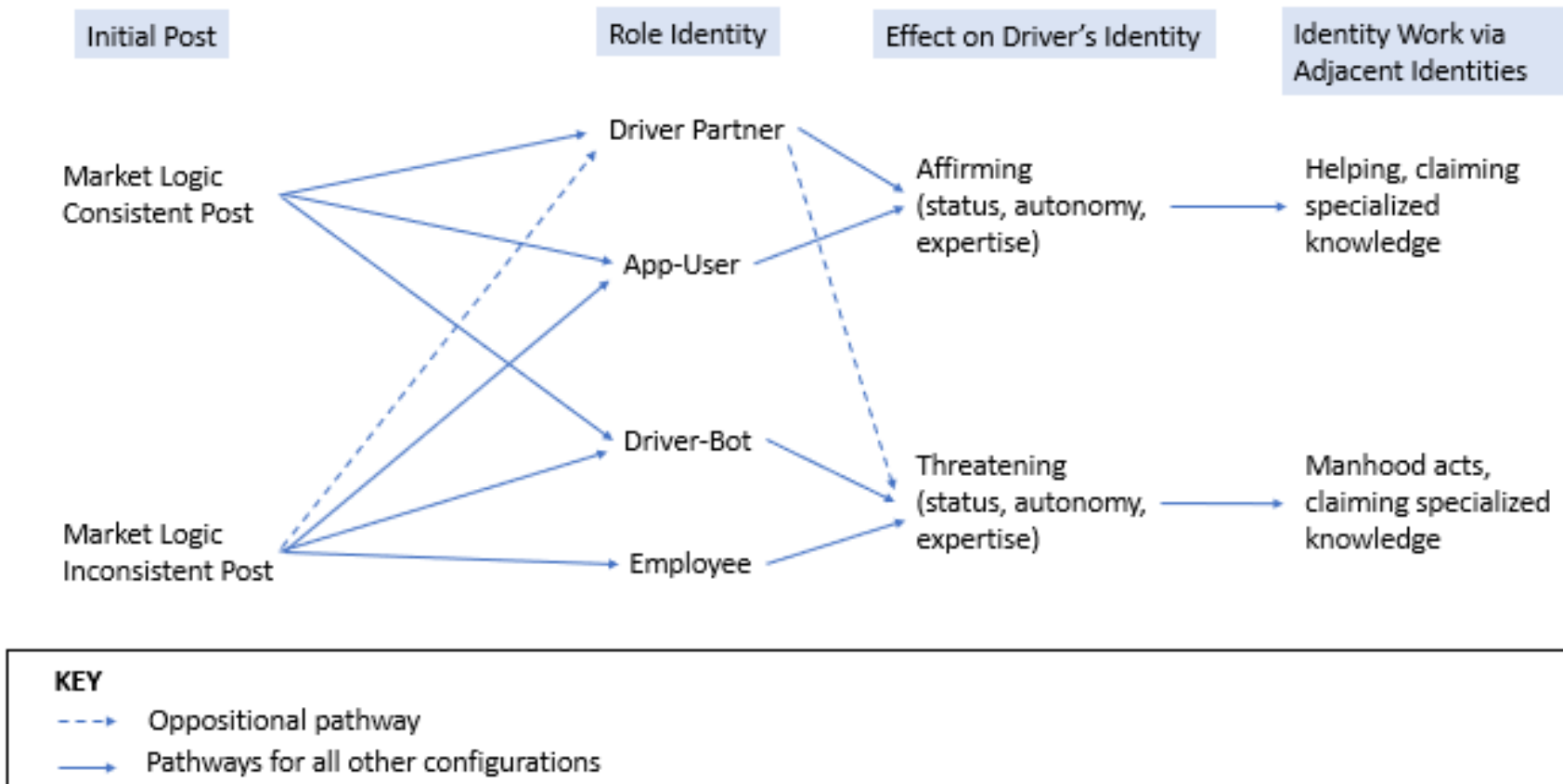
In sum, I found that market logic-inconsistent posts when paired with a lower status identity attracted virulent “manhood acts,” assertions of authority and superiority via sarcasm, insults and verbal jousting to affirm an identity based in the market logic. By contrast, market logic-consistent posts attracted helping acts when based in attractive identities (driver-partner, app user), which promised autonomy and market logic benefits. Even when posts were based in the market logic, however, they attracted manhood acts when they focused on the low autonomy of ride-hail drivers. Table 5 and Figure 1 summarizes my findings. Next, I investigate in-depth the prevalence of cynicism and fatalism within the threads through an analysis of vignettes.

TABLE 5

**Summary of Pattern of Identity Work Across All Threads in the Worker
(Mis)Classification Sample**

Logic-role configuration	<u>Logic Consistent</u>	<u>Logic Inconsistent</u>
<i>Employee</i>	Null set	<u>Identity threat</u> <i>Loss of independence, autonomy</i> Manhood acts
<i>App User</i>	<u>Identity affirmation</u> <i>Customers with market power</i> Helping	<u>Identity threat</u> <i>Price-takers</i> Helping
<i>Driver-bot</i>	<u>Identity threat</u> <i>Factor of production, resource</i> Manhood acts	<u>Identity threat</u> <i>Demand for human rights</i> Manhood acts
<i>Driver-partner</i>	<u>Identity affirmation</u> <i>Entrepreneur, Independent</i> Helping	<u>Identity threat</u> <i>Frustrated entrepreneur</i> <i>Threat to autonomy</i> Manhood acts

FIGURE 1
Summary of Findings



Analysis of Vignettes

Drivers were caught between the driver-bot, app user, driver-partner, and driver-as-employee roles. In trying to form a positive self, they reached into the cultural discourse – masculinity, market logic – to affirm a positive self for themselves in an uncertain identity environment. While drivers showed a marked preference for higher status role identities (driver-partner and app user) that were consistent with this variant of the market logic, it was hard to sustain such rosy pictures of the ride-hail driver role identity given the drivers’ experience of the job.

In the text that follows, I provide a more detailed look at four example vignettes (Tables 6, 7, 8, and 9). I chose these vignettes because they each had at least one instance of cynicism and fatalism and covered all four roles: app user (Vignette 1), driver-bot (Vignette 2), driver-partner (Vignette 3), and driver-as-employee (Vignette 4). Cynicism is defined as an inclination to believe that people are motivated purely by self-interest (Oxford Languages, 2020). Fatalism is defined as the belief that all events are predetermined and therefore inevitable (Oxford Languages, 2020).

The Hobbesian Jungle: Cynicism and Fatalism

Cynicism and fatalism occur because the backing, or the taken-for-granted “rules” of the market logic (Harmon, 2019; Toulmin, 1958), is being called into question by drivers based on their own experiences with Uber; meanwhile, the driver identity is also shifting. This occurs when the drivers are unable to locate where they are within the logic because the logic’s backing keeps being questioned, and the role identity keeps shifting. Cynicism and fatalism are the ultimate “trump cards” for challenging the backing, no one wholly disputes cynicism or fatalism. Therefore, the only thing that ends up being agreed upon (or rather unchallenged) is cynicism

and fatalism. For example, “just quit” is a common proposed solution by other drivers to a fellow driver’s complaints. The individualism of the driver-partner role, voluntarism of the app user role, and the dehumanizing nature of the driver-bot role leads them to tell each other to “just quit” if they surface any complaints about their working conditions (the employee role is not available to them since Uber rejects it). This relates to cynicism and fatalism because it means that nothing about this work can be or will be changed or improved; therefore, the only path to something different is to assert their autonomy by quitting the work. As a result, a positive role identity as a driver becomes elusive.

Cynicism and fatalism are often present with the market logic; this warps the market logic from its promise of the American dream, implied by Uber in its driver-recruitment advertisements, and reflected by many drivers in their posts, to reflect instead a Hobbesian Jungle. In this vein, when the market logic is depicted as a Hobbesian Jungle, competition is cut-throat and life is “nasty, brutish, and short” (Hobbes, 1651). In this Hobbesian Jungle version of the market logic, individuals are expendable and replaceable; and the strategy for drivers in this market is to maximize short-term profit at all costs, to be self-interested, and to even act with guile if needed to reach that goal. Each driver is an individualized market actor; each driver alone bears the ultimate responsibility and risk for their economic outcome. In the next few sections, I will illustrate these dynamics of cynicism and fatalism within interactions by explaining four vignettes (Tables 6, 7, 8, and 9).

TABLE 6
Vignette 1 (excerpt)

<i>Coding</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Line Number</i>
Logic consistent initial post Role identity: app user Issue: if demand is up in New York City Challenge to the warrant	LAUber: Uber says demand in New York City is up 30 percent since prices were cut. (What do you NYC drivers say?)	1 2 3
Cynicism and Fatalism Market logic (Hobbesian Jungle) *shifting from app user to driver-bot Affirmation of the backing	dizzyllama: LOL. Uber lies, as a matter of course. Why would anyone believe their bullshit numbers? The company is just trying to justify its race to the bottom. Your value as a driver to Uber is the difference between the lowest fee at which you are willing to drive and the highest fare the customers are willing to pay. Uber is experimenting with different rates and fees all over the US right now, to determine what its value is, and no one at Uber gives a shit what that means you make—or if it will support driving a car or net you any profit. This is reality. Get used to it.	4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
Cynicism and Fatalism Providing a rebuttal	AdamRMay: In essence, Uber is now making more money than ever in NYC, While drivers make the sake of [same if] not less. In these big city', drivers had decent turn around time between customers, meaning, they were doing alright, so to say. But now that prices have dropped and demand has picked up, that doesn't necessarily mean that the drivers are making more, because they can only hand[le] so many trips per day. But if Hi! This is Matt, your Uber driver campaigning for more drivers to sign up, this trend will continue, and drivers will make less and less and uber more and more.	16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26
Cynicism and Fatalism	Viral_load: The way Uber releases its "stats" is always ridiculous and extremely broad/usually missing conclusive information. The recent increase in "demand" more than likely would have happened	27 28 29 30

Providing a rebuttal	without the price cut. Most businesses in the last couple of months have slowdowns, its just a slow time of the year for everyone, and then beginning in February things start to pick up. The price-cut has nothing to do with it. Uber knows this, but they're not going to release the statistical information for the past year that would show exactly this, they're just going to say, "business is up! annnd yeaaaa, its totally because of the price cut." Of course, they would absolutely never release what drivers were making this time last year, because I guarantee you it was way more than they are making now	31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42
	[discussion of rates per miles in various cities]	43
Cynicism and Fatalism Providing a rebuttal	Viral_load: Are you sure demand is high, or is supply just low, or maybe a mix of both? In NJ after the most recent price cuts, Uber lost A LOT of drivers. There aren't half as many cars on the road at any given time that there used to be, especially in the AM rush hours. So there's still the same amount of ridership(demand), but not nearly as many cars as there were(supply), which has also been creating massive surges that almost always incurs low customer satisfaction and ratings.	44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52
Cynicism and Fatalism Providing a rebuttal Challenge to data	Moistio:When steam runs a 90% off sale, they need sales of the item to exceed 10x the previous metrics. They usually wind up 20-40x of the previous metrics. Steam can then deliver that because of the nature of digital goods. When uber cuts rates specifically by 30%, but thanks to a number of other changes the real effect is 50% cut to me, I can't drive 2x the hours to make the same money. I drove sat 2 days ago and the friday a week before that. First evenings driving since the rate cut. Horrible. I made literally half of what I was previously making. I have been driving my BiL to/from the airport weekly which saw a payout cut of ~35%. What the cuts do, tho, is keep profit margin growth in the dbl [double] digit %, which drives the evermore unsustainable valuation growth. They're burning muscle right now. And at some point this house of cards is going to be revealed for what it is. But that's ok... the board and primary investors will have long since cashed out.	53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72
Cynicism and Fatalism	Ornerymcgee: i dont doubt that demand is up 30%, but if prices are cut all that it means is ur driving to make the same amount of money as u were last year. also, jan-mid February are known to be the slowest months,	73 74 75 76

Providing a rebuttal	not just for uber but for the service industry as a whole, so demand would of been up after mid feb regardless of price cuts.	77 78 79
Cynicism and Fatalism Providing more data	Hell_view: I totally believe it for two reasons: 1. There's huge demand for Uber outside Manhattan 2. UberX was more expensive than NYC cabs until this last fare cut. (The drivers are still getting hosed, of course.)	80 81 82 83 84
Cynicism and Fatalism	UberPHL: In most of the country UBER has been lowering prices but at the same time rising its own cut, commission and safe fake fee [safe rider fee]. This company is such a conflict of strategies, one for the driver, another for the company	85 86 87 88 89

TABLE 7
Vignette 2 (excerpt)

<i>Coding</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Line Number</i>
Logic Inconsistent Role identity: driver-partner Issue: Uber's practices on New Year's Eve Challenge to the backing	NoelQ: I have reason to believe Uber broke its trust with drivers and riders on NYE, taking advantage of both parties to its own benefit. Thoughts?	1 2 3
Challenging data	WholeWheatBread: The surge in my area was low at midnight and 20 minutes later was over 8.0x. At midnight and 15 minutes after people aren't searching for rides. You watch the ball drop, kiss someone, get 1 more drink and start saying your goodbyes. By 12:30 we had 8.9 surge.	4 5 6 7 8
Challenging data	Imadeanaccount: This is EXACTLY what happened in Portland. People rushing trying to get to the bar before midnight. Dead for about 20-30 minutes, then massive (4-5x) surge and requests pouring in like crazy. Dropped off around 1:30-1:45 and then back up to 3-4x from then until 2:45. By 3 it was dead and the streets were empty downtown. Everyone cleared out QUICK. This doesn't even happen on a regular weekend night. Normally people are still out then. We had a big supply of ubers/lyfts/ cabs and everyone got home quickly and safely. Most efficient NYE I have ever witnessed downtown.	9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20
Challenging backing	Dan_ahoy: Same exact thing happened in San Diego; it was 1.5x at midnight, then 30 min later 8x and up until 2:15, dropping within minutes to 2x range. You're excusing it - they gamed everybody.	21 22 23 24
Cynicism and Fatalism Challenge backing	PCLOADING: If you have trust for anything Uber tells you, that's the real problem. Once you start being skeptical of anything they tell you, driving for them gets easier. Just assume that they are always lying and it's really refreshing when they finally tell the truth.	25 26 27 28 29
Challenge	Harshwords: But how would you know it's the truth?	30

Cynicism and Fatalism	PCLOADING: When the money hits your account. Up until that point, assume it's all a lie.	31 32
Cynicism and Fatalism	Badlonny: Preach.	33
Cynicism and Fatalism	SpeedySnake: lol that won't stop them from taking advantage of the driver.	34 35
Cynicism and Fatalism *identity transfer to driver-bot	McRibbet: Uber doesn't give a shit about drivers or passengers....they're like a casino - it's volume only...	36 37
Challenging data Insulting	Beepbeep: I don't see what's so fishy.... People ARE NOT gonna request an uber right after the ball drops... I actually think uber was doing a favor by imposing a 1.5x at midnight. Sorry but you have to be a little naive to think you would get surge pricing from 7:30PM to ~3AM Surge was crazy and consistent at around after 12:30. What's the hubbub?	38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45
Challenging the backing	Codymaverick: I actually agree with you [NoelQ, original poster), I think this was artificially initiated by Uber to try to curb high demand by bringing more drivers online earlier, and to a very very small extent, it worked. However, the big hubbub is that it means Uber artificially manipulated its surge pricing system, which is supposed to only trigger on ACTUAL demand, not whenever they feel like it. If they do it once, they can do it whenever they want. It violates rider and driver trust, like the OP stated.	46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55
Cynicism and Fatalism	Ieyedman: Happy new year, another year of lowering fares. You can't fight Skynet. Only Skynet can look inside of the network ... It's a black box lol	56 57 58

TABLE 8
Vignette 3 (excerpt)

<i>Coding</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Line Number</i>
Logic inconsistent	MooseWizard: GENERAL PRACTICES FOR RATING RIDERS (A Proposal)	1 2
Role identity: Driver-bot	It does not take a new driver more than a day to realize just how evil a company UBER is, therefore, after careful consideration, it is proposed that all UBER drivers, adopt the following general practice for dealing with riders:	3 4 5 6
Issue: collective rating practices	<i>Given: if a driver or rider rates the other with 3 stars or less, the system will never pair them together again.</i>	7 8
Providing backing (Uber is evil), claim (we should adopt general rating practices for riders) and warrant (given the system will never pair you with a 3 star or less rider)	1. In ANY case where you believe a rider will give you a rating of less than 5 stars, ALWAYS rate 3 stars or below to protect yourself regardless of tip. 2. The best rating a non-tipping passenger should be able to get is 4 stars. Period. 3. Add 1 Star for a \$2.00 tip and an additional star for each additional dollar (except as covered by item 1 above). 4. Subtract 0.1 star for every 0.1 miles under 3 miles up to 2 stars (they're a waste of time unless there is a tip). 5. Subtract 1 star for trips where the distance to pickup exceeds the actual trip. 6. Subtract 1 star for trips that take you to remote areas with no demand. 7. Subtract 0.1 star for every minute of waiting after the first minute. 8. Subtract 1 star if the rider provides incorrect or incomplete address information. This includes large venues with multiple entrances, failure to provide a terminal at a large airport, if they give a simple address without giving a major landmark or business name, or if the pick-up location is inaccessible. Examples: They send you to a shopping plaza but don't say which store they're at, they send you to a casino but don't say which entrance, they send you to a college campus but you can't get past the security gate. 9. Subtract 1 star if the incorrect address requires more than 1 minute of travel to get to the correct address. 10. Subtract 1 star if the rider seems agitated when contacting you for something that is obviously their fault or if you have to contact them for additional information and see rule 1 above. EXPECT A NEGATIVE RATING.	9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39

Providing data	11. Subtract 1 star if the rider has a rating of less than 4.0 stars. This forces them to tip or get bounced from the system.	40 41 42
Providing data	Many drivers have experienced less than 5 star ratings simply because a rider thought they left something behind, even when they did not. It is not unusual, especially when transporting a mix of college-aged males and females for them to trash your rating in a fit of self-importance. If you think they're going to try to impress their friends at your expense, see rule 1 above.	43 44 45 46 47 48 49
Providing data	In some cases, riders have left negative feedback after asking for an "aux cable" so they could plug their phone into the car stereo, even when the car's sound system was not equipped to accept auxiliary input.	50 51 52 53
Providing data	A five minute waiting period is more than sufficient for a passenger. Even making the driver wait the full five is rude, especially when the driver might be illegally parked or forced to circle the block. The passenger knows the driver is coming quickly and can track your progress. They should be waiting for you to arrive and flag you down upon recognition.	54 55 56 57 58 59 60
Market logic: status in market	The word must get out that despite UBER's "no tipping" policy, riders should insist on tipping if they want the speed and convenience of using UBER. This should further be backed up by a general policy that drivers simply not pick up a rider with a rating below 4.0, or do so only to give them a 3 star rating so your ride acceptance rate does not drop over time.	61 62 63 64 65 66 67
Providing claim	Rather than riders feeling like you are their personal slave, they should know that riding in your car for such low rates is a privilege that is easily revoked, and behave accordingly.	68 69 70 71
*shift to driver- partner identity	As fewer drivers are willing or even alerted to pick up a particular rider, they will have to draw rides from further and further away. Over time, if they don't tip, they'll simply be bounced from the system.	72 73 74 75
	Remember, rider ratings are there to help the drivers know what to expect upon pickup. You are using these practices to help other drivers, it's not about the riders.	76 77 78
Challenging the claim	truewheels3: This is a fuckin joke, right? Look up the KISS [Keep it simple, stupid] principle.	79 80
Challenging the claim	UbadeeSquid: As a former pizza delivery driver, Im going to say this regarding tips, and not breach the subject anymore.	81 82 83
	In this service, tips are not required, and should not be expected. If you EXPECT a tip from every rider you carry	84 85

	over the course of the evening, YOU are whats wrong with the driver side of uber. If you dont think you are being compensated enough with the fare rates, find another job.	86 87 88
Insulting	Go to your local domihoes or pizza slut and work it a week, and see if you do any better. Dont forget all the store work you gotta do for minimum wage. Then run all over town for .75 a trip and a buck or two from the customer. If youre lucky youll get a 5 spot maybe 3 times a night. You might walk out with 45 bucks plus your hourly wage. Ive been doing this uber thing for two weeks now. Im a security officer for my day job, and for 40 hours a week worked, I bring home 300. I worked 20 hours last week dong uber and brought home 331. I made about 50 in cash tips. I made 35 in cash tips last night.	89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99
Insulting Insulting	I dont ask, i dont pester, I dont post passive aggressive fuckboy signs in my car telling people "tips are appreciated" NO SH*T SHERLOCK of course they are appreciated. Whens the last time someone handed you a fiver and you was like "what the fuck is this? I dont want this shit?"	100 101 102 103 104 105
Challenging claim	For those of you posting history browsers who like try to make people eat their words thru their posting history, I few months back i went on a pizza tipping rant about how you should always tip your pizza drivers. The reason pizza drivers should be tipped is because they are using their personal vehicles, their gas, insurance, etc, for MINIMUM WAGE. In other words, if customers DIDNT TIP, the job would NOT BE WORTH IT. This job, however, after the breakdown, is FAR more lucrative than delivering pizza. And add the tips that DO come in, and you have to wonder why anyone with a newish car delivers pizza when they could be doing this.	106 107 108 109 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117
Challenging claim	Yes, we uber drivers use our own car, gas, and insurance as well, but the payoff is better. It takes 15 bucks to fill my gas tank up at current gas prices. I take one fare from downtown to the suburbs and that one fare alone covers my gas for the night. I also get 35 miles to a gallon. Halloween night I filled up before starting, took 22 fares, made \$175, and only used a half tank.	118 119 120 121 122 123 124
Challenging claim *shift to app user	Tips are voluntary and should be graciously accepted for a job well done. Tips are NOT a requirement on the uber platform, and should not be and expectation on every trip. Drivers who think that they should be tipped every trip are the ones making the rest of us look bad.	125 126 127 128 129
Providing claim	TLDR tip your pizza driver because their system is lopsided to the customers and companys benefit, but dont	130 131

	feel OBLIGATED to tip your uber driver, because this system is lopsided to the DRIVERS benefit.	132 133
Providing data	AnnArborist: I was a pizza driver. I would spit into regulars pizzas because they wrote a check for the exact amount every time. Like 2-4x week	134 135 136
Challenging backing	hairybutt: You don't seem to understand that if UBER didn't offer cheap, consistent pick ups to riders regardless of their pickup/dropoff location then no one would use UBER. We use it because it's RELIABLE, and is much cheaper than a taxi. No one would use that shit if it they only catered to the drivers needs rather than the riders. UBER exists for the customers first, and then the employees. And the employees wouldn't exist without the customers. And there would be no customers if they had to follow your ridiculous rules about catching a ride with them. We like the reliability. It's what makes it possible for the app to exist in the first place. And if you don't give 5 stars to a nice passenger just because they didn't tip you... well you're an entitled dick. Tips shouldn't be expected, especially since a big appeal of the app is that it's so much cheaper than a taxi precisely because a tip isn't expected. Although if we have a good conversation and you seem like a nice guy/gal who could use the extra tip, then yeah I will tip you. But otherwise get over your goddamn high horse and go work a shitty retail job if UBER is so unfair to you. Goddamn some people are stupid	137 138 139 140 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149 150 151 152 153 154 155 156 157
Insulting *shift to app user		
Insulting		
Cynicism and Fatalism; Market logic (Hobbesian Jungle) Challenging the backing	Chasen001: Corporations are not evil. They are amoral which is worse than evil. They exist only to exploit workers for profit	158 159 160
Cynicism and Fatalism; challenging the backing	AnnArborist: Lawful selfish would be their alignment	161 162
Challenging the warrant	UnDaunted345: Stopped reading at "Given:". Ratings on Uber do not affect future matches.	163 164
Challenging the backing Insulting	Hairybutt: You won't give 5 stars to a rider not doing something the UBER app explicitly tells them not to do? Entitled af man. Entitled, as, fuck. People use UBER because it's cheaper than a taxi. If tipping was expected it wouldn't be much cheaper and no one would use it.	165 166 167 168 169 170 171

Insulting	That being said I do tip when I have a really good conversation with the driver and it looks like they could use the extra help. Maybe 1/3rd of the time.	172
	But to expect it all the time and rate lower otherwise?	173
	Entitled, dick, move. And with that kind of an expectation/attitude UBER wouldn't be viable in the first place so...	174
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Joke	MooseWizard: I guess I hit a nerve lol	178
Challenging the backing	SportzFanz: I don't agree with the OP [original poster MooseWizard]. It's all nonsense. If I like you, 5 stars. If I don't, and that takes work, 1 star. I want you to struggle so much getting a ride you go back to cabs.	179
	Uber does NOT "explicitly tell them" to not tip, they say it's not REQUIRED. Of course, no tip is ever REQUIRED. It's for good service and it's not up to Uber.	180
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Challenging the backing		184
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Supporting the claim	Hairybutt: I feel it. 5 stars for a regular satisfactory ride. Tip if you're extra nice or tell a cool story or we otherwise connect.	187
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Challenging the backing	AnnArborist: Service industry workers collect tips to make up for the low pay they receive. Uber is the service industry	190
		191
		192
Challenging the backing	Hairybutt: Retail workers get paid less for more shit. Should I be responsible for their low wages too? Look I give a tip when you're exceptional? But for you to expect it from me so much that you'll rate me low if I don't. Pft. Entitled as shit. Find a better job if you're so hung up about it.	193
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Challenging the data	AnnArborist: They make more than many Uber drivers...	198

TABLE 9
Vignette 4 (excerpt)

<i>Coding</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>Line Number</i>
Logic-inconsistent initial post	Raftgirl [Initial Post]: I hear the CEO of Uber Drives sometimes, but shouldn't he really be doing the undercover boss, and ask questions to the drivers?	1 2 3
Role identity: driver-as-employee	Driving is fun and you aren't going to learn anything except the customers telling you that you that uber is great because it's cheap	4 5 6
Issue: CEO of Uber driving undercover		
Market logic: Hobbesian Jungle (challenge to backing) Cynicism and Fatalism	Woahnelly: Get this straight: Kalanick does not care about drivers. He has no ethics, no conscience and no commitment to justice of any kind: personal, economic, social or environmental.	7 8 9 10 11
You have no power in this logic. Using the logic as practiced by Uber to show they have no power *shift to driver-bot identity	Drivers are little more than dots on a map and there is a never-ending supply of them. He doesn't really care about riders, either. His goal is to build up his business at any cost, which also means ultimately eliminating drivers altogether. "Undercover bosses" (as seen on TV) are those who are presumed, for TV purposes, to actually give a sh*t about their employees. And remember, drivers are not employees.	12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19
Verbal jousting: Corporation logic Challenge to backing *shift to driver-as-employee identity	Michaelscott2016: [in response to Woahnelly] : Wake up - you are an exploited employee with no benefits.	20 21 22
Verbal jousting: Market logic -app user (American Dream) *shift to app user identity	Internetshmineternet: Uber is a dispatch service for contractors. Nothing more. It's super simple, switch to a different dispatcher if you are unhappy with their terms.	23 24 25 26
Verbal jousting: Corporation logic	Michaelscott2016: If that were true then we couldn't be fired for a 4.5 rating. If that were true we couldn't be fired for not accepting a certain amount of calls. If that were true then we couldn't	27 28 29 30 31

Challenge to backing	be fired for being involved in an accident. Obviously Uber is acting as more than just a simple "dispatch service"	32 33
Verbal jousting: Market logic (American Dream) Challenge to backing	Internetshmineternet: You're not fired, to be fired you'd have to be hired. You are no longer awarded contracts. It's up to Uber's discretion who they award their contracts to. This is what you signed up for, read the agreements.	34 35 36 37 38 39
Verbal jousting: Corporation logic Challenge to backing	Michaelscott2016: "You're not fired, to be fired you'd have to be hired." TIL[Today I learned] - you are not an employment lawyer. :) I also learned that you have no real understanding of American labor history and how that worked out. I really don't fault you for that - it's not something you're going to see discussed on Fox News. Look if that's what helps you sleep at night then great for you. In the meantime, American workers that work for Uber are out there continuing to demand their employment rights. You are still going to benefit from that even if you do not want to work with them in doing so.	40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52
Verbal jousting: Market logic (American Dream) Challenge to backing	Joseph_P_Brenner: Then quit. Nobody is forcing you to work for Uber. When you are free to choose, there is no exploitation. Failing to understand that you are responsible for your choices--and thereby your actions and consequences--is entitlement mentality.	53 54 55 56 57 58
Verbal jousting: Corporation logic Insulting Challenge to backing	Michaelscott2016: If American workers had that kind of attitude then we'd all be working 70 hour weeks and so would our children. That's really not a traditional American attitude. I think it's better to fight for the rights and wages due you for your honest work. P.S. Ayn Rand was a tw*t	59 60 61 62 63 64
Verbal jousting: Market logic (American Dream)	Joseph_P_Brenner: That doesn't follow from the principle. Nothing about the principle precludes the choice to persuade others for change. The cause of your scenario is not the principle but that of government interference in the economy. Don't criticize something you don't understand (and no, imitation is not understanding).	65 66 67 68 69 70 71
Verbal jousting: Market logic (Hobbesian)	Furthestline [in response to Woahnelly] : how is this really any different to any job? we're all just resources in the end of the day - unless you're in senior management/executive positions.	72 73 74 75

<p>Jungle); Corporation logic Cynicism & Fatalism – no power in this scenario</p>	<p>yes some companies are better at disguising it, and as a result treat their employees better, but that's all you really are at the end of the day.</p>	<p>76 77 78 79</p>
<p>Verbal jousting: Corporation logic; Cynicism & Fatalism– no power in this scenario</p>	<p>RiddleMeThis: True. But some employees have real value and are not easily replaced. Some even have a stake in the success of a business and are recognized and rewarded for their efforts, receive good compensation, benefits, and other forms of security. Not many, but some. I've never been a farm laborer or a factory worker, but Uber drivers are more plentiful and have little value.</p>	<p>80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88</p>

For example, Vignette 1 (Table 6) has a market logic consistent initial post with the role identity of an app user. The post is market logic consistent because by asking NYC drivers if they agree with Uber's claim that demand was up 30 percent since prices (or rates) were cut, it assumes self-interest seeking on the part of Uber. The role identity was assigned as an app user because the driver is depicted as external customer, not as a driver-bot, a driver-partner, or as a driver-as-employee. An Uber driver responded with cynicism and fatalism (ln 4-15):

dizzyllama: LOL. Uber lies, as a matter of course. Why would anyone believe their bullshit numbers? The company is just trying to justify its race to the bottom.

Your value as a driver to Uber is the difference between the lowest fee at which you are willing to drive and the highest fare the customers are willing to pay.

Uber is experimenting with different rates and fees all over the US right now, to determine what its value is, and no one at Uber gives a shit what that means you make—or if it will support driving a car or net you any profit.

This is reality. Get used to it.

By calling Uber a liar, the driver is cynical about their “bullshit numbers” as justification for its “race to the bottom.” The market logic was invoked, but it was not the American dream form of the market logic. Instead, it was the Hobbesian Jungle form – their value is only in cold calculations. With dizzyllama stating that Uber was experimenting upon them, drivers were no longer depicted as an app user, but became an element of technology: a driver-bot. Finally, it ended with a fatalistic affirmation of the backing, or the taken-for-granted rules of the Hobbesian Jungle version of the market logic: “This is reality. Get used to it.” Together, this leaves the worker without a positive identity and firmly within the Hobbesian Jungle form of the market logic. The rest of the posts in the thread are coded as cynicism and fatalism.

Vignette 2 (Table 7) begins with an initial post that is a market logic inconsistent post, because it questions the existing way of doing things. The original poster also assumed an obligation and a trust between Uber, its drivers, and its customers which does not fit with this

instantiation of the market logic. Its role-identity was driver-partner, because it depicted drivers as a contracted party with Uber. The initial post was also a challenge to the backing because by stating they have “reason to believe Uber broke its trust with drivers and riders on NYE, taking advantage of both parties to its own benefit” (ln 1-3), it questioned the purity of the market as created by Uber and implied that it was manipulated. Other respondents first challenged the data (i.e., ln 4-20), providing their own accounts of surge pricing and timings for New Year’s Eve.

Cynicism and fatalism were rife in this thread:

PCLOADING: If you have trust for anything Uber tells you, that's the real problem. Once you start being skeptical of anything they tell you, driving for them gets easier. Just assume that they are always lying and it's really refreshing when they finally tell the truth. (ln 25-29)

Harshwords: But how would you know it's the truth? (ln 30)

PCLOADING: When the money hits your account. Up until that point, assume it's all a lie. (ln 31-32)

Badlonny: Preach. (ln 33)

SpeedySnake: lol that won't stop them from taking advantage of the driver (ln 34-35)

McRibbet: Uber doesn't give a shit about drivers or passengers....they're like a casino - it's volume only... (ln 36-37)

PCLOADING was “skeptical” (ln 27) of Uber and encouraged others to feel similarly distrustful of “anything Uber tells you” (ln 27). This blanket skepticism and distrustfulness are evidence of cynicism. By saying that Uber is “always lying” (ln 28), it also is evidence of fatalism in that drivers cannot expect anything different. In other words, a driver can only expect the company to be selfish and thus, they can only anticipate lies and poor treatment. With McRibbet saying that Uber “doesn’t give a shit about drivers or passenger” because “they’re like a casino-it’s volume only,” the identity is dehumanized and shifted into the driver-bot role identity.

Vignette 3 (Table 8) also begins with a market logic inconsistent initial post, but with the role identity of a driver-bot. The initial post is market logic inconsistent because it questions the existing way of doing things by proposing a new ratings system. The role identity is the driver-bot role identity because it is dealing with the rating system which is part of the experience of being a driver-bot (Chapter 3). Multiple respondents challenged the claim that drivers should adopt the proposed general rating practices for riders in their post (i.e., ln 79-80).

There are multiple shifts in identity throughout the thread. The first shift in identity occurred in the initial post when MooseWizard states that these ratings are used to help other drivers (ln 76-78): by referencing other drivers as peers, this is shifting into a driver-partner identity. The second shift in identity occurs when hairybutt says tips should not be expected, since the appeal of the app is that it is much cheaper than a taxi (ln 50-52). This shifts into an app user role identity, as it presents the organization as an app that one voluntarily engages with.

Cynicism and fatalism occur in Vignette 3 (Table 8) when initial poster MooseWizard's statement of Uber as evil is challenged:

Chasen001: Corporations are not evil. They are amoral which is worse than evil.
They exist only to exploit workers for profit (ln 158-160)

AnnArborist: Lawful selfish would be their alignment (ln 161)

This cynicism and fatalism warp the market logic into the Hobbesian Jungle market logic, where workers like them only exist to be exploited and where such exploitation is legal and valued.

Vignette 4 (Table 9) has a market logic inconsistent initial post because it assumes a corporation logic with an "undercover boss" (ln 3). Accordingly, it also has the role identity of

driver-as-employee. Verbal jousting occurs in the thread (ln 20-88), as well as challenges to the backing.

There also are multiple shifts in identity to multiple identities. Woahnelly writes:

Woahnelly: Get this straight: Kalanick does not care about drivers. He has no ethics, no conscience and no commitment to justice of any kind: personal, economic, social or environmental. (ln 7-10)

Drivers are little more than dots on a map and there is a never-ending supply of them. He doesn't really care about riders, either. His goal is to build up his business at any cost, which also means ultimately eliminating drivers altogether. "Undercover bosses" (as seen on TV) are those who are presumed, for TV purposes, to actually give a sh*t about their employees. And remember, drivers are not employees. (ln 12-19)

Woahnelly has put forth a pessimistic and distrustful view of then CEO Travis Kalanick, expressing cynicism and fatalism. Drivers are “not employees” (ln 19), they are “dots on a map” (ln 12) with an endless “supply” (ln 13). This shifts the identity to a driver-bot identity, atomized elements of technology. Market logic also is invoked when drivers are depicted as existing in a “never-ending supply,” yet the cynicism and fatalism has warped it into the Hobbesian Jungle – where businesses are built up at “any cost” (ln 14-15). All that the drivers were left with was the Hobbesian Jungle market logic of an Uber driver being similar to “any job.” As Furthestline wrote in Vignette 4, “how is this really any different to any job? we're all just resources in the end of the day” (ln 72-74).

In sum, drivers were negotiating among the driver-bot, app user, driver-partner, and employee roles. In trying to form a positive self, they reached into the cultural discourse – bringing in positive adjacent identities such as masculinity and various professional identities with specialized knowledge, and the American dream version of the market logic – to affirm a positive self for themselves in an uncertain identity environment. While drivers showed a marked preference for higher status role identities (driver-partner and app user) that were consistent with

this variant of the market logic, it was hard to sustain such rosy pictures of the ride-hail driver occupational role identity given the drivers' experience of the job. Within their interactions, cynicism and fatalism warped the market logic from one based in the American dream to one based in the Hobbesian jungle – where competition makes life “nasty, brutish, and short” (Hobbes, 1651). Next, I will discuss how my findings contribute to the identity work literature by outlining how occupational identities come to be defined in new institutional contexts through interactional negotiations, with negotiators drawing on competing logics and using supplemental higher status identities (manhood) to augment their arguments. My findings also contribute to an understanding of the implications of the algorithm-controlled work in the on-demand economy for workers' identities, creating increasing incivility, cynicism, and fatalism among workers.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

In this dissertation, I have investigated an online forum of Uber drivers, their identities, and their collective identity work in the face of algorithmic management. On-demand workers under algorithmic management face a regime of control that can be more “encompassing, instantaneous, interactive, opaque, and disintermediating” than the historical regimes of technical and bureaucratic control (Kellogg et al., 2020). This reshapes both their efforts to understand “Who am I?” and by implication “how should I act?”

I have found that faced with an opaque and legally distant organization (Uber), ride-hail drivers lack the traditional organizational socialization and identification. ShareSpot, an online forum, serves as a means to work out who they are, as they need to understand themselves based on a new institutional arrangement. Workers come together online to find meaning, belongingness, and answers for how to act – which has implications for “who am I?”. Through organizational discourse, Uber frames their identity as one of disconnection: app users, driver-bots, and driver-partners. Interacting in the online forum, ride-hail workers find a community that helps each other and affirms identities, but also negotiates understandings of identities, some of which are threatening. In response to identity threats, community members’ engagement is rife with conflict and anger. As part of a way to claim a positive identity, drivers respond with identity work involving adjacent higher-status identities: they claim specialized knowledge through helping and they express masculinity through dramaturgical manhood acts (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Cynicism and fatalism then occur because there is no agreement on which identity applies while the backing is being questioned, making a positive identity elusive.

Algorithmic Management and Algorithmic Organizing

My first contribution relates to the nascent empirical understanding of workers under algorithmic management and algorithmic organizing. Algorithmically managed on-demand economy workers are kept at arms-length, outside of the boundaries of the organization as independent contractors. My dissertation shows variation in experiences of both algorithmic management and identity work across new occupations emerging as a result of digitalization. As seen in my study, ride-hail drivers have a different scope for autonomy than other on-demand economy workers that have been studied. For instance, unlike ride-hail drivers, eBay sellers have scope for resistance and subversion of the algorithm, allowing some agency in their dealings with customers when they circumvent the system (Curchod et al., 2019). eBay's algorithmic control system allows sellers to negotiate the price for goods with buyers directly, which Uber's algorithmic control system does not allow. In addition, creative knowledge workers may lack professional and organizational ties like ride-hail drivers, but they have other higher-status cultural resources to draw upon to construct their identity. Also, unlike ride-hail drivers, workers like writers, artists, consultants, and film producers have a great deal of agency in their everyday work and significant freedom in defining success and their identities (Petriglieri et al., 2019).

Faced with this lack of autonomy and status resources, ride-hail workers have turned to online forums for connection and belonging, and there they work to negotiate and define a positive occupational role identity for themselves. While online forums have been hailed by scholars as a space with potential for worker empowerment and knowledge sharing (Kellogg et al., 2020), this study shows both the "light" and the "dark" side of online community spaces. On the positive side, participating in the forum gives workers access to meaningful, specialized knowledge from experienced workers. This knowledge sharing also allows workers to engage in

identity work that affirms a positive identity: helping brings status and allows helpers to demonstrate specialized knowledge. In this way, participating on the forum acts as an identity affirmation.

ShareSpot also takes on the traditional role of formal and informal socialization when workers are “exiled” (Hafermalz, 2020) from the boundaries of the organization. Organizational socialization (Cable, Gino & Staats, 2013; Moisander, Grob & Eraranta, 2017; Pratt, 2000) can create meaning even for outsourced, contingent, and precarious workers. Participating on ShareSpot, thus, acted to augment identity for the socializers and the socialized workers.

On the negative side, my dissertation gives greater insight into the identity alienation that is experienced when working with algorithms (Curchod et al., 2014). While drivers work to affirm the positive identities of driver-partners and app users as advanced by Uber, they face identity threats on the forum. These identity threats occur when faced with challenges of the logic underpinning the driver role identity, and when others deny the autonomy, status, and expertise associated with the driver-partner and app user roles by pointing to regular reminders in their day-to-day work life that they have little autonomy, status, or expertise. They lack autonomy, status, or expertise because they are at the mercy of Uber who could (and regularly did) change the terms of their work at will with no input from them. Cynicism and fatalism could be seen as symptoms of identity alienation (Curchod et al., 2014), resulting from the frustration of the positive identities most drivers sought to affirm and finding themselves in more of a Hobbesian Jungle than an American dream.

Identity

Instead of identities in the on-demand economy being fragile internal projects (Petriglieri et al., 2019), I found that identities were co-constructed through interactions using adjacent

identities, involving masculinity and specialized knowledge from other experiences in their lives. Being a man and having specialized knowledge added status, expertise and autonomy to their personal identities, augmenting the limited status, autonomy and expertise associated with the ride-hail driver role.

My dissertation is also part of the current scholarly effort to study multiple identities. Recent research has advanced the concept of multiple identities, rather than looking at singular or even dual identities. This scholarship (Ramarajan, 2014; Ramarajan & Reid, 2013) pushes away from the traditional understanding of hierarchy of identities, organized by either salience and strength of feeling (Stryker & Burke, 2000) or by contextual fit (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Instead, multiples identities exist in an intrapersonal identity network (Ramarajan, 2014). Yet, this stream of research presumes that identities are all well established and well understood amongst members of the same identity group. I show in my dissertation that in a nascent field, the meanings for such identities are not held universally by all members and the meaning of the occupational identity itself is “up for grabs.”

Research on the work-family interface has established that there are spillover effects from one domain to another (Crouter, 1984; Staines, 1980) and more recent work has established the influence of “non-work” identities on occupational identities (Ramarajan & Reid, 2013). Gender identities have also been closely associated with occupational identities, though this connection has not always been apparent (Ashcraft, 2013). Yet, primarily this stream of research has been concerned with established occupational identities and how gendered identities (i.e., woman, mother) can be reconciled with them. Instead, I look at a new occupation whose identity is not yet settled (Ashcraft, 2005). I begin with looking at how Uber’s discourse in the nascent field created multiple possible meanings of the role identity, each with their own identity implications.

Gender was an adjacent identity, with dramaturgical manhood acts conducted to add status and autonomy to the identity of the posting drivers. The predominance of these manhood acts in posts by drivers created positive spillovers onto the occupational role identity itself. Drivers were “manly” in the sense of “being their own man”, being aggressive and self-reliant, resonating with aspects that were viewed positively within the market logic.

In my dissertation, I investigate the “working out” of a nascent occupational role identity when the understandings of that role identity are opaque, emerging, and “up for grabs.”(Ashcraft, 2013). Identity work involved activating other adjacent identities (masculinity, specialized knowledge) in order to build up the status and autonomy of the occupational role identity. In doing so, I extend work on identity enhancement (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Rothbard, 2001) to show how collectives mobilize adjacent identities in interaction. The spillover effects observed in my dissertation also are more complex than identity conflict (Kreiner, Hollensbe, & Sheep, 2006) or enhancement (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Rothbard, 2001). While the identity enhancement and conflict literatures are concerned with how a singular person manages multiple identities that intersect, my findings relate to how collectives negotiate between meanings of an identity in a nascent field to create an occupational role identity that benefits from positive spillovers from other identities.

Working out a new occupational identity is a collective and institutional project, not just an individual one as previously conceptualized (Murphy & Kreiner, 2020). Despite Uber trying to define the identities, role players are also working it out on their own and with each other. Uber’s framing heavily influences the logic because drivers are recruited in acceptance of their framing, but the identity remains to be worked out in nascent fields.

I also contribute to the identity literature by exploring identity work under algorithmic management. Prior to this study, it was unclear how algorithmic management affects workers' identities (Kellogg et al., 2020: 388). Prior work on algorithmic management focus on experiences of control and resistance under algorithmic management (Curchod et al., 2019), yet, identity work can also be the site of organizational efforts to control (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). To study identity work, I investigated the “back stage”(Goffman, 1969) and “hidden transcripts” (Scott, 1985) of work under algorithmic management: an online forum. I found that, even on the back stage, discourse by the organization played a role in identity construction.

Furthermore, literature on gender and the workplace has primarily focused on women. Yet, gender is also accomplished by men through gendered practices. My study introduces the concept of manhood acts to organizational studies and shows how hegemonic masculinity can be an act of identity work in pursuit of a positive collective occupational identity.

Institutional Theory and Logics

My dissertation has implications for the nascent research stream on digitally-enabled institutional arrangements. Digitally-enabled institutional arrangements are defined as digital technologies intertwined with institutionally legitimate practices, values, and actor constellations (Gegenhuber et al., 2020). My dissertation shows that digital technologies that facilitate markets in the emerging field of the on-demand economy also impact how workers understand themselves and how they understand their place in the world.

My dissertation also has implications for the study of institutional logics, particularly with respect to meanings. The term meaning denotes those aspects of institutions that are ideational (e.g., culture, myth, discourse) and at times even symbolic, to distinguish them from

the material aspects of institutions, like structures and practices (Zilber, 2017a). Historically, logics scholarship has rigorously traced the evolution of logics over time with a focus on structures and practices (Greenwood et al., 2011; Ocasio, Thornton, & Lounsbury, 2017; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008; Thornton et al., 2012; Zilber, 2013).

The study of meaning, however, has for the most part, has been relegated to the background and “context” (Zilber, 2017a, 2013). The meaning and content of institutional logics are usually derived on the basis of authors’ knowledge of an empirical setting (e.g., Goodrick & Reay, 2010; Pahnke, Katila, & Eisenhardt, 2015). For example, Zilber’s (2002) study of a rape crisis center shows that meanings change, but not necessarily how. Also, in Wright and Zammuto (2013), two logics (“Cricket-as-art” and “Cricket-as-business”) were identified and analyzed in an early stage of data analysis, but the substantive empirical analysis did not focus on explicating the meanings of these logic and instead focused on the various dynamics that ensue over time (Zilber, 2017a). Within institutional theory, limited studies do attend to the interactions that lead to meaning construction, such as the framing and field frames research which are closely associated with logics (e.g., Hoffman, 1999; Maguire & Hardy, 2009; Zietsma & Lawrence, 2010). However, scholars still lack an understanding of the day-to-day micro-dynamics of actors employing varying logics (c.f., McPherson & Sauder, 2013; Toubiana & Zietsma, 2016). Few empirical studies within this approach have explored meanings as “dynamic and contested social phenomena” with a concern for how the meanings of logics are articulated, debated, censored, erased, or rewritten (Zilber, 2013).

The market logic has risen to prominence in many societies over the last four decades (Davis, 2009; Logue et al., 2016), helped in part by the American dream understanding of it, which holds that anyone can pull themselves up by their bootstraps, achieving success through

their own merits, and that innovative entrepreneurs and holders of capital can create vast wealth through creating new arrangements that the market values. What the on-demand economy shows is another set of subject positions within the market logic. What is the American dream for the lucky few is the Hobbesian Jungle for the unlucky many – those who despite their efforts, will not find success because they are competing mercilessly with hordes of others, all with the wrong set of (too-common) resources. As inequality has been increasing in the U.S. (Horowitz, Igielnik, & Kochhar, 2020) and elsewhere (UN News, 2020), the differences between these two subject positions in the market logic is now starker, and the bootstraps are too frayed and broken to enable moves from one to the other.

Collective Action

Although I must be careful about theorizing from non-findings, another interesting contribution could be the failure to foment rebellion in this site. Like physical spaces (Evans & Boyte, 1986; Polletta, 1999; Scott, 1985), online communities could act as free spaces and be a site for collective action and platform organizing (Curchod et al., 2019). Online spaces were speculated to be particularly important for collective action since workers under algorithmic management do not have the same physical “shop floor” connections (Cutolo & Kenney, 2020; Karanović et al., 2020; Kellogg et al., 2020). For example, Curchod and colleagues (2019) found that the eBay sellers were able to use the corporate-sponsored forum to foment collective action against eBay by creating formal associations of sellers dissatisfied with automatic sanctions. Their collective actions, however, were short-lived; the associations failed to mobilize, only lasting a few months.

I found that efforts at collective action in the driver forum free space were met with cynicism and fatalism. Drivers had bought into the market logic, and were unable to act against

it, even when it consigned them to a Hobbesian Jungle-like existence. This may be because if they believed in the market for the American dream, they had to accept the Hobbesian Jungle to be internally consistent. Attacking others and cynicism and fatalism were the result. Despite believing that they should pull themselves up by their bootstraps, they found again and again that there were no bootstraps available to them within the driver occupational role identity.

Implications for Society and Policy

My dissertation suggests that algorithmic management has unforeseen implications for society. Those who espouse traditional forms of masculinity face challenges in this new economy (Nixon, 2009). If frustrated men are engaged in algorithmically managed work, performing hypermasculinity is one means by which they can augment their role identity with some status and autonomy. Traditionally masculine work like factory work and resource extraction (such as mining, forestry, oil rigs, etc.) (Ely & Meyerson, 2006, 2010) are disappearing in developed economies. As these jobs are replaced by service jobs and poorly paid and precarious work, the need to assert a positive identity can lead some to call on any adjacent valued identity. When there is little to call on except maleness, perhaps supplemented by whiteness, we could expect to see hypermasculinity with expressions of incivility to others at best, and misogyny and racism at worst. This struggle for identity likely underlies the rise of groups like the “Proud Boys” (MacFarquhar, Feuer, Baker, & Frenkel, 2020), whose members seem to prize the status of their gender and race.

My dissertation also has possible repercussions for policy and policymakers. For example, legal and regulatory challenges (e.g., AB5 in 2019 and Proposition 22 in 2020 in California) over worker classification impact not just material conditions (i.e., pay) for workers and the business models for on-demand companies, but they may also impact feelings of

belongingness, meaning, and identification. What if there were a new type of legal designation for ride-hail workers, the dependent contractor (Weber, 2015)? This designation would be in-between employee and independent contractor and would be designed to more accurately reflect the experience of an on-demand worker. How would on-demand workers perceive the status of a dependent contractor? How would this new legal designation impact belongingness, meaning, and identification?

My dissertation also touches upon the phenomenon of Uberization, or the increasing reliance on digital communication technologies for recruiting labor (Davis & Sinha, 2020). Distance and disconnection also have already been identified as a factor in human exploitation (Crane, 2013; Kim & Davis, 2016). Furthermore, the “incursion of markets into more domains of life can be a strong force for creating more inequality, and this is particularly true when it comes to labor markets” (Davis & Sinha, 2020: 27). What other jobs will be disrupted through Uberization? For instance, delivery services have already been disrupted. Will similar experiences of the market as a Hobbesian Jungle persist?

My research also suggests the value to societies of finding other ways to organize ride-hailing work beyond a corporate-run, algorithmically managed marketplace. One suggestion could be to look to Europe for cooperatively owned sharing economy organizations, such as tool libraries (Reischauer & Mair, 2018). There are also two U.S.-based examples of innovative on-demand organizations: the non-profit ride-hailing organization RideAustin (<http://www.rideaustin.com/>) and the personal shopping organization Dumpling (<https://dumpling.us/>). RideAustin was founded after Lyft and Uber left Austin because local regulations passed that both companies were unwilling to follow. One could imagine cities having local non-profit ride-hailing infrastructures, combining ride-hailing and municipal

transportation (i.e., buses, subways, trains) together. A competitor to on-demand grocery delivery organization Instacart, Dumpling describes its on-demand workers as small business owners and helps them create their own limited liability corporations (LLCs) (Mascarenhas, 2020).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

My dissertation may not be representative of all ride-hail drivers or on-demand workers more generally. For instance, part-time workers may not care enough to be part of ShareSpot and my study may overrepresent full-time ride-hail drivers. While these concerns are not insignificant, previous studies have demonstrated that online communities are a valuable source of insights into workers' experiences (Karanović et al., 2020; Vaast & Levina, 2015). Furthermore, fora are an important source of information about work related tasks (Curchod et al., 2019), thus most platform workers may resort to using such fora, regardless of the amount of time they spend working or the nature of their evaluation of the organization.

This study is also focused on a U.S. context. Ride-hailing as an institution is different across national boundaries (Davis & Sinha, 2020). Future research may want to compare how occupational identities differ in other national contexts, such as countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa. Online communities also may play a different role in identification processes in these contexts because ride-hail companies in Asia and Africa also “sponsor online and offline driver communities that focus on creating norms for good service and highlight key incentives” (Davis & Sinha, 2020: 25). On-demand organizations in non-U.S. contexts may socialize and train their workers in ways that impact the development of a positive occupational identity.

Another limitation is that I did not interview ride-hail drivers. Instead, I used two crucial, yet underutilized, methods to study identity: online “participant observation” and “reading texts” (Alvesson et al., 2008). There is a preponderance of interview studies based on identities, including a growing number on ride-hail drivers (Peticca-Harris, DeGama, & Ravishankar, 2020; Phung et al., 2020). Future research could triangulate between interview data, online “participant observation” data, and texts.

What about domestic work? Another gendered occupation, domestic work is increasingly managed algorithmically through companies like Handy (<https://www.handy.com/>) and Care.com (<https://www.care.com/>). Without the 500 or so ratings needed to “wash out” negative reviews that ride-hail or delivery drivers average, on-demand domestic workers are even more dependent on customer evaluations and algorithmic management. With domestic work being a predominantly female workforce, how would the identity patterns observed here, i.e. manhood acts, be different? Would there be some other identity protections that women may be socialized to deploy during service work (Hochschild, 2003), that men are not socialized to be able to do (Nixon, 2009)?

Conclusion

To conclude, on-demand economy activity and algorithmic management is increasingly impacting work and consumption patterns. Managed by a “black box” algorithm, ride-hail drivers lack the traditional organizational socialization and identification. As part of a way to claim a positive identity, drivers respond with identity work involving adjacent high-status identities: they claim specialized knowledge and they express masculinity through dramaturgical manhood acts. With identities shifting while the backing is being questioned, a positive identity

is elusive, settling in cynicism and fatalism within the Hobbesian Jungle meaning of the market logic.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENT

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Lecturer/Assistant Professor in Strategy and Organisation (Beginning March 2021)

EDUCATION

Smeal College of Business, The Pennsylvania State University

2017-May 2021

Ph.D. Candidate in Business Administration (Management & Organizations)

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B.A., History and The Study of Women, Gender, and Sexuality, *magna cum laude*

PUBLICATIONS

Garud, R., Kumaraswamy, A., **Roberts, A. E.**, & Xu, Le. (2020, Early View). Liminal movement by digital platform-based sharing economy ventures: The case of Uber Technologies. *Strategic Management Journal, Special Issue: Strategies for Platform Ecosystems*.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/smj.3148>

Baudot, L., Johnson, J., **Roberts, A. E.**, & Roberts, R.W. (2020). Is corporate tax aggressiveness a reputation threat? Corporate accountability, corporate social responsibility, and corporate tax behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 163, 197–215. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04227-3>

Roberts, A. E. 2020. Identity and the microfoundations of institutions. In Patrick Haack, Jost Sieweke, and Lauri Wessel (Eds.), *Microfoundations of Institutions (Research in the Sociology of Organizations)*. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Zietsma, C, Voronov, M., Toubiana, M., & **Roberts, A. E.** 2019. *Emotions in Organization Theory*. Cambridge Elements on Organization Theory Book Series, Eds: Nelson Phillips, Royston Greenwood. Cambridge University Press [Book].

Roberts, A. E. & Zietsma, C. 2018. Working for an app: Organizational boundaries, roles and meaning of work in the "on-demand" economy. In Leopold Ringel, Petra Hiller, & Charlene Zietsma (Eds.), *Toward Permeable Boundaries of Organizations? (Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Volume 57)*. Emerald Publishing Limited: 195 – 225.

Roberts, A. E. & Karambayya, R. 2016. Women in management in Canada. In A. Richardson, & R. J. Burke (Eds.), *Women in management worldwide: Signs of progress*, 3rd ed. Surrey, UK: Gower.

HONORS AND GRANTS

- Jeanne and Charles Rider Graduate Fellowship, Smeal College of Business (\$2,200), 2019-2020, 2020-2021
- Farrell Center for Corporate Innovation and Entrepreneurship Research Grant (\$10,000), Smeal College of Business, 2019-2020
- M&O Summer 2019 Research Funding, The Pennsylvania State University
- M&O Summer 2018 Research Funding, The Pennsylvania State University
- ABCD "Above and Beyond the Call of Duty" Reviewer Award Winner, Organization and Management Theory (OMT) Division Annual Meeting, Academy of Management, 2016