Shaming, Striving and Partying: Normative Control in Platform Work

Short Paper

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Abstract

Platform work is becoming a prevalent type of work in modern labour markets. Initial studies reveal that platforms produce desired behaviour, despite a lack of direct control. This suggests normative control, through the internalization and acting in accordance with organizational norms. This work-in-progress, an on-going study of platform resellers, contributes an initial understanding of normative control in such platform work. The findings, shown through vignettes, illustrate distinct types of normative control observed in platform reselling; shaming, a type of concertive control; striving, a form of identity regulation and partying, or normative control by distraction. These findings highlight how normative control in platform work leverages the materiality of digital media, introducing new visibilities, and engages instant feedback structures, increasingly blurring the distinction between control and non-control, underscoring the role digital media play in the production of normative control.

Keywords: Platform work, Digital work, Normative control; Gig work; Organizational control

Introduction

At the backdrop of diminishing stable and long-term employment, modern labour markets more heavily feature non-standard employment and contingent work arrangements (Kalleberg, 2000; Cappelli & Keller, 2013). One form of contingent employment which is rapidly rising is platform mediated work (Spreitzer, et al., 2017). Initial research of so-called 'gig-work' highlighted its precarious nature and diminished rights for workers (Schor, 2016). However, with increasingly nuanced research, a more holistic view has developed, and thus the terminology of platform mediated work provides an umbrella term for work which takes place through a platform application (Barley et al, 2017). Studies of such work have uncovered the importance of online forums as sites of practice formation (Möhlmann & Zalmanson, 2017), and for workers to create understanding of their work (Roberts & Zietsma, 2018). Studies have also highlighted the dualities of empowerment and marginalization that workers contend with (Deng, et al., 2016), and the conflation this implies for their relationship to the platform (Roberts & Zietsma, 2018). This paper, an ethnographic study investigating platform mediated reselling, e.g. the selling goods through platforms, joins this burgeoning group of scholars researching platform mediated work. While reselling has clear differences to service-oriented platform mediated work, such as Uber TaskRabbit and Airbnb, there are also many similarities including algorithmic management and the import of maintaining favourable reputation scores.

Based on an inductive finding from the initial data analysis, this paper specifically contributes an understanding of the nature of normative control in these spaces. Normative control produces different dynamics to direct, output or bureaucratic controls (Rennstam, 2017). While direct control functions through explicated rules, normative control is fluid and ephemeral operating through ideas about what one ought to do (Rennstam, 2017). Normative control is thus largely unobtrusive and internalized, operating on

governance rather than compliance (ibid). Understanding the nature of such control in platform work presents a timely and relevant area of study given a number of puzzles in our theoretical understanding of this terrain. For instance, initial studies suggest that platforms successfully produce the 'appropriate individual', despite a lack of direct control, or contact between participants and management (Wood, forthcoming). Studies further highlight the often-contradictory feelings workers have in their personal autonomy (Roberts & Zietsma, 2018). Normative control provides partial explanation to both of these dilemmas, functioning through the internalization and acting in accordance with organizational values and norms (Barley & Kunda, 1992). Based on these observations this research, presented here as work-in-progress, investigates: ***How does normative control unfold in platform work?***

This research is focused on an understudied group of platform mediated workers, platform resellers, who sell new and used clothing via a reselling app Poshmark. It is based on a digital ethnographic method, focusing on multiple research sites. Due to the nascent state of this research, the findings are displayed through three vignettes, each illustrating types of normative control observed in platform reselling; *shaming*, a type of *concertive control*; *striving*, a form of *identity regulation* and *partying*, or normative control by *distraction*. These findings provide tentative understanding of how normative control in platform work (1) introduces new dynamics of visibility due to the materiality of digital technology and (2) engages instant feedback and reward structures to increasingly blur the distinctions between control and non-control, or labour and play (Kücklich, 2005). The implications of these new control dynamics have drastically difference consequences for workers, allowing them to engage in local acts of resistance, or potentially dissuading them from doing so. Given that platform work is at present largely unregulated, understanding these dynamics seems vital to enabling decent working conditions in the future (Ens, et al., 2018).

Literature Review

Normative Control in Organizations

Normative control is an umbrella term for control that seeks organizational efficiency through normative communities where members espouse organizational values (Ouchi, 1980; Barley & Kunda, 1992). Achieving such control is likened to culture building, relying on the recruitment of like-minded individuals and socialization (Etzioni, 1961). Normative control is often prescribed as appropriate in situations where neither formal monitoring is feasible, outputs clear and measurable, nor are tasks particularly definable for bureaucratic or technical control (Rennstam, 2017).

Rennstam (2017) outlines three types of normative control: concertive control, identity regulation and distraction, which are used as a conceptual foundation for this study. Concertive control describes the mutual enforcing of norms and values through colleagues (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985). Colleagues or teammates become collaborators in a value-driven mission, disciplining themselves and others through self-regulation (Coombs, Knights, & Willmott, 1992). As norms became persistent, they can transform into formal 'guidelines' and rules that 'must' be followed, becoming more often more powerful than the bureaucratic system they replace (Barker, 1993). Identity regulation, on the other hand, is a managerial practice of controlling the process by which organizational members "develop self-images and work orientations that are deemed congruent with managerially defined objectives" (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002, p. 1). This occurs at the nexus of identity of self, processes of identity work and regulative forces (ibid). Self-reporting of performance is an example of identity-regulation, whereby employees confront an explicated version of self, and are forced to reckon with its compatibility with organizational values (Flyverbom, et al., 2015). Lastly, normative control as distraction involves individuals who are either intentionally or unintentionally diverted from their controlled state through rewards and personal enticements (Rennstam, 2017). Such a tactic is identified in Fleming and Sturdy's (2011) study, where organizational ideals of 'be yourself' created a sense of freedom that obscured obtrusive control processes that were simultaneously in place. This also allowed for control tactics to target the 'whole person', as now these attributes were on display in the organization realm (ibid). Similarly, the privilege to use workplace mobile phones anytime/anywhere can engender both feelings of extreme productive and constraint in autonomy (Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2013). Woven in these cases are subtle tactics of control which is rebranded as novel, or for the benefit of employees' self-interest. The identified normative control types are summarized in table 1.

	Definition	References
Concertive control	Negotiated consensus of behaviour based on shared values	(Barker, 1993) (Tompkins & Cheney, 1985)
Identity regulation	Management of self-image and work which is congruent with managerial objectives	(Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) (Flyverbom, et al., 2015)
Distraction	Diversion from control through rewards and personal enticements	(Fleming & Sturdy, 2011) (Mazmanian, Orlikowski, & Yates, 2013)

Table 1. Normative Control

Normative Control in Platform Work

In this study platform reselling is included under the umbrella of platform work, e.g. work which takes place through a platform application (Barley et al, 2017; Spreitzer, et al., 2017). Platform reselling involves the reselling of goods, and includes platforms like eBay and Poshmark as well as local marketplaces such as Facebook Marketplace and Craigslist. While platform reselling has some clear differences to service-oriented platforms such as Uber and TaskRabbit, there are many similarities, justifying its inclusion within this category of work. For instance, while Uber drivers complete rides (gigs) for which they are subject to the platform's pricing strategy (Möhlmann & Zalmanson, 2017), resellers instead complete sales (transactions), choosing the price of sale while paying the fees required of the platform provider (Churchod et al., 2019). While there are clear structural differences in the nature of task, prevalent in understanding control are the many similarities. Both resellers and gig workers experience similar ambiguities and control their behaviour as a result of the visibility/invisibility of the algorithms and what behaviour is 'wanted' of them. Similarly, both resellers and gig workers are heavily controlled by their feedback scores and their subsequent reputation score (Churchod et al., 2019; Wood et al., 2018). Thus, to understand normative control, covering a broader range of workers would seem prudent. Based on these observations this section draws on studies across a diverse range of platform mediated work, highlighting the similarities these workers experience in terms of normative control.

Poshmark, as a multi-sided platform, mediates between groups of supply and demand, acting as a middle-men – orchestrating what otherwise could be a difficult search process (Boudreau & Hagiu, 2009). To ensure sustainability platform governance, or control, goes beyond setting correct prices (Parker, et al., 2016). Because management interacts with workers solely through applications, algorithmic management, or decisions which are executed by algorithms, provide the main means of control (Möhlmann & Zalmanson, 2017). However, beyond the direct control of algorithms are forms of normative control, resulting from the uncertainty of when workers will be rewarded or punished (ibid). Such opacity is a purposeful design choice, where feedback for good behaviour is given in an open and quick manner, allowing desired norms to be learned, while feedback that punishes undesirable behaviour obscures cause and effect relationships to prevent future trolling (Parker, et al., 2016). For instance, Uber, has been known to send messages to drivers with helpful tips on how to improve their ratings and rewarding drivers with incentives when they adhere (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016). In this scenario, drivers are not forced into compliance but rather given suggestions of desirable behaviour, under a guise of helping them on their entrepreneurship quest. Such rewarding 'feedback loops', are discussed heavily in the platform literature, as means to create 'self-reinforcing behaviours' (Parker, et al., 2016) however are generally absent from literature on platform mediated work. Feedback loops suggest normative control, as they seek precisely to unobtrusively teach desired behaviour through workers' internalization of norms.

Ranking and review systems, where users are able to rate and provide qualitative comments about transactions, offer further insight into normative control. Those with higher scores are often rewarded with greater visibility, and with increased profits, making such reviews highly valued (Wood, et al., 2018). Gandini (2019) refers to these practices of control as 'techno-normative', arising from a combination of management by their customers (Fuller & Smith, 1991) and the gamification of 'unlocking' one's personal best. The drive to compete could suggest distraction, where workers control themselves 'playing' to achieve

their own personal high score (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011). Furthermore, the visibility of such reviews allows workers to compare against one another, building an image of self through systematic comparison (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2017). The position offered by favourable reviews has been cited as a form of reputational capital, arguably inciting forms of internalized control to gain prominent platform position (Gandini, Pais, & Beraldo, 2016). While positive reviews build capital, negative reviews can be a significant source of anxiety. Specifically, eBay resellers have felt monitored and controlled as a result of their reviews, citing a fear of being removed off as a result of negative feedback from buyers (Churchod et al., 2019). Further complicating the issue is a general opaqueness of how such review scores are calculated and which actions lead to favorable outcomes (Churchod et al., 2019). Similarly, Uber drivers have felt threatened by being 'de-platformed' and sought favorable reviews to mitigate this risk.

In sum, the picture of normative control practices in platforms is far from clear. Instead current research is fragmented, with little indication of how, where and in what configuration such types of normative control are in play. To investigate this important issue this paper now expands on its methodological foundations – an on-going digital ethnographic study.

Methodology

Setting

The empirical material for this research comes from a group of platform resellers who use Poshmark, a mobile commerce app for selling new and used clothing and beauty products. Focusing on one marketplace allows the IT artefact to be brought into focus in terms of its specific properties, including algorithms and governance strategies (Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001). Operating in the US with over 4 million sellers, Poshmark is a social commerce app, aiming to bring 'human interactions and social discovery' into online shopping. Poshmark sellers are primarily women, ranging from full-time to casual resellers. Resellers engage broadly in a number of processes as part of their work. They 'source' merchandise to sell, largely through thrift stores, or through 'retail arbitrage' (hunting for discounted wares at retailers). Resellers also prepare merchandise, cleaning, measuring, photographing and listing on Poshmark before storing in an inventory system. Additionally, being social is a large part of Poshmark, gaining followers, attention and (hopefully) sales. When buyers search for goods, the results are displayed with the 'recently shared' first, and resellers frequently share items from their own and others' closets. Beyond the Poshmark app, resellers participate in an ecosystem of other social medias, including making and/or watching YouTube videos, sharing photos and stories on Instagram, and participating and liking on Facebook. Many resellers have active Instagram accounts, and have a link to their store through it. Similarly, regular groups meet on Facebook to share tips and tricks; speculate different business strategies, brands to sell, and ways to overcome algorithms; and to gripe about other resellers and buyers. Therefore, for platform resellers a range of digital media must be considered as key sites of their work in general, and in this case as explicitly part of the control apparatus.

Methods

Data collection is ongoing and being conducted through a longitudinal digital ethnographic method, drawing on Netnography, (Kozinets, 2015) and digital sociology (Marres, 2017). "Netnography is participant—observational research based in online fieldwork. It uses computer-mediated communications as a source of data to arrive at the ethnographic understanding and representation of a [..] phenomenon" (Kozinets, 2015, p. 60). A digital ethnographic method is similar to traditional ethnographic methods, being immersive and contextual, however puts greater emphasis on the role of the digital technology itself (ibid). Collection began in September 2018 and continues at present through several online sites where resellers meet including: Poshmark, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Reddit. While Poshmark is the central platform to making sales these other social media sites are central to reseller work, as places to discuss sales tactics, build community and thus are included in data collection. Central to digital ethnographic work is following actors and their activity across relevant sites to create understanding of the practices and processes engaged in (Marres, 2017), therefore, much like a traditional ethnographer the various web spaces are viewed as different sites belonging to a phenomenon of interest and interactions are recorded through fieldnotes observing the events. Because of the contemporary nature of online observational data there are limited pre-existing ethical guidelines, creating quandaries related to publicly available content,

and whether it is for the consummation of researchers (Vaast & Urquhart, 2017). To address this challenge a dedicated Instagram profile is used, which states the authors research interest, and provides contact information should users want further information or to block their participation. Furthermore, when joining new Facebook groups, a post is made detailing the research purpose. To date, over 190 fieldnotes have been compiled, amounting to around 1200 pages of notes. Supplementing the participant observation are 13 textual interviews conducted with resellers through messaging functions on social media. Additionally, the author has a Poshmark account where shares, likes and comments are made, and a number of purchases have been made through the application to gain a deeper understanding of the field site. Because of the studies nascent stage, data analysis remains in an exploratory stage and is being coded in line with grounded theory methodology (Strauss, 1987). To date only open coding has been performed on the data, with axial and selective coding planned for completion in autumn of 2019. The vignettes come from the developed open codes, as illusory of the initial findings.

Normative Control in Platform Reselling

The following vignettes offer precursory findings of normative control in platform work. While fictional in nature, they are grounded in data and are representative of conventional reseller work. Each narrative relates to one of the aforementioned types of normative control. Vignettes are used here to unfold the depth of the tentative analysis, affording richness in a work-in-progress format. Through these short stories the reader is invited to explore the complexity of the reselling experience and its associated control dynamics.

Shaming Nonconformity

Debbie crawls around her living room floor, laying a red Free People blouse on her white laminate backdrop, carefully arranging it with a gold necklace and Steve Madden floral print wedge-heels. Standing up again she uses her smartphone to snap a few pictures, both standing on her toes for a wide angle and kneeled down for close-ups up of the boho-style blouse she plans to list later today. She's really excited about the new white backdrop and can't wait to list the photos, after she has gotten through her 'death-pile' of unlisted garments next to her couch. She sighs, while sourcing is entertaining, and listing the things she loves can be fun, the bread and butter items can be somewhat boring to photograph. And she is definitely not looking forward to re-photographing the older items in her closet – those from when she had just started on Poshmark 7 months ago and used mirror selfies taken in her bedroom as her listing photos. She knew that the photos weren't perfect but didn't think they were 'that bad'. That was NOT the response in the Facebook group where someone posted one of her pictures and joked about her "tragic spinster life-love-laugh bedroom, complete with wine". In that moment she felt shame about the clothes she'd neglected to pick up off the floor, and indeed the half empty glass of wine on her nightstand. Moreover, seeing her picture on Facebook as an example of what not to do, with 36 people joking about her, had not been a pleasant experience. "Oh well!", she thinks, at least it was the needed motivation to go out and get a proper backdrop, lighting and start doing styled 'flat-lays' that are so popular on Poshmark. Debbie smiles, "now these are some pictures to proud of", she thinks, "maybe I'll even post a couple on Instagram later!"

This vignette highlights an example of concertive control in the reseller platform ecosystem, where resellers use social media to mutually negotiate shared values and a consensus of acceptable aesthetics. This occurs in part through shaming nonconformity, which happens on reseller groups on Facebook. Resellers post pictures, and descriptions of people's behaviour as a means to engage in a discussion and build agreement about proper and deviant behaviours. Because of the material nature of digital media, acceptable images are reinforced across Poshmark, Instagram, and the like, and many resellers feel compelled to conform to the standard, often sharing tips on backdrops and lighting set-ups. Resellers together develop the norms of what is acceptable and aesthetically pleasing in a visible way through their digital media. These norms are then reinforced, and in some cases renegotiated, in these spaces.

Striving for Ambassador Status

Janet quickly checks the list of things required to be a poshmark ambassador. 5.000 'community shares' (sharing from others closets), and 5.000 self-shares (from ones' own closet) - A resounding check! She has also shared the required quota of 50 'new to the community' poshers. She has 50 active listings in her

closet, and has made 15 sales, while maintaining an average of 4.5 stars. Finally, she has always had an average ship time that is less than 3 days. "Almost there", she thinks, "just need to make my first purchase, and leave my first love note (review) and I become a poshmark ambassador!". Over the past three months Janet has been hustling to achieve this goal. Being an ambassador means that she will serve as a mentor, who 'sets the tone in the community'. Once Janet achieves ambassador status, she can also put it both on her 'meet the posher' profile page and her Instagram account, @sellingwithjan, a mark of quality and of her commitment to reselling. Becoming an ambassador also brings her one step closer to going full-time. Janet is currently working part-time as a secretary but can't wait until her revenue is enough to quit and call herself a full-time 'Posher'. Scrolling through her favourite brands on Poshmark Janet is a bit torn – she doesn't really want to buy something, or necessarily spend the money but also knows that other resellers say that the requirement to purchase is about 'seeing both sides of the coin'. "As if!" Janet thinks, "it's about Poshmark making money!" But she tries not to entertain such negative thoughts, after all Poshmark is allowing her to pursue this career, and that is pretty great. Then again, she thinks, it's taken a lot of work to get here. Completing 10.000 shares isn't peanuts, and neither is negotiating with buyers to satisfy their every whim and keep her high rating.

This vignette highlights how ambassador status could constitute a form of identity regulation, or the management of self-image and work as congruent with organizational objectives. To become an ambassador, resellers much satisfy a number of algorithmic tasks and engage in self-management to satisfy the organizations expectations of what an ideal ambassador is. This includes negotiating with customers to ensure they have high reviews, as well as shipping goods regularly and adding small details like thank-you notes to avoid upsetting buyers. They also must participate in sharing 'posh-love' and generating activity on the platform, driving visibility of both their own and others' goods. Ambassadors often display this title on their social media accounts, and when welcoming new members to the community brandish it as a mark of their expertise. Indeed, part of achieving the status is sharing items of those specifically new to the platform, helping to ensure that new app users have instant activity, or in platform terms positive feedback.

Partying Posh Style

Oh YES! Bethany screams, quickly scrolling through the email on her phone. Her husband glances at her like she is crazy. She tries to explain, "I'm hosting a Posh Party this Saturday! Finally! I've been waiting for months". His judgment doesn't waver. Bethany sighs and tries to clarify, "it's a really big deal to be a host. You never know when they are going to choose you… and you get to personally curate an online party when tons of people are on the app looking for styling suggestions. Plus, it brings you tons of sales!". Bethany can barely contain her excitement. She has been working really hard to get here. She achieved ambassador status last month and has been following the guidelines Poshmark set for hosts, including being in 'good standing' on the app and keeping her closet 'fresh and eye-catching'. She has also been careful not to overshare – because she has heard rumours of others ending up in 'Poshmark jail' when they have been too active and mistaken for a 'bot'. She flips apps to her favourite Poshmark Facebook group, writing a post saying that is hosting her first party with the theme 'Date Night' and is looking for host picks (clothes she can share to the party). She already knows exactly which items from her own closet she wants to share. But more importantly she needs to get the dresses she sourced yesterday listed ASAP. Bethany has read how much exposure hosting a posh party can bring and knows that Poshmark recommends having your own closet stocked prior to hosting. As she toggles out of the Facebook app, she notices 102 notifications on Poshmark. Excited, she opens the app thinking the extra exposure from being announced as the party host must be working its magic. Clicking through she can see that it's people who have shared listings to her closet or have left notes begging for her to feature one of their items. "Ugh", she thinks, "this was supposed to be an exciting opportunity for me but instead everyone just wants me to give them exposure! Dealing with all of this might be more work than I'd bargained for".

Poshmark parties highlight a form of normative control by distraction, or the diversion from control through rewards and personal enticements. Poshers sign up to host Parties and patiently wait to be chosen. During this time, they self-surveil and conform to norms of how their closet should look, and how they should behave, all in the hopes of being picked to host the event. However, given the ambiguities surrounding the algorithm there is uncertainty related to how exactly one should be the ideal individual. Simultaneously, there is status and reward involved in becoming a host, a position that is vied for and celebrated when achieved. However, behind the joy of being picked to host is a large amount of digital work spent managing messages and communication with other resellers and conforming to what is expected as

part of the community. This is exacerbated by the nature of digital technology, the visibility of party hosts and the vying for attention in the reseller work. However, branding the event as a party frames it as fun and novel, masking much of the control.

Implications: Normative Control in Platform Reselling

Taken together these vignettes provide a tentative idea of how normative control unfolds in platform reselling. This includes, as a concertive negotiation of aesthetic norms between participants, as algorithmically driven identity regulation, and as distraction, or the enticement of hosting a party obscuring self-surveillance and the management of others in the network. These initial findings reveal interesting dynamics of how normative control unfolds in platform work, namely (1) how new dynamics of visibility are introduced due to the materiality of digital technology and (2) how instant feedback and reward structures increasingly blur the distinctions between control and non-control, or labour and play.

In traditional organizations processes of normative control, are ephemeral and fluid. For instance, concertive control highlights how norms exist as verbal understandings initially, but can over-time become formalized into documents which have similar rigidity to bureaucratic structures (Barker, 1993). Normative control for platform resellers instead implicates the materiality of social media, meaning both the process and products of concertive control is an on-going series of digital artefacts, which are editable and renegotiated (Kallinikos, et al., 2013). This raises initial insight into the role digital artefacts play in the (re)accomplishment of normative control and presents an avenue for future research. Additionally, the context of platforms, with instant feedback and rewards, reveal new dynamics of the blending of work and play. Indeed, such findings have been observed in other digital environments and referred to as playbour, labour which is somehow neither and both work and play (Kücklich, 2005). Mixing elements of play, or gamification, into the realm of normative control shows how resellers check off a list of items, unlocking small goals to ascertain a specific status, all the while controlling their own behaviour in line with the platforms wishes. In other words, the platform makes visible Poshmark's desired norms, then gamifies resellers alignment with them, creating a form of normative control. Such findings speak to the need to continue this line of inquiry of the nature of control in platform work. Furthermore, these vignettes provide an initial insight into how all three types of identified normative control exist in conflation, as overlapping processes that reinforce one another. Finally, one significant contribution also comes in the studies approach, studying practices of control through ethnographic orientations, understanding how various digital media participates. Each vignette highlights how it is not solely through the platform that resellers are controlled, but in addition to their engagement with others in online social spaces. This point calls for similar methodologies which draw attention to the thoroughly digitally embedded nature of such work.

Expected Contribution and Concluding Remarks

This study represents a first step in understanding the nature of normative control in platform reselling. Namely, this research suggests unique ways in which digital technology intertwines in such processes of normative control. In the future this work-in-progress research will be extended, with the expected contribution of a robust conceptual framework of how normative control is practiced in platform reselling and with what consequence.

While this case is novel, and follows one specific type of platform mediated work, there are tendencies towards this type of normative control visible in other platform work, such as studies of Uber that show the role online communities play in shaping the norms and practices of drivers (Möhlmann & Zalmanson, 2017). This suggests these findings can contribute to growing scholarship that seeks to understanding the future of platform work, and its varied and nuanced complications. Joining a burgeoning group of IS scholars interested in the future of platform mediated work (Deng, et al., 2016; Möhlmann & Zalmanson, 2017) this research will add a valuable stream, namely the nature of control in such work systems. While previous research has highlighted the conflated feelings of empowerment and disempowerment platform mediated workers feel (Deng, et al., 2016; Roberts & Zietsma, 2018), this work highlights the agency platform resellers have in shaping the normative structures they work within. In other words, while platform participants are often seen as being controlled by, but this work shows the role they play in crafting their own system of values and norms and types of control. This is however not meant to disregard the oppressive tendencies uncovered in previous work. In many senses, this study reveals two opposing forces;

exposing control in a visible way would allow platform workers to engage in local acts of resistance, improving their experience, while the blurring of control and non-control could dissuade them from doing so. Given that platform work is at present largely unregulated, these dynamics are likely being used by platform owners to their benefit. However, nothing prevents the same dynamics being used to formulate some general guidelines on the appropriate treatment of platform workers, enabling decency and more fulfilling working conditions (Ens, et al., 2018). Studies such as this help to build a holistic understanding of the complexities of digital work in the 21st century. Practically then, this research joins scholars in moving beyond dystopian and utopian arguments about the fate of platform workers, creating nuanced understanding of these new types of digitally-mediated labour (Wajcman, 2017).

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