

Flexing and floundering in the on-demand economy: Narrative identity construction under algorithmic management[☆]

Eric M. Anicich

University of Southern California, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Identity
Self-narratives
On-demand economy
Algorithmic management

ABSTRACT

Based on an autoethnographic field study involving 130 h of work as a food delivery driver in the on-demand economy, semi-structured interviews ($N = 40$), and observations in company meetings and online forums, I developed a model specifying how the sociotechnical context of app-work (independent contracting, technologically-mediated task environment, no coworkers) simultaneously threatens workers' ability to constitute and animate their narrative identities and creates conditions for workers to attenuate that threat. Specifically, the same characteristics that workers experienced as depersonalizing reduced interpersonal accountability concerns, allowing workers to self-servingly construe identity-implicating experiences through *narrative flexing*, a form of narrative identity work that workers enacted intrapersonally (through narrative structuring, fantasizing, rationalizing) and interpersonally (through storytelling in online communities). Overall, this work reveals how certain technological and social constraints and opportunities affect the identity dynamics of a vast, yet understudied class of workers who are neither fully tethered to nor fully untethered from traditional organizations.

1. Introduction

The on-demand economy – comprised of economic activity created by technology companies that fulfill consumer demand via the immediate provisioning of goods and services (Jaconi, 2014) – is economically and culturally disruptive. According to a recent Pew Research survey (2021), 16% of American adults – roughly 41 million individuals – have earned money as app-workers in the past,¹ and 58% of these workers reported that the money they earned was either “essential” or “important” for meeting their basic needs. Despite the phenomenal growth of app-work over the past decade, scholars have only recently begun to consider the psychological as opposed to purely economic implications of alternative work arrangements (Ashford, Caza, & Reid, 2018; Spreitzer, Cameron, & Garrett, 2017).

At the vanguard of this new world of work is a growing cohort of predominantly young and low income workers (Pew Research Center, 2021) whose ability to fashion a coherent identity is strained by the

vagaries of algorithmic management and independent contracting. Understanding how app-workers navigate the unique identity constraints and opportunities that their work provides is vital because individuals across the global economy are being funneled into these types of roles at an astonishing pace (Kindelan, 2021), coinciding with the proliferation of technology companies that broadly comprise the gig economy (Duggan et al., 2020)², the increased adoption of flexible employment relationships (Spurk & Straub, 2020), and a greater focus on operational efficiencies offered by algorithmic management (Hall, Horton, & Knoepfle, 2019; Liu, Brynjolfsson, & Dowlatabadi, 2021). Although legislative bodies in the United States (Roosevelt & Hussain, 2021), United Kingdom (Meyer, 2021), and European Union (Chan, 2021) have recently intervened to help app-workers meet their basic economic needs, these efforts are unlikely to impact app-workers' ability to meet their basic *identity* needs, casting doubt on the long-term sustainability of these work arrangements.

In the present work, I address the question: How do increasingly

[☆] This article is part of the special issue ‘New advances in self-narratives in, across, and beyond organizations; Edited by Dr. Daniel M. Cable, Dr. Julia Lee, Dr. Gianpiero Petriglieri and Dr. David Sherman’.

¹ The Pew Research survey labels this type of work “gig platform work,” which refers to “earning money by using a mobile app or website to find jobs that directly connect workers with people who want to hire them, or by using a personal vehicle to deliver packages to others.”

² I focus on app-workers in the on-demand economy who are required to use their personal vehicle to physically transport customers, food, or other products after being algorithmically matched with customers and destinations through a smartphone app. App-work is distinct from other forms of gig work including capital platform work (e.g., Airbnb, Etsy) and crowdwork (e.g., Amazon Mechanical Turk, Fiverr, see Duggan et al., 2020).

prevalent work arrangements characterized by weak employer-worker relations, strong reliance on technology, and highly constrained social and task environments impact workers' ability to constitute and animate their narrative identities? The inductively derived answer I propose based on an autoethnographic field study involving my personal experience working as a food delivery driver in the on-demand economy, semi-structured interviews, and observations in company-sponsored driver meetings specifies how aspects of the sociotechnical system that workers experienced as depersonalizing (i.e., independent contractor status, technologically-mediated task environment, absence of co-workers) were simultaneously liberating, allowing them to engage in a form of narrative identity work that I call *narrative flexing*. Stripped of their idiosyncratic characteristics and largely outside the purview of interpersonal accountability, workers exercised discretion in intra- and interpersonally construing identity-implicating experiences in ways that attenuated the identity-threatening consequences of depersonalization.

Overall, my findings illuminate how workers respond to the threat that a certain work arrangement – app-based, contract work in the on-demand economy – poses to familiar ways of becoming and expressing oneself at work. In doing so, I offer a novel perspective on the technological and social constraints and opportunities that influence the identity dynamics of a growing yet understudied class of workers who are “suspended between insider and outsider roles” (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016, p. 48) and differentiate my findings from past work that has largely examined workers' identity development through the lens of traditional institutional forces (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008; Pratt, 2000; Smircich & Morgan, 1982) or independent workers' own efforts to cultivate a fulfilling identity in a highly customizable work environment (Petriglieri, Ashford, & Wrzesniewski, 2019).

2. Theoretical background

Below, I review theoretical concepts and frameworks that emerged as relevant to my inductively derived findings including the relationships among identity, self-narrative, and responses to identity threats. I also explain why existing research showing how workers construct narrative identities in the presence, and complete absence, of formal organizational affiliation is unable to account for the unique experiences of app-based, contract workers who occupy roles betwixt and between these two extreme levels of institutional support.

2.1. Identity as narrative

I embrace a psychodynamic perspective on identity (Petriglieri, 2020) and define it as “an ongoing process of associating meanings to the self and giving those meanings a story that fulfils our longings, sustains our beliefs, and bolsters our relations” (p. 170). In particular, I follow Petriglieri (2020) in suggesting that identity may be viewed as a fabrication that helps us connect our present to our past. The meanings individuals attach to their identities are typically based on their social roles or personal characteristics (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Gecas, 1982) and often take a narrative form (McAdams, 2001; McAdams & McLean, 2013) – i.e., “the story one tells oneself, or others, about oneself” (Ezzy, 1998, p. 245; Ricoeur, 1988, 1992).

Self-narratives, like other narratives, tend to follow a predictable plot structure (Thorndyke, 1977) and are commonly based on a three-act paradigm, involving a beginning, middle, and end (Varotsis, 2015; McAdams, 1996). The middle act “concerns the protagonist's journey” through which a dilemma is ultimately resolved following a turning point or climax (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010, p. 141; Ibarra, 2003). Conversely, narratives that lack discernable plot structure and protagonist agency are incoherent (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). In this way, self-narratives are central to the *constitution* and *animation* of narrative identities (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016). The constitution of one's narrative identity refers to an ongoing process of integrating and interpreting one's lived experiences and involves the “interweaving of historical

events and the imaginative” (Ezzy, 1998, p. 244; Ricoeur, 1988) into a “symbolic structure” (Ricoeur 1984, p. 65), while the animation of one's narrative identity captures the extent to which one perceives their narrative identity as having a sense of direction, forward movement, and temporal progression (Varotsis, 2015; Weick, 1995) that “carry the story along” (Ezzy, 1998, p. 245). Narrative identity is therefore “coherent but fluid and changeable” (Ezzy, 1998, p. 246), allowing individuals to “understand themselves through stories that connect who they once were to who they are now and who they may become” (Caza, Vough, & Puranik, 2018, p. 897; Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010).

Unsurprisingly, individuals are sensitive to internal or external events that threaten the constitution and animation of their narrative identities and take steps to avoid, ignore, or distort the threatening self-relevant information in some way (Leary et al., 2009) with the goal of reducing or preventing psychological discomfort, resolving conflicts, or more generally maintaining a positive self-image (Baumeister, Dale, & Sommer, 1998; Brown & Starkey, 2000; A. Freud, 1966; S. Freud, 1949; Laughlin, 1970; Petriglieri, 2011).³ Specifically, individuals respond to identity threats – consciously or unconsciously (Petriglieri & Stein, 2012) – by performing identity work which involves “forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening, or revising” an identity (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1165). Importantly, identity work is a form of story-telling (Caza et al., 2018; Linde, 2001) in which narratives are “the preferred sensemaking currency” (Boje, 1991, p. 106; Weick, 1995) that allow individuals to understand novel, unexpected, or confusing events (Maitlis & Christianson 2014). Thus, narrative identity work captures “efforts to craft self-narratives that meet a person's identity aims” (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010, p. 137). In the next section, I examine how traditional organizations facilitate members' narrative identity construction and then consider how workers who are fully *outside* of traditional organizations craft coherent narrative identities.

2.2. Narrative identity construction among workers in traditional organizations

In traditional organizations, workers' narrative identity construction unfolds in the context of two interdependent systems – a *social system* comprised of members' experiences, relations, and attitudes and a *technical system* comprised of an organization's structure, technology, and policies (for a review see Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020). These systems figure prominently in systems psychodynamic scholarship, which is concerned with the tension between an “inside-out” perspective and an “outside-in” perspective (Gould, 2001; Neumann & Hirschhorn, 1999; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020). An inside-out perspective considers how individuals shape systems “in ways that reflect and amplify their inner world—their history and aspirations” (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020, p. 428), whereas an outside-in perspective treats individuals' experience as symptomatic of some aspect of their systems (Kernberg, 1978) and focuses on the interaction between technical systems (e.g., algorithmically-managed, platform-mediated work) and social systems (e.g., virtual communities of workers), and on the deployment of defenses (e.g., fantasy, rationalization).

According to systems psychodynamic theories, organizations may function as identity workspaces for members (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010) to the extent they provide members with access to a holding environment, or a social context that reduces disturbing affect and facilitates sensemaking. Holding environments help to contain and interpret members' experiences (Kahn, 2001; Winnicott, 1975). Containment refers to an environment's ability to “absorb, filter or manage difficult or threatening emotions or ideas—the contained—so that they can be

³ Although the self may be the ultimate target of threat (or enhancement), Petriglieri (2020, p. 177) points out that “selves need identities that define them.” Therefore, identities are what ultimately “define people and make them viable as humans” (Swann & Bosson, 2010, p. 615).

worked with" (French & Vince, 1999, p. 9; Bion, 1970), whereas interpretation involves "ideas that provide connections, meanings, or a way of comprehending previously unrelated experiential data" (Shapiro & Carr, 1991, p. 5).

In the context of a holding environment, containment and interpretation often occur in sentient communities which "provide reassurance, feedback, and targets for social comparison that help individual members stabilize their identity" (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010, p. 53) and which are aimed at satisfying the emotional needs of individual members (Miller & Rice, 1967; Petriglieri, Petriglieri, & Wood, 2018). Members pursue these goals by exchanging personal stories (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007), thereby subjecting their narrative identities to scrutiny and negotiation (Gergen & Gergen, 1988) by audience members who may "interject their own data" in a way that "directly influences the coherence and legitimacy of a self-narrative" (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010, p. 143). Audience members therefore contribute to the construction of others' narrative identities "by advancing corroborating points and obliging the narrator to compromise on certain stances" (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010, p. 143). In this way, individuals co-construct their narrative identities with and through others (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014; Vough & Caza, 2017; Wrzesniewski, Dutton, & Debebe, 2003) in order to meet their identity needs (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). This perspective aligns with Sluss and Ashforth's (2007) view that self-definition in traditional organizational contexts is based, in part, on one's network of interdependent roles – e.g., worker-supervisor, worker-customer, and worker-worker – and the relational identities that stem from those roles (see also Cooley's (1902, 1998) writing on the "looking glass self").

Overall, traditional organizations directly and indirectly "reinforce and nudge [organizational members'] social constructions" (Ashforth & Schinoff, 2016, p. 119) toward a shared understanding of reality (Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) by providing members with the social resources and institutional supports necessary to constitute and animate their narrative identities.

2.3. Narrative identity construction among workers who are fully outside of traditional organizations

Fully independent workers, on the other hand, do not have access to a ready-made identity workspace and, therefore, must rely on other means to construct a coherent narrative identity. For example, Petriglieri et al. (2019) recently examined how creatives and knowledge workers (e.g., independent writers, artists, consultants) manage their work identities in the absence of organizational affiliation. Those authors found that workers crafted customized holding environments for their precarious and personalized work identities by forging connections to routines, places, people, and a broader purpose, resulting in viable work identities and vital selves (Petriglieri et al., 2019), highlighting the unique identity opportunities available to workers who are fully untethered from traditional institutional forces.

Petriglieri et al.'s (2019) findings shed light on the identity construction dynamics that unfold in the context of direct contract work involving two parties. Importantly, however, this type of contract work can be distinguished from app-based, contract work involving a minimum of three parties (customer, workers, and intermediary online platforms; see Duggan et al., 2020). Compared to direct contractors (e.g., Petriglieri et al., 2019), the app-based, contract workers who are the focus of the present study are 1) much more dependent on technology to identify and communicate with customers and perform the work and 2) have much less freedom to set wages, offer or perform diverse tasks, and meaningfully customize their task environment in other ways. These differences underscore the identity challenges facing app workers who are neither fully inside nor fully outside the influence of traditional organizational forces. To intimately access this unique population of workers, I relied on the depth and richness that qualitative methods in general, and autoethnographic field studies in particular, can provide.

3. Methods

3.1. Overview of autoethnography

Over a period of eighteen months (December 2018 to May 2020), I engaged in an autoethnographic field study that included my personal driving experiences as a food delivery driver for a popular on-demand platform and semi-structured interviews with rideshare and food/grocery delivery drivers. Autoethnography is a qualitative research method that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand a cultural experience (Chang, 2016; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). Leveraging autoethnographic experiences as a source of organizational field data is rare, yet potentially insightful (for recent examples see Bourgoin, Bencherki, & Faraj, 2020; Cameron, 2021; Hibbert et al., 2021). For this reason, Anteby (2013, p. 1284, see also Boyle & Parry, 2007; Jones & Bartunek, 2019) advocated for "relaxing the taboo on personal involvement" in organizational research, which "currently restricts our collective ability to generate new theoretical insights" (p. 1278).

While "initially guided by personal introspections" (Anderson, 2006, p. 386), rigorous autoethnography also relies on data collected in interviews (Karp, 1996). In this way, autoethnography "involves turning the ethnographic gaze on the self, while maintaining the outward gaze of ethnography" (Haynes, 2018, p. 14; Denzin, 2014). Specifically, autoethnographers collect *internal* data by recording one's actual behaviors, thoughts, and emotions as they occur and introspectively formulating and organizing one's present perspectives on the data, as well as *external* data that provide "contextual information to confirm, complement, or reject introspectively generated data" (Chang, 2016, p. 104). To accommodate these complementary perspectives, I adopted a writing style that embraced analytic autoethnography's "commitment to theoretical analysis" (Anderson, 2006, p. 378) and evocative autoethnography's (Ellis, 1997) more emotionally-stirring emphasis on the autobiographical impulse (i.e., the inward gaze, Neumann, 1996). In particular, "personal agonies, usually hidden from public view" are often central subjects in the "confessional-emotive" writing style characteristic of evocative autoethnography (Chang, 2016, p. 145), which aligns nicely with the psychodynamic view of emotions as a valid source of data (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020).

Autoethnography was appropriate in the present context for several reasons. First, the autoethnographic method aligns with the systems psychodynamic perspective. Indeed, the latter "requires revisiting the scholar as separate from the scholarship" and "questioning our own identities in the field, and, at times, even voluntarily moving to its margins" (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020, p. 439). Working as a food delivery driver allowed me to *feel* and *live* the precariousness of on-demand work, experiences that greatly informed the final model that emerged from my findings. Second, the nature of my research question required me to make assertions about individuals' inner dynamics (e.g., self-narratives, fantasies, rationalizations) and autoethnography permitted me to experience those inner dynamics first-hand, resulting in richer insights than would have been possible had I relied exclusively on interviews or surveys, for example. Finally, Amabile and Hall (2021, p. 348) argue that "personal experience may actually be essential for truly valid research...especially unexplored phenomena that involve unusual experiences, high degrees of emotionality, or identity issues." All three of these features figure prominently in app-based, contract work and, thus, highlight the value of using autoethnography in this context.

3.2. Methodological description of personal driving experience (internal perspective)

I logged 130 h of driving time and completed 238 deliveries for a popular app-based, food delivery platform.⁴ To increase the generalizability of my findings, I drove in two different regional markets – Los Angeles (~90 h) and Las Vegas (~40 h). During my time as a driver, I recorded field texts (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lofland, 1971) which were essential to my ongoing analysis and interpretation of the driving experience. I maintained a separate field journal that contained private and personal thoughts and feelings pertaining to the research process in general and my driving experience in particular and field notes in which I recorded more objective data from the field (Chang, 2016). In particular, I recorded snapshots of momentary experiences (e.g., specific interactions and observations) on my phone in between deliveries and my emotional reactions to those experiences. At the end of each day, I reviewed, organized, and sometimes elaborated on these texts based on additional feelings or insights that emerged upon further reflection.

I also attended three company-sponsored meetings including a one-on-one, in-person meeting with the platform's L.A. Community Associate, a virtual fleet meetup for L.A. drivers to discuss the platform's response to COVID-19 and other driver grievances related to a recent pay cut, and a virtual meeting with local drivers where platform representatives discussed a city council ordinance that threatened the company's (and, in turn, drivers') earning potential. The documents I gathered and notes I took in these meetings sensitized me to the strained and distant relationship between drivers and the platforms they serve. Finally, I monitored and contributed to online driver forums on Facebook. By engaging in "virtual eavesdropping" (Snow & Anderson, 1987, p. 1343), I was able to observe and analyze the behavior of other drivers while taking advantage of the fact that "social media provides a largely untapped source of narrative data" (Vaara, Sonenshein, & Boje, 2016, p. 552). These secondary data sources helped to corroborate findings that emerged from my other data sources.

3.3. Methodological description of semi-structured interviews (external perspective)

To complement the *internal* perspective based on my first-hand driving experience with an *external* perspective, I concurrently conducted 40 semi-structured interviews with other drivers in the on-demand economy.⁵ Given that my goal was to elaborate rather than test theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I engaged in theoretical or purposeful sampling by interviewing drivers with a wide range of experiences in the on-demand economy. I began by recruiting interview participants who worked at least part-time as a rideshare and/or delivery driver through Amazon's Mechanical Turk. However, because my iterative coding and analysis of the initial interview transcripts and ongoing background reading revealed that many drivers virtually congregate in online driver forums, midway through interviewing, I began recruiting interview subjects from Facebook driver groups. This updated strategy allowed me to recruit subjects from a context that was more thematically relevant to my ongoing analysis.

All interviews were conducted over the phone and typically lasted between 30 and 60 min. Interviewees received a \$20 Amazon.com gift card code in exchange for participating. The final sample consisted of 40

U.S. based drivers (50% women; age $M = 39.4$, $SD = 9.39$) who lived and worked across most of the major geographical regions in the U.S. and had differing amounts of experience in the on-demand economy (completed rides/deliveries $M = 4354$, $SD = 6159$). Participants averaged 28.5 h of driving per week ($SD = 18.5$), and worked an average of 48.28 h per week ($SD = 15.00$) for pay across all of their income-generating activities. Thirty-three percent of drivers in the sample ($N = 13$) drove full-time (i.e., at least 35 h per week) and driving was the primary source of income for fifty-eight percent of drivers ($N = 23$). Drivers had various other roles (e.g., as a student, caregiver, retiree) and jobs outside of the on-demand economy (e.g., in security, IT, food/beverage). Nearly all of the drivers identified economic priorities (e.g., bills, debt, savings goal) as their primary motivation to drive, which were often precipitated or exacerbated by a recent life change (e.g., layoff, retirement, divorce, birth of a child, medical situation). All of the interviews were audio recorded (with informant consent) and professionally transcribed (using Rev.com), resulting in 507 pages of transcribed text. I conducted 29 interviews and a paid research coordinator who was trained in semi-structured interviewing conducted the other 11 interviews.

I began the interviews with descriptive and open-ended "grand-tour" questions before progressing to "mini-tour" questions seeking more detailed and focused information (Chang, 2016; Spradley, 1979). Although guided by a structured interview protocol (see Table S4 in the SOM document), I allowed interviewees to talk about what they wanted to talk about, so long as it was at least loosely related to the topic of the study (Weiss, 1994). As a result, drivers revealed what was meaningful and important to them (Lamont & Swidler, 2014; Ramarajan & Reid, 2020). Finally, I reviewed thousands of driver comments and job reviews posted on Facebook, UberPeople.net, and Indeed.com, as well as information on on-demand company websites and emails that I received from the platform's L.A. Community Associate and corporate office.

3.4. Data analysis strategy

I engaged in inductive data analysis following a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1997) that was guided by a general set of research questions focused on the identity implications of engaging in app-based, contract work in the on-demand economy. My analysis unfolded in three stages during which time I frequently went back and forth between the data and the literature. At each stage, I deliberately attended to overlapping and divergent themes. This approach allowed me to identify aspects of the driving experience that I experienced similarly to other drivers as well as aspects that I experienced differently, and to interrogate possible explanations for these similarities and differences.

Stage 1: Generating tentative categories and first-order codes. I began by conducting line-by-line analysis of a small number of transcripts almost immediately after completing the first set of interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) and held regular meetings with my research coordinator who helped with the interviewing to discuss the emerging insights. My primary goal at this stage was to identify common statements through a process of open coding (Locke, 2001; Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014) and assign tentative categories and first-order codes. Throughout this process, I wrote one-page memos to "inventory" the data and summarize the analysis for each interview (Chang, 2016, p. 76; Corbin & Strauss, 2014) while comparing and contrasting these data with the data from my field notes and field journal. For example, first-order codes reflected statements about drivers "feeling controlled by the algorithm" and "feeling invisible to customers." As my analysis unfolded, I abandoned some categories and revised others that did not fit the data well. Fig. S1 in the SOM document depicts the final data structure.

Stage 2: Integrating first-order codes into theoretical categories. In the next stage, I consolidated first-order codes into more theoretical and abstract second-order categories (Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1994) and began searching for relationships among them. For example,

⁴ Additional details about my autoethnographic field study are provided in the supplementary online material document.

⁵ I intentionally did not reveal my status as a driver to participants because I wanted to maintain a disciplined outsider perspective while interviewing. During some interviews, however, my personal connection to the driving experience produced feelings and reactions that I subsequently recorded in my field journal. Similarly, I did not reveal my researcher status to customers while driving or company representatives while attending driver meetings.

statements related to drivers sharing biographical details about their past with customers (e.g., past struggles, upbringing, knowledge/skills), discussing how driving facilitates personal growth, and revealing plans for how they intend to use the money they earn from driving pointed to a common theme related to drivers' efforts to structure their self-narratives by psychologically connecting their momentary experiences to aspects of their past or to a desired future in a way that helped constitute and animate their narrative identities.

Stage 3: Aggregating theoretical dimensions. In the final analysis stage, I looked for aggregate theoretical dimensions underlying the second-order categories to better understand how the categories fit together into a coherent picture. At this stage, I consulted prior work on narrative structure, self-narratives, narrative identity work, and identity workspaces to understand the theoretical implications of my emerging model. For example, second-order themes related to drivers' independent contractor status, technologically-mediated task environment, and absence of coworkers reflected crucial aspects of the "sociotechnical context of app-based, contract work." Fig. 1 summarizes my research process and Fig. 2 depicts the final model that emerged from my findings. In the following sections, I develop each part of this model in detail.

4. Findings

4.1. The sociotechnical context of app-based, contract work contributes to driver depersonalization

In this section, I show how certain aspects of the sociotechnical context of app-based, contract work – namely, drivers' independent contractor status, technologically-mediated task environment, and absence of coworkers – contribute to their distant, one-off, and non-existent relational identities (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007) with company representatives, customers, and other drivers, respectively.⁶ Structurally prevented from forging "progressively personalized" and positive relational identities that are central to self-definition (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007, p. 16), drivers experienced depersonalization, which occurs when a system or observer fails to treat or perceive a target person as an individual with a range of idiosyncratic characteristics and skills (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 2002). Importantly, "depersonalized and therefore relatively static entities...lack the color, nuances, and vagaries that define individuals" (Sluss & Ashforth, 2007, p. 17). Accordingly, the consequences of depersonalization are "hallmarks of the identity threat experience" (Emerson & Murphy, 2014, p. 511), as my findings reveal.

Independent contractor status. Drivers' legal characterization as independent contractors instead of employees licenses on-demand companies to maintain an arm's-length relationship with their drivers.⁷ For example, a driver with roughly 10000 completed rides/deliveries explained how one platform dismissed his hard-earned driver rating when he sought support: "I'm a 4.97 rated driver, which is like stupid high, you know?...But when you go to them with an issue...they don't care. You're absolute disposable garbage, and you know it" (#21).⁸ A food delivery driver noted a similar experience while describing what she viewed as an unjustifiable complaint made against her by a

customer: "[Platform name] doesn't even let you defend yourself...at that point I had maybe 2800 deliveries...your reputation don't mean nothing to them. You're just a number to them" (#36). Other drivers expressed similar concerns about being viewed as "just a number," reflecting the depersonalizing nature of the work.

Furthermore, biographical details that typically constitute and animate individuals' narrative identities and are valued in an employer-employee relationship (e.g., work histories, skills, and credentials) are irrelevant in the on-demand economy. As one driver explained: "I always get the sense that my day job [in the IT industry] has a little bit of prestige...I'm one of the second or third tier people...in ride sharing, I feel like I'm sort of on a flat playing field with any other drivers" (#6). In this way, on-demand work strips drivers of their personalizing characteristics and denies them the standing that their identities may warrant in other contexts. For example, a full-time driver lamented, "she [driver's wife] just cries a lot because she feels like, you know, you could do so much better. You speak four languages, you have so many skills." Another driver added, "I graduated from law school and passed the Bar exam. I'm too old for this sh**, and too smart" (#39). As a Ph.D. graduate, I too felt the frustration of being overqualified for on-demand work even though my academic pedigree could not help me deliver food more efficiently (FJ#1).

Technologically-mediated task environment. Drivers' strong dependence on technology to complete the work reinforces the arm's-length relationship between on-demand platforms and drivers, further contributing to drivers' experience of depersonalization. For example, drivers' exposure to algorithmic management – i.e., the automation of HR-related duties and functions traditionally undertaken by human managers (Duggan et al., 2020) – prevents them from customizing aspects of the task environment as one driver explained: "I try to bring my personality, but the app itself doesn't really offer that...the app sets the precedent to dehumanize. It's like if you don't try to inject your personality, it just washes it out...I feel like a robot by the end of the day" (#22, FJ#2). Another rideshare driver compared her dependence on the app to Pavlovian conditioning: "It's almost like Pavlov's dog in that, the app goes 'ping!' And you go 'ping!'" (#14, FJ#3). The imagery of the app "washing out" drivers' individuality and drivers struggling to "inject" themselves into the work contrasts with the on-demand platforms' emphasis on driver autonomy: "They advertise [on-demand work] as you...control your own destiny with this...but at the end of the day you really can't" (#27). Another driver acknowledged that "[The app is] kind of herding you around the city with this invisible hand," while reminding himself that "I'm presumably a free-thinking person" (#9).

Additionally, the high volume of one-off customer encounters resulting from the exhausting efficiency of algorithmic management combined with the stipulation that drivers are matched and initially communicate with customers through a smartphone app that reveals few personal details about either party contribute to a climate of depersonalization. One driver noted that it is "always really appreciated" when "[customers] treat you like a human being and they look you in the eye or smile" (#9), implying that behaviors that would be taken for granted in most interpersonal contexts are relatively rare in on-demand work. Other drivers offered a similar perspective: "[The customers] cannot see the driver, the driver is invisible for them. For all intents and purposes, the driver doesn't exist. It's like you're not really there" (#35). A number of drivers discussed more direct forms of mistreatment at the hands of customers: "People think that it's okay to treat you like sh**, to assume that you're stupid...And then lambast me for sort of not giving them the service they think they deserve" (#39, FJ#4). Feelings of depersonalization prompted a different driver to remind customers that, "We're human beings too...We're not just these anonymous people grinding out rides" (#14). These findings are consistent with the view that anonymity functions as a mechanism of disinhibition because it is associated with fewer external constraints on action (Hirsh, Galinsky, & Zhong, 2011). As a result, anonymous or

⁶ I discuss aspects of the technical system and the social system in the same section because the two systems are highly interdependent (see Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020). For example, in the context of on-demand work, a prominent feature of the work that affects the technical system (i.e., algorithmic management) is closely related to a prominent feature of the work that affects the social system (i.e., the absence of coworkers).

⁷ The ratio of independent contract workers (i.e., drivers) to employees is roughly 181 to 1 at Uber and 400 to 1 at Lyft (for a review see Duggan et al., 2020).

⁸ Numbers in parentheses after a quote identify the interviewee who provided the quote. Numbers that are preceded by "FJ" in parentheses refer to a relevant excerpt from my field journal. These field journal excerpts are presented in Table S1 in the supplementary online material document.

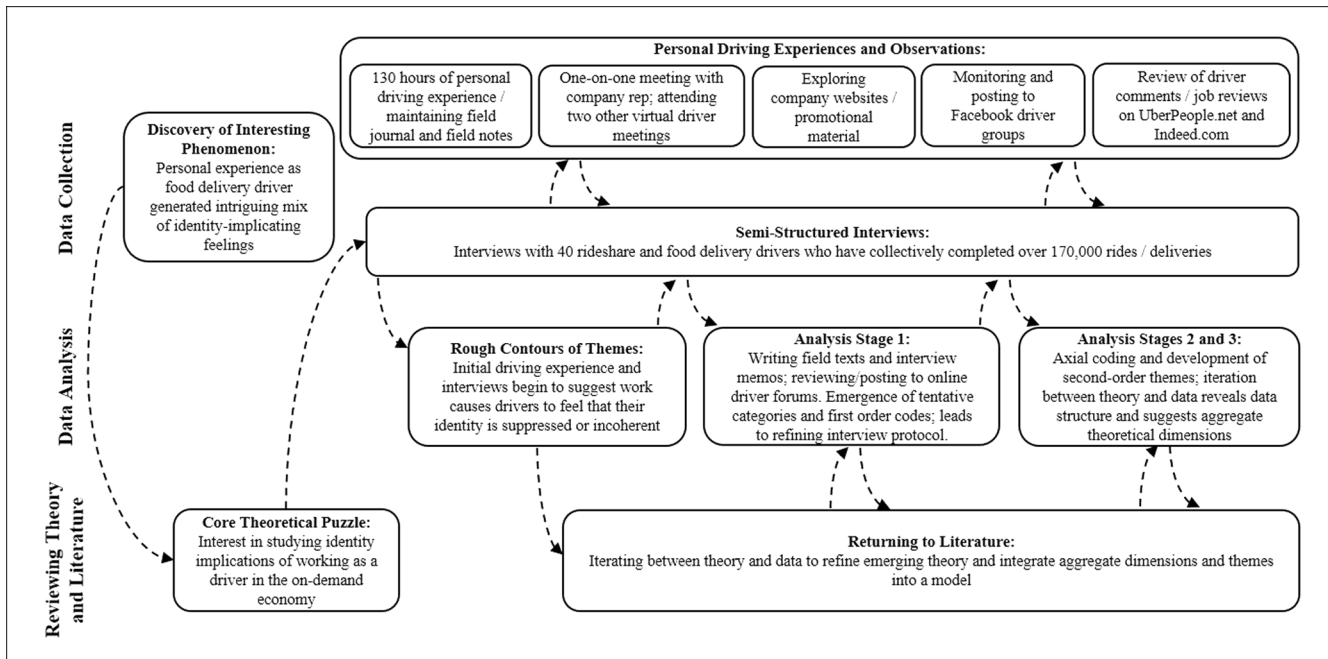


Fig. 1. Overview of data collection and analysis process.

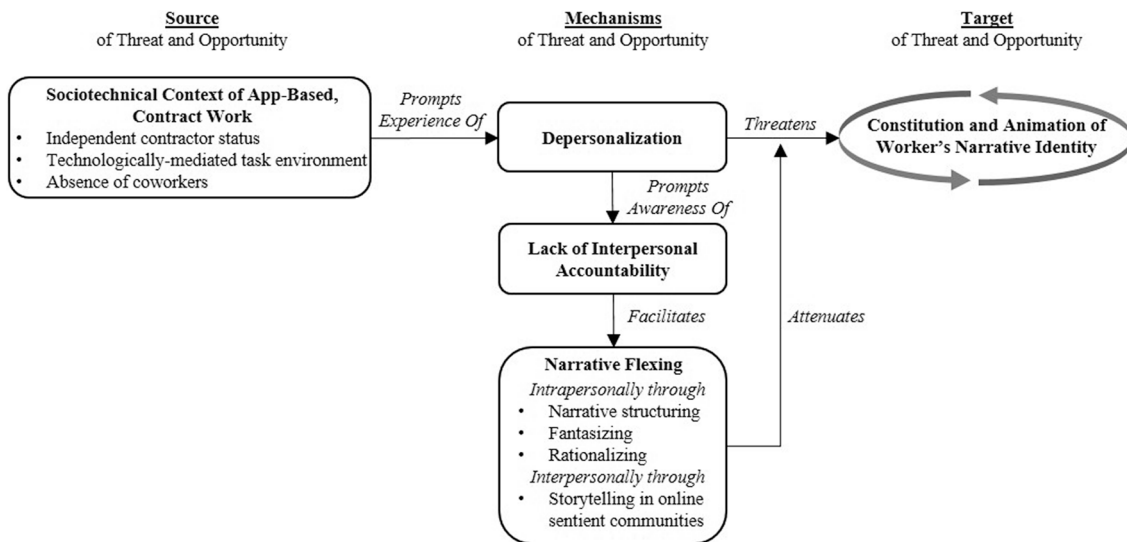


Fig. 2. Final model depicting narrative flexing as a response to the depersonalizing consequences of app-based, contract work in the on-demand economy.

semi-anonymous interactions – such as between on-demand drivers and customers in a technologically-mediated communication environment – can license the depersonalizing treatment of others (Joinson, 1999; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Montoya-Weiss, Massey, & Song, 2001; Postmes et al., 2002; Siegel et al., 1986).

Absence of coworkers. In traditional organizational contexts, coworkers may help each other process and interpret anxiety-producing and other identity-implicating experiences in ways that reduce feelings of depersonalization and, thus, alleviate threats to their narrative identities (Kahn, 2001). In on-demand work, however, “You don’t have a coworker, you don’t have cooler talks...You’re just a driver” (#17). Whereas “with other jobs you can like call your supervisor and say, ‘Hey, what am I supposed to do?’” in on-demand driving “There’s no help...you’re kind of on your own” (#4). This characteristic of on-demand work is problematic from an identity construction perspective because narrative identity work cannot happen in isolation (Kreiner et al., 2006;

Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010).

Without coworkers, a number of drivers struggled to make sense of their unique work experiences. For example, one driver alluded to how the absence of coworkers prevented her from situating her unique driving experiences into a coherent narrative identity:

I’m alone in my car 12 h a day. So I have a lot of time to think about stuff...we have all this information about this different way of working. We work for a ghost in a machine basically for this phone app, right? Like the wizard behind the curtain. There’s no one to talk to and no real colleagues. And we have all this information and all this experience, and no one to talk to about it...it’s hard to explain what we’re doing (#39, FJ#5).

Another driver summarized this disconnect and the frustration it produces:

You need the people that drive the street to understand when I tell you something about driving...people write about rideshare, or people write about the gig economy...They never even drive...you need to feel it. You need to understand when I say, "Well, I'm driving five hours and I'm tired like hell," I'm sorry for my language, but you need to understand that...People think I'm sitting down in the sunny Santa Monica sunshine... no...there are so many things behind [the driving experience] (#17).

Here, the driver suggests that *feeling* is synonymous with *understanding* the driver experience. This statement resonated strongly with me given my own struggle to connect with non-drivers over my driving experience (FJ#6). Ultimately, drivers' struggles to process and organize their unique experiences with and through coworkers exacerbated drivers' sense of depersonalization.

4.2. Depersonalization threatens drivers' ability to constitute and animate their narrative identities

After reflecting on the above examples and returning to my field journal and notes multiple times, a theme that would become increasingly central to my analysis came into focus: The threat drivers experienced was not to a specific work identity, but rather to their general sense of personhood, constituted and animated through narrative and encompassing the past and future, personal and professional. The depersonalizing consequences of on-demand work threatened drivers' ability "to keep a particular narrative going," an ability that Giddens (1991, p. 54) argues is central to identity. Viewed through this lens, company slogans suggesting drivers can "drive toward what matters" (Lyft slogan) and "accomplish" their "long-term dreams" (DoorDash slogan) felt elusive, if not insulting to drivers, many of whom felt "stuck in the cycle [of driving]...going nowhere and this is month after month after month" (#36).

Each completed delivery or ride in the on-demand economy is an independent transaction with unique micro dramas. The characters in and settings of these micro dramas change constantly, but the overarching plot – to the extent there is one – never advances. There is no continuity across experiences. It was not until I drove for over 40 h in one week in Las Vegas to better understand the experiences of full-time (vs. part-time) drivers that I was able to comprehend this fundamental truth of on-demand work. What I was experiencing, and what many of the drivers I interviewed described, was akin to the experience of laboring on a stationary bicycle that is literally suspended, unable to gain traction on the path, any path, below – peddling frantically, yet futilely; technically untethered, yet uninspired; at once dynamic and static. The unsettling awareness that one is the protagonist in an arrested self-narrative mired in meaningless chaos – this is the experience of driving in the on-demand economy.

This realization represented a turning point in my analysis and led me to reflect on the driving experience through the lens of narrative identity which is "integrally temporal" (Ezzy, 1998, p. 245). Importantly, narratives that lack a discernable plot and protagonist agency are incoherent (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010). As an early career researcher, I had become increasingly disillusioned and convinced that my efforts in academia over the span of several years were uncorrelated with my outcomes, as if I – the person – was paradoxically frozen "in progress" just as my ongoing research projects were. I felt compelled to engage in a *productive* endeavor. Pay and prestige did not matter. Quite simply, I needed to predictably accumulate results, any results. This, I hoped, would complement my day job and restore order to my life.

After only several days of driving, my elaborate plan to achieve psychological relief began to unravel. App-work felt incompatible with my other life. It felt fraudulent. The pendulum had swung too far in the other direction; instead of offering the complementary work experience that I had hoped it would, driving became its own source of stress. Delivering food to strangers for small sums of money would never be the

answer to my problems. As I struggled to reconcile my driver identity with my academic identity, I felt at risk of "losing the plot" of my own narrative (Thomas & Linstead, 2002, p. 77).

After completing more interviews, it became clear that I was not alone in feeling suspended in an unstructured plot, struggling to organize and advance my narrative identity. These experiences and observations prompted my desire to understand how drivers respond to threats to their narrative identities. This desire was motivated as much by my interest in achieving psychological relief as a driver as it was by my interest in conceptually mapping the relevant academic terrain as a researcher. One interview exchange in particular pointed to a potential answer that figured prominently in my final model:

[Interviewee] I don't see a lot of drivers that actually enjoy what they're doing. It seems like a last resort. And they don't seem to take a whole lot of pride in how they do it (#32).

[Interviewer] Do you feel like that is the case for you?

[Interviewee] Not at all! It's kind of the opposite...I mean, I think it's what you make it (#32).

This driver draws a stark contrast between how she believes "a lot of drivers" experience the work and how she claims to experience the work herself. Her claim that "I think it's what you make it" points to a type of psychological maneuvering that I noticed a number of drivers engaged in whereby they *made* negative experiences into positive experiences.

4.3. The depersonalizing consequences of app-based, contract work facilitate narrative flexing by prompting an awareness of reduced interpersonal accountability

Stripped of their idiosyncratic characteristics and largely outside the purview of interpersonal accountability, drivers exercised discretion in shaping, if not distorting, their experiences in ways that both leveraged and counteracted their experience of depersonalization. Specifically, drivers were able to attenuate the threat posed to their narrative identities by exploiting a fundamental irony of on-demand work: The same characteristics that drivers experienced as depersonalizing (i.e., independent contractor status, technologically-mediated task environment, absence of coworkers) were simultaneously liberating in that they allowed drivers to construe identity-implicating experiences in self-serving ways outside the scrutiny of observers (e.g., coworkers, supervisors, repeat customers) who may challenge or reject drivers' interpretations of events or possibilities. This view aligns with Postmes and colleagues (2002, p. 4) claim that "depersonalization...offers the strategic liberty to ignore social pressures" and "could have a liberating impact...if people want to escape the surveillance and regulation of others" (see also Tetlock, 1985).

One driver attributed this flexibility to "the anonymity of [interacting with] a complete stranger for a few brief moments" and the fact that "you are in a car, in a private setting...you will never see that person again, you have no obligation to them" (#35). A different driver explained that "[In traditional organizations] your boss obligates you to come into your office...they're basically watching you to make sure that you're getting something done...they want to make sure you're doing that and they want to keep an eye on you. So, it's a control thing" (#27). Another driver added: "If you're in the corporate world and you are sitting with your boss...you need to be careful what you're saying, and how you're reacting because your future is dependent on that job...But in driving...if I say I like blue, and you don't like blue. I don't care, you know...because my manager is not going to look at me" (#17). These statements highlight that certain mechanisms of control that are embedded in the sociotechnical context of many traditional organizations are absent in the on-demand economy – e.g., workers' employee (vs. independent contractor) status, human (vs. algorithmic) management, face-to-face (vs. technologically-mediated) interactions, and the presence (vs. absence) of coworkers.

As a result, drivers felt free to engage in a form of narrative identity work that I call *narrative flexing* which involves selectively emphasizing, to oneself or others, an atypically positive or negative experience or perspective with the aim of achieving psychological relief. The word “flexing” is intended to convey both the formal and informal definition of the word “flex”.⁹ That narrative flexing involves *selectively* sharing experiences or perspectives captures the flexibility or discretion that drivers exercise in selecting experiences or perspectives to emphasize and therefore reflects the formal definition of “flex” (i.e., “to bend” or otherwise distort something). That narrative flexing involves emphasizing *atypically* positive or negative experiences or perspectives reflects the informal definition of “flex” (i.e., “to make an ostentatious display of something”).

In the next section, I discuss the intrapersonal and interpersonal mechanisms through which drivers engage in narrative flexing as well as how these responses to depersonalization attenuate the threat posed to drivers’ ability to constitute and animate their narrative identities.

4.4. Intrapersonal mechanisms of narrative flexing

Internal conversation (i.e., soliloquy, [Athens, 1994](#)) is the “key to the self” (p. 530) and makes enduring “self portraits” possible (p. 527). Drivers relied on internal conversations to engage in narrative flexing through *narrative structuring*, *fantasizing*, and *rationalizing*.

Narrative structuring. Numerous drivers attempted to psychologically connect their momentary experiences to aspects of their past or to a desired future in a way that helped constitute and animate their narrative identities. I call this process *narrative structuring*. One driver described how he structured his narrative identity through a process of visualization, underscoring the internal and flexible nature of soliloquy: “I like to think of it like, ‘Okay, I want to go out and run [deliveries] tonight especially because I’m going to go take my nieces and nephews out. We’re going to go to the snow cone place.’ I visualize sometimes when I’m out working, why I’m really earning the money” (#31). Other drivers explained how momentary customer encounters facilitated the internal structuring of their narrative identity. For example, a food delivery driver described how she came to view the depersonalizing nature of her work as an opportunity to inscribe a customized self-narrative on her otherwise blank narrative slate:

I realized that you’re able to offer a biography and say something about yourself...I actually got creative and I said, “I’m outdoorsy, and I have a lavender farm,” and said a few things about myself. I think those who care, they’ll actually go and look at that and be like, “Oh, this is a person” (#22).

A different driver offered a similar insight about how she infuses her customer interactions with knowledge derived from her upbringing in a way that adds continuity to her narrative identity:

I grew up driving here [in Anaheim, CA], I learned how to drive here...I can tell people about what Disneyland used to look like when I was a child, and a little bit about the history of the area (#14).

Here, the “history of the area” is a narrative vehicle by which the driver emphasizes her own history to herself and her customers. By infusing biographical details into momentary customer encounters, some drivers were able to extract a greater sense of meaning from otherwise depersonalizing work. A driver with over 6000 completed rides described a customer disclosure that emerged organically in his vehicle and that he seized upon to connect his past to the present with carryover effects into the future:

I picked up a husband and wife...I overheard the wife talking about her nephew...she thought that he was smoking marijuana, but the symptoms and what she was saying was the total opposite of marijuana. I already knew first hand that was meth because I was a meth addict. For some reason, I was like, “Man, I got to interrupt and let her know what’s going on”...I kind of apologized. I just want to give an insight so I kind of give her the backstory...I’m like, “He’s not smoking marijuana. If he’s not sleeping or eating. He’s doing a harder drug and most likely it is meth.” I had them both in tears. They were crying. I kind of told them what they had to do in order for him to get better...The wife said, “Hey, do you mind that when we get out of the car I give you a hug?”...It made my life good by sharing my story...Until this day, they’re still my customers. (#37).

Here, the driver overheard the customer’s personally-relevant revelation related to drug use, filtered it through his own past experiences, and then decided – on his own terms – to interject his personal narrative into the conversation. In this way, the driver flexibly construed a potentially triggering revelation in a way that added structure and agency to his narrative identity.

The aforementioned story – recounted by the driver with such clarity and vividness – was based on an experience that the driver admitted “probably happened like a year ago” (#37). This acknowledgement sheds light on another element that informed my conceptualization of narrative flexing. Specifically, I noticed that drivers – sometimes prompted by questions about a particularly good or bad experience they have had while driving and sometimes unprompted – frequently shared, and appeared to extract a sustained sense of meaning from, very rare experiences. “The extremes become the most memorable, you know?” (#21, FJ#7), explained one driver. Importantly, the “extremes” – as many drivers attested – are disproportionately negative and tend to involve some combination of physical violence (or the threat of it), verbal abuse, and extreme messes. To successfully navigate this flow of predominantly identity-threatening experiences, drivers are motivated to stretch the rare identity-enhancing moments the way one might stretch an undersized bandage over the surface area of a large wound. However, constituting and animating one’s narrative identity in this way is no easy task. Just as an ill-fitting bandage may snap out of place to reveal the underlying wound, so too may a rare identity-enhancing moment be stretched too thin and fail to effectively mask the relatively more common identity-threatening experiences. Seeking further relief, some drivers relied on fantasizing and rationalizing instead of, or in addition to, narrative structuring.¹⁰

Fantasizing. A fantasy represents an “unconscious endeavor to fulfill or gratify difficult or impossible goals and aspirations” ([Brown & Starkey, 2000, p. 107](#)). It is “a kind of vivid daydream” that involves “retreat into imagination” ([Brown & Starkey, 2000, p. 107](#)). Fantasy is closely related to the concepts of possible future selves which represent “specific, individually significant hopes, fears and fantasies” ([Markus & Nurius, 1986, p. 954](#)) and the type of “fictive storytelling” that [Snow and Anderson \(1987, p. 1360\)](#) observed among the homeless involving “future-oriented fabrications about oneself.” Living out a fantasy is possible in principle, yet exceedingly rare in practice.

One of the most common fantasies that drivers expressed involved the work’s *potential*, which some drivers described the way one may describe the potential of winning the lottery and becoming wealthy. Applied as a type of protective balm, hope became an animating force for some drivers. For example, when asked about his motivations for

⁹ See both the formal and informal definitions of “flex” here: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/flex>

¹⁰ In many, but not all cases, fantasizing and rationalizing worked in tandem with drivers’ efforts to structure their narrative identities. For example, by fantasizing or rationalizing, some drivers were able to *transform* potentially identity-threatening experiences into identity-enhancing experiences and then *connect* those fantasized or rationalized experiences to their past or desired future through the process of narrative structuring.

driving, one driver emphasized the possibility of meeting someone who could change his life in the future:

For some people to maybe find the love of their lives [laughing]...I also work in the IT industry and food & beverage [industry]...I think one day I can find someone in this industry that can guide me to, you know, a better opportunity...There's a chance, you never know, because every day you meet many people, one of them can change your life (#7).

When asked if any of his previous passengers have opened personal or professional doors for him in this way, he responded:

Yeah like I said...one day I can give a ride to someone that is in charge of a big restaurant or a big country club...and then I start telling them I wanted some extra cash. I do this, I do that as well and then they're like "Oh look I know someone in this industry." Then they say, "Well we can give you a chance if you want, you have experience." As we're talking, I tell them about the experience that I have and they say, "Oh you might be a good fit for our company as well." I think about that when I go out to do rides as well, not just to make the extra money, but could be that as well (#7).

Here, the driver weaves in and out of reality and fantasy by first referencing the types of conversations he commonly has with passengers before pivoting to what is ultimately revealed to be a fantasized vision of a future that has yet to (and may never) materialize. Specifically, the driver role plays an interaction in which a hypothetical passenger acknowledges the driver's past work experience and, in turn, helps "guide" him out of the morass of on-demand driving by offering him "a better opportunity" in the future. The final sentence of the driver's response, however, reveals that his description is merely a fantasy. The driver blurs the distinction between describing a hypothetical situation (e.g., "one day I can" and "could be that") and actually role playing that hypothetical conversation in the present tense (e.g., "then they say" and "as we're talking"). A different driver offered a similar, but less clearly articulated fantasy:

Despite the pay kind of going down over time...It's a pretty good way to network with people...I've stayed in touch with a couple of people just, you know, as friends and possible contacts for employment and possible contacts for consulting with different business aspects or consulting with different prospects of, you know, anything really. Yeah, I've definitely exchanged numbers with a couple of my passengers (#24).

This driver quickly moves past the identity-threatening acknowledgment related to decreasing pay to emphasize the networking potential of the work. Interestingly, the driver then elaborates on that claim as it relates to his own future. In suggesting that he may one day provide or seek consulting services for "different business aspects" and "different prospects of, you know, anything really," the driver gropes for a sequence of words that will come off as vaguely impressive and plausible with limited success, as if one of the engines of his inner fantasy machine has failed to fire up resulting in insufficient imaginative thrust. He concludes by unnecessarily bracketing the word "I've" with the words "yeah" and "definitely," perhaps in an attempt to banish any lingering doubt he or I may have related to the veracity of his claims.

As I shifted between interviewing drivers and completing deliveries myself, I came to understand and ultimately embrace an intriguing realization related to fantasy: The fidelity and generalizability of drivers' stories are unproven and yet somehow unimportant. Truth is not the goal of fantasy as much as relief. In the on-demand economy, fantasies incubate and flourish in the privacy of drivers' vehicles and minds, outside the scrutiny of observers who may have a more threatening interpretation of events or possibilities. There are no coworkers or repeat customers to offend, no ongoing relationships to manage, no high-status positions or achievements to pursue or protect. In this

context, fantasy is encouraged if not demanded of drivers.

Reflecting on drivers' interpretations of their experiences while simultaneously trying to organize and interpret my own experiences, I sensed an unspoken recognition among some drivers, myself included: If our white-knuckled grip on a particular fantasy were to ever loosen, a tornado of disconfirming evidence would tear the whole self-serving project apart. The identity-threatening tornado that I sought to resist was the possibility that my voluntary immersion in the on-demand driver community was a spectacular misallocation of physical and intellectual effort – an inexplicable personal and professional miscalculation on my part, from which nothing of value would emerge. My best defense against these creeping doubts was maintaining the belief that I would one day be able to claim that my driving experience "broadened my perspective," an intentionally vague aspiration that afforded me flexibility in determining success. A separate fantasy that I maintained was that I could one day spin my driving experience into a meaningful intellectual contribution, thus linking it to my past and future as a researcher (FJ#8). These fantasies promised to animate my floundering narrative identity.

Rationalizing. The final intrapersonal form of narrative flexing that drivers engaged in is rationalizing, which involves "an attempt to justify impulses, needs, feelings, behaviors, and motives that one finds unacceptable so that they become both plausible and consciously tolerable" (Brown & Starkey, 2000, p. 106). Rationalizing requires exercising a degree of self-deception (Laughlin, 1970). For example, a rideshare driver I interviewed enthusiastically shared, "I've only had two people make extreme messes in my car. I've only had one barber and one person urinate in my car, and so I feel like...that's a pretty good track record" (#33). In almost any other work context, experiencing this type of assault on one's personal vehicle would be considered an unacceptable outcome. However, rather than focus on these experiences in an absolute sense, this driver chose to compare her experiences to the experiences of other rideshare drivers who presumably have worse track records, thus offering her some psychological relief by comparison. Another driver recounted harrowing experiences that threatened his physical safety, while sprinkling his story with rationalizing statements:

I've had a nine millimeter gun pulled on me two times. Nine millimeter gun, two times...You have to pay the bills...It's all about bills and that's what I'm just trying to do. I forget it [the incident]...I say, you know what? This is not going to happen again and you just drive again.....I was brought up in a military family. So for me like that kind of stuff, it will not scare me. But the second time it happened, and this just happened two weeks ago in Gardena and they were high schoolers that pulled a gun on me, high schoolers, high schoolers were pointing a gun at me...I was supposed to take him one mile up the block and the guy didn't want to pay a dollar more to add the other passenger. And because of that, the guy pulled a gun on me...I'm stronger mentally I feel. I feel like I'm stronger mentally (#20).

In this example, the driver engages in rationalizing self-talk to convince himself that 1) having a gun pulled on him at point blank range by a stranger over a \$1 dispute is not scary because he grew up in a military household and 2) his safety will not be jeopardized in this way for a second time. The driver concludes by emphasizing personal growth in proclaiming that he is stronger mentally as a result.¹¹ Interestingly, he repeats this growth claim a second time as if to convince himself of its veracity or speak it into existence. By drawing temporal connections to his military upbringing and subsequent mental growth, the driver successfully situates a stressful experience in his narrative identity,

¹¹ It is important to acknowledge how economic desperation and rationalization often go hand in hand in this context. The driver quoted above estimated that he averages 85 h of driving a week while noting that he is "barely making, let's say \$11 an hour" (without benefits)... "at 46 years of age, who's going to take me at 46 years of age?...a lot of companies will not" (#20).

allowing him to muster just enough psychological relief to continue driving.

Other more entrepreneurially-minded drivers seemed to internalize the “be your own boss” messaging that many on-demand companies tirelessly espouse¹² and subsequently leaned on this self-image to rationalize negative aspects of the work. “If something goes wrong, just expect to like suck it up and deal with it, pretty much, is the attitude I get [from the company]. I guess that’s part of being your own boss, that if things go wrong you got to deal with it” (#11), said a relatively inexperienced food delivery driver seemingly trying to reconcile this less desirable aspect of being his own boss with the company’s misleading emphasis on driver autonomy and economic freedom. While reflecting on his experiences, a different driver with nearly 15000 completed rides and deliveries across multiple platforms noted, “I feel like I might have the DNA of an entrepreneur...I try to think of [driving] as you’re running your business” before moments later conceding some degree of self-deception, “You’re actually really not running a business doing [platform name]” (#24). Another driver confidently asserted that “I’m an entrepreneur,” while claiming that “[platform name] has expanded my thinking...I guess you could say it’s kind of paid training. All that driving just gives me time to think about what I want to do” (#22). The use of phrases like, “I guess that’s part of...”, “I guess you could say...”, and “I try to think of it as...” suggest that some drivers struggled to accept their own rationalization attempts.

Over time, it became increasingly clear that although intrapersonal forms of narrative flexing helped drivers attenuate the threat posed to their narrative identities, it provided insufficient relief on its own because narrative identities must ultimately be negotiated with and through others (Swann, Johnson, & Bosson, 2009). However, app-based, contract work provides drivers with neither the “social relationships” nor the “institutional structures” needed to collectively craft their narrative identities (Ezzy, 1998, p. 250). Thus, in addition to flexibly construing narrative details intrapersonally, many drivers engaged in narrative flexing interpersonally through storytelling in online driver forums.

4.5. Interpersonal narrative flexing in online driver forums

Numerous drivers described seeking out and contributing to online driver communities on Facebook, Reddit, UberPeople.net, and other platforms unprompted, which led me to revise my interview protocol to more thoroughly examine drivers’ views of and experiences in these forums. After returning to the literature and reflecting on my own immersion in several of these communities, I concluded that in addition to functioning as onboarding and socialization tools for drivers, they also functioned as *online sentient communities* that “provide reassurance, feedback, and targets for social comparison that help individual members stabilize their identity” (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010, p. 53). Importantly, these communities offered drivers something that internal narrative flexing efforts alone could not: opportunities for social connection and social comparison through storytelling with similar others.

Storytelling in online sentient communities. The online forums helped drivers stabilize their narrative identities by providing them with the means to connect with other drivers over similar experiences and perspectives through storytelling. One driver explained: “You talk to other drivers [on the forums] and you go, yeah, you’re not the only one that

feels that way, you know?” (#21). Another driver added, “It’s also kind of nice to be able to be like, ‘Apartment deliveries, am I right?’ And everyone goes, ‘Oh, they’re the worst’...there’s definitely comradery involved in those message boards” (#40). “The community aspect of that is nice” (#15). “You talk to each other because you feel so alone” (#38). In addition to counteracting drivers’ general feelings of loneliness, the forums allowed drivers to subject their unique driving experiences to social scrutiny – often for the first time – through narrative flexing. The resulting social comparisons led to further social connection for some drivers and backlash for others as I explain below.

Some drivers shared stories of despair or hardship (e.g., pertaining to an abusive customer, poor earnings, etc.), which audience members likely perceived as more relatable than stories of triumph given drivers’ disproportionate exposure to negative (vs. positive) experiences. The lateral social comparisons prompted by relatable (and predominantly negative) stories helped drivers forge positive social connections with other drivers. In other words, stories featuring negative experiences resonated more strongly with other drivers and resulted in social connection to a greater extent than stories featuring positive experiences. For example, in response to a driver’s representative post about a particularly bad customer experience that resulted in the customer giving the driver a 1-star review, audience members responded with supportive statements such as: *“So many of us have experienced this. You have been initiated into the club, and I have fifteen one-star reviews, don’t sweat it.”* In a second representative example, a driver posted about a passenger asking him if he had a car seat for the passenger’s young child to which four different audience members responded with statements such as: *This happened to me too!, This happened to me three times!, I have also been there with passengers acting like it’s our fault, and Why do passengers think we have to meet all of their needs?* In a third example, a female community member posted about her “worst ride ever” involving physical violence and other illegal activities to which separate people responded: *I am so sorry that this happened to you, Thank you for sharing your story so that we can all learn from your experience, As a woman I have also had numerous scary experiences like this. Stay strong. I am sorry, and I am also a female driver who works during the late night and early morning hours! Thank god that you are okay.* By engaging with other drivers, some narrative flexers came to view their outcomes as more attributable to the characteristics of on-demand work than to their own shortcomings or bad luck as individual drivers. This knowledge appeared to reduce drivers’ anxiety and help them consolidate their experiences into a more coherent narrative identity.

Other drivers shared rare, triumphant stories (e.g., pertaining to a large customer tip, transporting or delivering to a famous customer, high weekly earnings, etc.), prompting their peers to make identity-threatening upward social comparisons that often resulted in backlash for the narrative flexer. Identity-threatening upward social comparisons caused audience members to attempt to shift the focus away from the narrative flexer’s positive outcome (e.g., earnings in an absolute sense) and toward some threatening detail of the narrative (e.g., earnings per hour). As one rideshare driver explained, “There’s people that like to screenshot their earnings...there’s a lot of that. Like ‘hey, look how much I made today’...then you automatically get people like, ‘oh yeah, well it took you this many hours’” (#27). Another driver explained that

¹² Uber has referred to their massive fleet of drivers as “entrepreneurs” (<https://www.uber.com/newsroom/financing-100000-entrepreneurs>), with some in the media using the term “Uberpreneurship” (Youshaei, 2015) to highlight elements of entrepreneurship which are inherent in the work. However, others have convincingly challenged this view on the grounds that drivers are unable to set prices or meaningfully affect their earnings (Mishel & McNicholas, 2019).

¹³ According to the Association of Internet Researchers, “transforming the quotations...or creating samples of discourse that are composites from various participants may mitigate risk” related to protecting subjects’ anonymity (Franzke, Bechmann, Zimmer, & Ess, 2020, p. 11). Thus, when reporting on online driver forums, I use a “practical method of data representation” (Markham, 2012, p. 334) that involves the “transfiguration of original data into composite accounts or representational interactions.” This approach is a “sensible and ethically grounded solution for protecting privacy in arenas of shifting public/private context” (p. 342). I present these composite accounts in italics to distinguish them from direct quotes.

“people want to feel proud of what they’re doing...it’s like, ‘Look...can you please validate me?’” (#30). “They’re just starved for recognition of what they do” (#39), added a different driver.

My review of various driver forums supported these drivers’ claims. In one representative post, a member claimed to have earned nearly \$6000 in three weeks of driving (an unattainable outcome for most drivers) to which separate community members responded with statements such as: *Wait until you have to pay your taxes, You must have spent \$800 on gas lol, I hope you saved money for vehicle maintenance expenses, and Do you even have health insurance?* In a similar example, a different driver posted a screenshot of his earnings over an 8-day period depicting 82 h and 35 min of total driving time to which separate community members responded: *How much fuel did you use?...Did you have any time left for a social life?, You forgot to factor in vehicle maintenance expenses, Please get a COVID test!!!!, and Are you attempting to show off because I’m not impressed?* Another member simply posted a screenshot of a calculator displaying the original poster’s low hourly earnings.

These examples illustrate “framing contests” that developed between narrative flexers and their audience, with each party seeking to persuade the other party to adopt their view of the situation (Kaplan, 2008). As “narratives are contested and collective accounts negotiated” (Maitlis & Christianson, 2014, p. 82), some drivers were confronted with unsettling, but nonetheless informative, feedback. Analogously, someone negotiating over the price of a car may desire to uncover information about their counterpart’s constraints regardless of how frustrating knowledge of that information may ultimately be because possessing that information is essential to determine if a deal is possible. From this perspective, experiencing audience backlash or a threatening social comparison can contribute to advancing drivers’ self-narratives by clarifying the range of interpretations of and reactions to a particular situation or outcome.

Taken together, my findings reveal that the same aspects of the sociotechnical context of app-based, contract work that strip drivers of their personalizing characteristics and ultimately threaten their ability to constitute and animate their narrative identities paradoxically free them to curate more personalized narrative identities through narrative flexing. The net effect of these competing forces is, at best, the slow realization of an undesirable future just as the net effect of continuously playing a slot machine in a casino is the slow realization of an economic loss. Another pull of the arm and the slot machine comes to life, wheels spinning as the vise of reality tightens. Stationary, yet hopeful. There is always next time. Someone has to win the jackpot and be transported to a new station. Yet, deep down, knowledge that the house always wins looms large.

5. General discussion

The future of work is here. In recent years, the independent workforce has grown three times faster than the U.S. workforce overall (Upwork & Freelancers Union, 2017). By 2021, nearly 41 million workers in this economic space had earned money driving for app-based platforms in the past (Pew Research Center, 2021). To better understand the identity dynamics affecting workers in this new world of work, I conducted an autoethnographic field study in the on-demand economy. The inductively derived model that emerged from my data specifies the process by which app-based, contract workers experience and respond to unique identity threats and opportunities. Specifically, my findings suggest that the same characteristics that workers experienced as depersonalizing (i.e., independent contracting, technologically-mediated task environment, and absence of coworkers) reduced interpersonal accountability concerns and, therefore, facilitated a form of narrative identity work that I call narrative flexing. Drivers’ engaged in narrative flexing intrapersonally (through narrative structuring, fantasizing, and rationalizing) and interpersonally (through storytelling in online sentient communities). However, without access to an institutionally provided holding environment or sufficient autonomy to

successfully cultivate a personalized holding environment for themselves, workers’ narrative flexing efforts only partially attenuated the threat posed by depersonalization to the constitution and animation of their narrative identities.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

The current work makes a number of noteworthy contributions to the literature. First, my findings highlight the unique identity threats and opportunities facing app-based, contract workers in the on-demand economy who are betwixt and between extreme levels of institutional support. For employees who are *fully inside* of traditional organizations, “the price of guidance...is fewer degrees of freedom and more pressure to conform” (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016, p. 55), whereas for workers who are *fully outside* of traditional organizations, “the price [of existential fulfillment]” is often “economic anxiety” (Petriglieri et al., 2019, p. 141). Crucially, app-based, contract workers incur both costs, while reaping neither of the benefits. Without access to a ready-made identity workspace or the necessary freedom to cultivate a personalized holding environment, app-workers are suspended in a perpetual state of “betweenness” that is sustained by their high dependence on technology and inability to meaningfully customize important aspects of their work. One interview informant suggested that these features of app-work point to the existence of a “third business model,” noting that “It’s not really traditional employment, it’s not really independent contracting. It’s like somewhere in between” (#21). This description of existing “somewhere in between” combined with the common frustration of “going nowhere...month after month after month” (#36) invoke the image of a worker laboring aimlessly on a stationary bicycle that is literally suspended, struggling to gain traction on any path below – i.e., struggling to connect their past to the present and the present to a desired future.

By seeking to understand workers’ efforts to attenuate threats to the advancement of their narrative identities, this work also contributes to crafting a “sharper liminality construct” (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016, p. 49). Whereas liminality (a term derived from the Latin word for “threshold,” Turner, 1967; Van Gennep, 1908) has historically been conceptualized as a “highly ritualized process of transition from one social status and identity to another” (Ibarra & Obodaru, 2016, p. 49) involving clear scripts, expert guides, and predetermined outcomes (e.g., an analyst who becomes a manager in the same organization), contemporary conceptualizations of liminality are concerned with “not whether the person is reincorporated into an unequivocal next and ‘higher’ role, but the extent to which he or she is able to make productive and creative use of liminality’s suspension of identity to question prior givens, explore different possibilities, and ultimately craft an evolving sense of self” (p. 54). The current study is among the first to consider how this updated conceptualization of liminality affects narrative identity construction in the new world of work.

Second, I advance theorizing related to narrative identity work (Ibarra & Barbulescu, 2010) by introducing the concept of narrative flexing and identifying the intrapersonal and interpersonal mechanisms through which workers engage in it. My conceptualization of narrative flexing – which involves selectively emphasizing, to oneself or others, an atypically positive or negative experience or perspective with the aim of achieving psychological relief – is broader than the concept of *bragging* (“informing others of a positive, self-relevant behavior or trait,” Berman et al., 2015; p. 91), which involves disclosing exclusively positive and not necessarily atypical information. Thus, narrative flexing encompasses bragging, but the two constructs do not fully overlap. Additionally, narrative flexing is a more focused concept than *self-disclosure* (“any message about the self that a person communicates to another,” Wheelless & Grotz, 1976, p. 338), which does not specify the typicality or valence of the disclosure. Finally, narrative flexing is related to the concept of *working out loud* (WOL, Sergi & Bonneau, 2016), whereby workers use social media to narrate their work in real time (Winer, 2009). However, whereas WOL involves “making mundane work

visible” (Sergi & Bonneau, 2016, p. 378) on social media, narrative flexing involves making *atypical* experiences visible and is not confined to social media.

My findings suggest that narrative flexing will be most prevalent and effective in dynamic and identity-threatening situations that provide high interpretive flexibility and low interpersonal accountability. For example, situations involving involuntary organizational exits (Kulkarni, 2020) and discontinuous career transitions (Haynie & Shepherd, 2011) may have these characteristics and, therefore, be conducive to narrative flexing through rationalizing and narrative structuring, in particular. Furthermore, identity-threatening situations that provide opportunities for individuals to congregate and communicate in virtual communities (Kaakinen et al., 2020; Sirola et al., 2021) may be conducive to interpersonal narrative flexing through storytelling, while the use of increasingly sophisticated virtual avatars (Nowak & Fox, 2018; Raveendhran, Fast, & Carnevale, 2020) and immersive technologies (Suh & Prophet, 2018) may facilitate more narrative flexing through fantasy in the future. Finally, workers who experience status inconsistency across roles (Fernandes et al., 2021; Han & Pollock, 2021; Sessions et al., 2021) or power fluctuation across situations (Anicich, 2021; Anicich et al., 2021a; Anicich & Hirsh, 2017a, 2017b; Sabey et al., 2021) may be prone to engaging in narrative flexing through narrative structuring. For example, through narrative structuring, a middle manager may situate their conflicting “boss” and “subordinate” roles into a coherent narrative identity by emphasizing their history as a role transcendent “change enabler” or “relationship builder” (Anicich et al., 2021b) as a way to attenuate the identity conflict that these incompatible roles may otherwise provoke (Hirsh & Kang, 2016; see also work on work-identity integrity violations, Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006). Ultimately, in specifying how drivers attempt to re-imagine identity-threatening aspects of app-work as liberating through narrative flexing, my findings respond to claims that identity scholars “have not systematically addressed the ways in which threats come to be seen as opportunities or opportunities come to be seen as threats” (Bataille & Vough, 2020, p. 37).

Third, my findings help to disentangle the identity implications of two alternative work arrangements that have tended to be conflated in past work (Duggan et al., 2020) – direct contract work involving two parties and app-based, contract work involving three parties. Compared to direct contract workers, app-based, contract workers are 1) much more dependent on technology to identify and communicate with customers and perform the work and 2) have much less freedom to set wages, offer or perform diverse tasks, and meaningfully customize their task environment in other ways. These differences suggest that strategies for cultivating a personalized holding environment and viable work identity that may work for some independent workers (e.g., see Petriglieri et al., 2019) may be less effective, or entirely ineffective, for app-based, contract workers, underscoring the identity challenges facing workers who are neither fully tethered to nor fully untethered from traditional organizational forces.

More generally, past work has done little to distinguish among capital platform work (e.g., Airbnb), crowdwork (e.g., Amazon Mechanical Turk), and app-work (e.g., Lyft). This limitation has been exacerbated by commentators’ inconsistent application of labels such as “independent contractors,” “freelancers,” and “gig workers” to describe diverse classes of workers and work experiences. Indeed, research related to alternative work arrangements has been dominated by “monolithic perspectives” that blur the distinctions among profoundly different segments of the economy (Duggan et al., 2020, p. 116). These distinctions are not trivial. For example, some segments of this economic space rely on generally *high-skilled* and *physically remote* workers offering *diverse services* to customers who themselves may live in other countries (e.g., Freelancer.com workers), whereas other segments of this economic space rely on generally *low-skilled* workers who are *physically confined* to the same space as their customers and who offer *identical services* over time and in relation to other workers (e.g., Lyft drivers). My

findings, therefore, contribute to a growing, yet still nascent, body of work that takes seriously the need to understand the psychological and behavioral tendencies of workers in this increasingly large, yet insufficiently differentiated, segment of the economy (Cameron, 2021; Cameron & Rahman, 2021; Kameswaran, Cameron, & Dillahun, 2018).

Fourth, this work helps to refine and extend the concept of identity workspaces (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010) by illuminating the interplay among physical, social, and psychological spaces in shaping the identity outcomes of workers. From a psychodynamic perspective, “space” functions as “an intermediate area of experiencing, to which inner reality and external life both contribute” (Winnicott, 1975, p. 230) and may be physical, social, and psychological in nature (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). The current findings suggest that drivers struggled to perform successful identity work while engaging in fleeting and semi-anonymous interactions in narrow and constraining physical spaces (e.g., drivers’ vehicles) and vast and virtual social spaces (e.g., online driver forums); at times retreating to or creating more hopeful psychological spaces where fantasy and rationalization could flourish. This is a noteworthy contribution because, as Lepisto et al. (2015, p. 17) note in their review of the identity work literature, researchers have explored “the why, when, what, and how of identity work” but “we do not review place or ‘where’ identity work occurs given its under representation in the literature.” This shortcoming has broader implications for the identity work literature because “how people conduct identity work is closely tied to where they do it” (Petriglieri et al., 2018, p. 480).

Finally, past work examining individuals’ efforts to craft and/or navigate holding environments has disproportionately reported on privileged subjects with high social standing including elite MBA students (Petriglieri et al., 2018; Petriglieri, Wood, & Petriglieri, 2011), employees with job titles such as “head partner,” “senior lawyer,” and “CEO” (Petriglieri & Obodaru, 2019, p. 701), and workers in knowledge-based and creative roles (e.g., artists, writers, consultants; Petriglieri et al., 2019). However, the voices of more vulnerable and oppressed workers – such as the ones considered in the present work – have largely remained silent. In surfacing these workers’ struggles and emotions, this work also shines a light on the *human* as compared to the purely *economic* implications of algorithmic management. This latter contribution is timely because there has been a “predominant research focus on the economic value of algorithms” while overlooking how they affect “worker experiences and livelihoods” (Kellogg et al., 2020, p. 383-384, for recent exceptions see Cameron, 2021; Cameron & Rahman, 2021; Newman, Fast, & Harmon, 2020; Raveendhran & Fast, 2021; Raveendhran et al., 2020).

5.2. Limitations and future directions

My inductive and qualitative study based on a relatively small sample of workers drawn from a particular population presents generalizability challenges. It is possible that my findings do not reflect the experiences and views of typical drivers. Furthermore, the extent to which my findings may generalize beyond app-based, contract work in the on-demand economy remains an open question. However, there are reasons to believe that my findings will become more relevant and generalizable as several transformations that are already underway across the global economy continue to take hold including the precipitous rise of algorithmic management (Kellogg et al., 2020) and remote work (Ozimek, 2020) combined with the proliferation of technology companies that broadly comprise the gig economy (Duggan et al., 2020) and that have vigorously fought to continue to classify workers as independent contractors instead of employees (see California Proposition 22).¹⁴ The confluence of these factors is likely to expose a growing number of workers to conditions that mirror the conditions faced by the

¹⁴ However, in August 2021, a California Supreme Court judge ruled Proposition 22 unconstitutional. More legal battles are sure to follow.

drivers in my study (e.g., economic precarity, technologically-mediated task environments, and social isolation). Finally, my findings are limited by my US-centric sample and perspective, which is noteworthy because under algorithmic control “worker experiences may vary according to country” (Kellogg et al., 2020, p. 385), highlighting the need to study these issues in other national cultural contexts.

My findings also point to several interesting directions for future research. First, more work is needed to understand the role of technology in facilitating and undermining the use or cultivation of holding environments to meet workers’ identity needs. My findings suggest that technology – when combined with other aspects of the sociotechnical context of app-based, contract work – at once threatens drivers’ ability to constitute and animate their narrative identities and provides the means to attenuate that threat. However, important questions remain such as: How can workers and organizations wield technology in ways that promote instead of undermine successful identity work? Answering this and related questions would allow scholars to respond to Petriglieri’s (2020, p. 11) speculation that “the study of identities technologically sustained and socially eroded might help us peek into how (or for whom) technology might contain, rather than constrain, a full experience of humanity.” Second, scholars should prioritize studying how interpersonal accountability affects the narrative identity construction process. In what ways do narrative identities constructed with minimal (vs. extensive) audience scrutiny differ? What are the psychological and behavioral consequences of these differences? Third, future work should seek to understand how concepts such as organizational trust, commitment, and culture are experienced in platform-mediated compared to traditional organizational settings. Fourth, exploring how working as a driver in the on-demand economy interacts with other aspects of drivers’ lives including their relationships with loved ones and ability to code-switch between driving and engaging in other personal and professional pursuits may also be worthy future endeavors. Finally, scholars should consider using research methods that allow for a more fine-grained analysis of drivers’ momentary experiences. Experience sampling methodology (ESM) – involving multiple daily observations per participant over multiple days – is a natural methodological fit for studying driver experiences in the on-demand economy. For example, an ESM study could reveal intraday fluctuations in important driver experiences that may qualify existing perspectives and point to new and potentially fruitful areas of inquiry.

Overall, my autoethnographic study of app-based, contract workers in the on-demand economy sheds light on the antecedents and consequences of drivers’ efforts to constitute and animate their narrative identities in the face of depersonalizing technological and social constraints. As the services and working conditions provided by technology platforms continue to evolve, scholars and practitioners alike should prioritize understanding this growing and culturally disruptive segment of the economy and the workers who, quite literally, drive it.

CRedit authorship contribution statement

Eric M. Anicich: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Appendix A. Supplementary material

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2022.104138>.

References

- Amabile, T. M., & Hall, D. T. (2021). The undervalued power of self-relevant research: The case of researching retirement while retiring. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 35(3), 347–366.
- Anderson, L. (2006). Analytic Autoethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 35(4), 373–395.
- Anicich, E. M. (2021). Beyond high and low: Obstacles and opportunities associated with conceptualizing middle power and other middle-range effects. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, e12607.
- Anicich, E. M., & Hirsh, J. B. (2017a). The psychology of middle power: Vertical code-switching, role conflict, and behavioral inhibition. *Academy of Management Review*, 42(4), 659–682.
- Anicich, E. M., & Hirsh, J. B. (2017b). Why being a middle manager is so exhausting. *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2017/03/whybeing-a-middle-manager-is-so-exhausting>.
- Anicich, E. M., Schaefer, M., Gale, J., & Foulk, T. A. (2021a). A fluctuating sense of power is associated with reduced well-being. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 92, Article 104057.
- Anicich, E. M., Schaefer, M., Gale, J., & Foulk, T. A. (2021b). *Harvard Business Review*. <https://hbr.org/2021/11/when-your-authority-fluctuates-throughout-the-day>.
- Anteby, M. (2013). Relaxing the taboo on telling our own stories: Upholding professional distance and personal involvement. *Organization Science*, 24(4), 1277–1290.
- Ashford, S. J., Caza, B. B., & Reid, E. M. (2018). From surviving to thriving in the gig economy: A research agenda for individuals in the new world of work. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 38, 23–41.
- Ashforth, B. E., Harrison, S. H., & Corley, K. G. (2008). Identification in organizations: An examination of four fundamental questions. *Journal of Management*, 34(3), 325–374.
- Ashforth, B. E., & Mael, F. (1989). Social identity theory and the organization. *Academy of Management Review*, 14(1), 20–39.
- Ashforth, B. E., & Schinoff, B. S. (2016). Identity under construction: How individuals come to define themselves in organizations. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 3, 111–137.
- Athens, L. (1994). The self as a soliloquy. *Sociological Quarterly*, 35(3), 521–532.
- Bataille, C. D., & Vough, H. C. (2020). More than the Sum of My Parts: An Intrapersonal Network Approach to Identity Work in Response to Identity Opportunities and Threats. *Academy of Management Review*.
- Baumeister, R. F., Dale, K., & Sommer, K. L. (1998). Freudian defense mechanisms and empirical findings in modern social psychology: Reaction formation, projection, displacement, undoing, isolation, sublimation, and denial. *Journal of Personality*, 66(6), 1081–1124.
- Berman, J. Z., Levine, E. E., Barasch, A., & Small, D. A. (2015). The Braggart’s dilemma: On the social rewards and penalties of advertising prosocial behavior. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 52(1), 90–104.
- Bion, W. R. (1970). *Attention and interpretation*. London: Karnac.
- Boje, D. M. (1991). The storytelling organization: A study of story performance in an office-supply firm. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 106–126.
- Bourgoin, A., Bencherki, N., & Faraj, S. (2020). “And who are you?”: A performative perspective on authority in organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63(4), 1134–1165.
- Boyle, M., & Parry, K. (2007). Telling the whole story: The case for organizational autoethnography. *Culture and Organization*, 13(3), 185–190.
- Brown, A. D., & Starkey, K. (2000). Organizational identity and learning: A psychodynamic perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 25(1), 102–120.
- Cameron, L. D. (2021). “Making Out” While Driving: Relational and Efficiency Games in the Gig Economy. *Organization Science*.
- Cameron, L. D., & Rahman, H. (2021). Expanding the locus of resistance: Understanding the co-constitution of control and resistance in the gig economy. *Organization Science*.
- Caza, B. B., Vough, H., & Puranik, H. (2018). Identity work in organizations and occupations: Definitions, theories, and pathways forward. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 39(7), 889–910.
- Chan, K. (2021). “EU plans to improve conditions for gig economy workers by classifying them as employees.” PBS. Retrieved from: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/eu-plans-to-improve-conditions-for-gig-economy-workers-by-classifying-them-as-employees>.
- Chang, H. (2016). *Autoethnography as method* (Vol. 1, Routledge).
- Clandinin, D. J., & Connelly, F. M. (2000). *Narrative inquiry: Experience and story in qualitative research*. Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Cooley, C. H. (1902). *Human nature and the social order*. New York, NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons.
- Cooley, C. H. (1998). *On self and social organization*. University of Chicago Press.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2014). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Sage Publications.
- Denzin, N. K. (2014). *Interpretive Autoethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Duggan, J., Sherman, U., Carbery, R., & McDonnell, A. (2020). Algorithmic management and app-work in the gig economy: A research agenda for employment relations and HRM. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 30(1), 114–132.
- Ellis, C. (1997). Evocative autoethnography: Writing emotionally about our lives. In *Representation and the text: Re-framing the narrative voice* (pp. 116–139). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. (2011). Autoethnography: An overview. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 273–290.
- Ellis, C., & Bochner, A. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity: Researcher as subject. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 733–768). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Emerson, K. T., & Murphy, M. C. (2014). Identity threat at work: How social identity threat and situational cues contribute to racial and ethnic disparities in the workplace. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 20(4), 508–520.
- Ezzy, D. (1998). Theorizing narrative identity: Symbolic interactionism and hermeneutics. *Sociological Quarterly*, 39(2), 239–252.
- Fernandes, C. R., Yu, S., Howell, T. M., Brooks, A. W., Kilduff, G. J., & Pettit, N. C. (2021). What is your status portfolio? Higher status variance across groups increases interpersonal helping but decreases intrapersonal well-being. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 165, 56–75.
- Franzke, A. S., Bechmann, A., Zimmer, M., Ess, C. and the Association of Internet Researchers (2020). Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0. <https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf>.
- French, R. B., & Vince, R. (1999). *Group relations, management, and organization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Freud, A. (1966). *The writings of Anna Freud Volume II. The ego and the mechanisms of defense (revised ed.)*. Madison, CT: International Universities Press.
- Freud, S. (1949). (First published in 1922.) *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Gecas, V. (1982). The self-concept. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 8(1), 1–33.
- Gergen, K. J., & Gergen, M. M. (1988). Narrative and the self as relationship. In *Advances in experimental social psychology* (pp. 17–56). Academic Press.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity: Self and society in the late modern age*. Stanford University Press.
- Gioia, D. A., & Chittipeddi, K. (1991). Sensemaking and sensegiving in strategic change initiation. *Strategic Management Journal*, 12(6), 433–448.
- Glaser, B., & Strauss, A. (1967). Grounded theory: The discovery of grounded theory. *Sociology the Journal of the British Sociological Association*, 12(1), 27–49.
- Gould, L. J. (2001). Introduction. In L. J. Gould, L. F. Stapley, & M. Stein (Eds.), *The systems psychodynamics of organizations* (pp. 1–15). London: Karnac.
- Hall, J., Horton, J., & Knoepfle, D. (2019). Pricing efficiently in designed markets: The case of Uber. Working paper. San Francisco: Uber Technologies.
- Han, J. H., & Pollock, T. G. (2021). The two towers (or somewhere in between): The behavioral consequences of positional inconsistency across status hierarchies. *Academy of Management Journal*, 64(1), 86–113.
- Haynes, K. (2018). Autoethnography. *The SAGE Handbook of qualitative business and management research methods: Methods and challenges*.
- Haynie, J. M., & Shepherd, D. (2011). Toward a theory of discontinuous career transition: Investigating career transitions necessitated by traumatic life events. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(3), 501–524.
- Hibbert, P., Beech, N., Callagher, L., & Siedlok, F. (2021). After the Pain: Reflexive Practice, Emotion Work and Learning. *Organization Studies*, 01708406211011014.
- Hirsh, J. B., Galinsky, A. D., & Zhong, C. B. (2011). Drunk, powerful, and in the dark: How general processes of disinhibition produce both prosocial and antisocial behavior. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 6(5), 415–427.
- Hirsh, J. B., & Kang, S. K. (2016). Mechanisms of identity conflict: Uncertainty, anxiety, and the behavioral inhibition system. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 20(3), 223–244.
- Ibarra, H. (2003). *Working identity: Unconventional strategies for reinventing your career*. Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
- Ibarra, H., & Barbulescu, R. (2010). Identity as narrative: Prevalence, effectiveness, and consequences of narrative identity work in macro work role transitions. *Academy of Management Review*, 35(1), 135–154.
- Ibarra, H., & Obodaru, O. (2016). Betwixt and between identities: Liminal experience in contemporary careers. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 36, 47–64.
- Jaconi, M. (Jul. 13, 2014). *The 'On-Demand Economy' Is Revolutionizing Consumer Behavior – Here's How*, Business Insider. <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-on-demand-economy-2014-7>.
- Joinson, A. N. (1999). Anonymity, disinhibition and social desirability on the Internet. *Behaviour Research Methods, Instruments and Computers*, 31, 433–438.
- Jones, E. B., & Bartunek, J. M. (2019). Too close or optimally positioned? The value of personally relevant research. *Academy of Management Perspectives*.
- Kaakinen, M., Sirola, A., Savolainen, I., & Oksanen, A. (2020). Shared identity and shared information in social media: Development and validation of the identity bubble reinforcement scale. *Media Psychology*, 23(1), 25–51.
- Kahn, W. A. (2001). Holding environments at work. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 37(3), 260–279.
- Kameswaran, V., Cameron, L., & Dillahun, T. R. (2018). Support for social and cultural capital development in real-time ridesharing services. In *In Proceedings of the 2018 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems* (pp. 1–12).
- Kaplan, S. (2008). Framing contests: Strategy making under uncertainty. *Organization Science*, 19(5), 729–752.
- Karp, D. (1996). *Speaking of sadness*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Kellogg, K. C., Valentine, M. A., & Christin, A. (2020). Algorithms at work: The new contested terrain of control. *Academy of Management Annals*, 14(1), 366–410.
- Kernberg, O. F. (1978). Leadership and organizational functioning: Organizational regression. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 28(1), 3–25.
- Kets de Vries, M. F., & Korotov, K. (2007). Creating transformational executive education programs. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 6(3), 375–387.
- Kindelan, K. (2021). Women turn to app-based delivery platforms for work flexibility amid pandemic. Retrieved from: *Good Morning America* <https://www.goodmorningamerica.com/living/story/women-turn-app-based-delivery-platforms-work-flexibility-80395932>.
- Kreiner, G. E., Hollensbe, E. C., & Sheep, M. L. (2006). Where is the “me” among the “we”? Identity work and the search for optimal balance. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49, 1031–1057.
- Kulkarni, M. (2020). Holding on to let go: Identity work in discontinuous and involuntary career transitions. *Human Relations*, 73(10), 1415–1438.
- Lamont, M., & Swidler, A. (2014). Methodological pluralism and the possibilities and limits of interviewing. *Qualitative Sociology*, 37(2), 153–171.
- Laughlin, H. P. (1970). *The ego and its defenses*. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Leary, M. R., & Kowalski, R. M. (1990). Impression management: A literature review and two-component model. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107(1), 34–47.
- Leary, M. R., Terry, M. L., Batts Allen, A., & Tate, E. B. (2009). The concept of ego threat in social and personality psychology: Is ego threat a viable scientific construct? *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 13(3), 151–164.
- Lepisto, D. A., Crosina, E., & Pratt, M. G. (2015). Identity work within and beyond the professions: Toward a theoretical integration and extension. In A. Desilva, & M. Aparicio (Eds.), *International handbook of professional identities* (pp. 11–37). Rosemead, CA: Scientific & Academic Publishing.
- Linde, C. (2001). Narrative and social tacit knowledge. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 5(2), 160–170.
- Liu, M., Brynjolfsson, E., & Dowlatabadi, J. (2021). Do digital platforms reduce moral hazard? The case of Uber and taxis. *Management Science*.
- Locke, K. (2001). *Grounded Theory in Management Research*. London: Sage.
- Lofland, J. (1971). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Maitlis, S., & Christianson, M. (2014). Sensemaking in organizations: Taking stock and moving forward. *Academy of Management Annals*, 8(1), 57–125.
- Markham, A. (2012). Fabrication as ethical practice: Qualitative inquiry in ambiguous internet contexts. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(3), 334–353.
- Markus, H., & Nurius, P. (1986). Possible selves. *American Psychologist*, 41(9), 954–969.
- McAdams, D. P. (1996). Personality, modernity, and the storied self: A contemporary framework for studying persons. *Psychological Inquiry*, 7(4), 295–321.
- McAdams, D. P. (2001). The psychology of life stories. *Review of General Psychology*, 5(2), 100–122.
- McAdams, D. P., & McLean, K. C. (2013). Narrative identity. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(3), 233–238.
- Meyer, D. (2021). Uber drivers are workers—and they deserve minimum wage and paid leave, the U.K.'s highest court rules. Retrieved from: *Fortune* <https://fortune.com/2021/02/19/uber-drivers-are-workers-minimum-wage-paid-leave-britain-court-ruling/>.
- Miller, E. J., & Rice, A. K. (1967). *Systems of organization*. London, UK: Tavistock.
- Mishel, L., & McNicholas, C. (2019). Uber drivers are not entrepreneurs: NLRB General Counsel ignores the realities of driving for Uber. *Economic Policy Institute*.
- Montoya-Weiss, M. M., Massey, A. P., & Song, M. (2001). Getting it together: Temporal coordination and conflict management in global virtual teams. *Academy of Management Journal*, 44(6), 1251–1262.
- Neumann, M. (1996). Collecting ourselves at the end of the century. *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of Qualitative Writing*, 1, 172–198.
- Neumann, J. E., & Hirschhorn, L. (1999). The Challenge of Integrating Psychodynamic and Organizational Theory. *Human Relations*, 52, 683–695.
- Newman, D. T., Fast, N. J., & Harmon, D. J. (2020). When eliminating bias isn't fair: Algorithmic reductionism and procedural justice in human resource decisions. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 160, 149–167.
- Nowak, K. L., & Fox, J. (2018). Avatars and computer-mediated communication: A review of the definitions, uses, and effects of digital representations. *Review of Communication Research*, 6, 30–53.
- Petriglieri, J. L. (2011). Under threat: Responses to and the consequences of threats to individuals' identities. *Academy of Management Review*, 36(4), 641–662.
- Ozimek, A. (2020). The future of remote work. *SSRN*. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3638597>.
- Petriglieri, G. (2020). F** k Science!? An Invitation to Humanize Organization Theory. *Organization Theory*, 1(1).
- Petriglieri, G., Ashford, S. J., & Wrzesniewski, A. (2019). Agony and ecstasy in the gig economy: Cultivating holding environments for precarious and personalized work identities. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 64(1), 124–170.
- Petriglieri, J. L., & Obodaru, O. (2019). Secure-base relationships as drivers of professional identity development in dual-career couples. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 64(3), 694–736.
- Petriglieri, G., & Petriglieri, J. L. (2010). Identity workspaces: The case of business schools. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 9(1), 44–60.
- Petriglieri, G., & Petriglieri, J. L. (2020). The return of the oppressed: A systems psychodynamic approach to organization studies. *Academy of Management Annals*, 14(1), 411–449.
- Petriglieri, G., Petriglieri, J. L., & Wood, J. D. (2018). Fast tracks and inner journeys: Crafting portable selves for contemporary careers. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 63(3), 479–525.
- Petriglieri, G., & Stein, M. (2012). The unwanted self: Projective identification in leaders' identity work. *Organization Studies*, 33(9), 1217–1235.
- Petriglieri, G., Wood, J. D., & Petriglieri, J. L. (2011). Up close and personal: Building foundations for leaders' development through the personalization of management learning. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 10(3), 430–450.
- Pew Research Center (December 2021). “The State of Gig Work in 2021” Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/12/08/the-state-of-gig-work-in-2021/>.
- Postmes, T., Spears, R., & Lea, M. (2002). Intergroup differentiation in computer-mediated communication: Effects of depersonalization. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 6(1), 3–16.
- Pratt, M. G. (2000). The good, the bad, and the ambivalent: Managing identification among Amway distributors. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 45(3), 456–493.

- Pratt, M. G., Rockmann, K. W., & Kaufmann, J. B. (2006). Constructing professional identity: The role of work and identity learning cycles in the customization of identity among medical residents. *Academy of Management Journal*, 49(2), 235–262.
- Ramarajan, L., & Reid, E. (2020). Relational reconciliation: Socializing others across demographic differences. *Academy of Management Journal*, 63(2), 356–385.
- Raveendran, R., & Fast, N. J. (2021). Humans judge, algorithms nudge: The psychology of behavior tracking acceptance. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 164, 11–26.
- Raveendran, R., Fast, N. J., & Carnevale, P. J. (2020). Virtual (freedom from) reality: Evaluation apprehension and leaders' preference for communicating through avatars. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 111, Article 106415.
- Ricoeur, P. (1984). *Time and Narrative*, vol. 1. Translated K. McLaughlin and D. Pellauer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (1988). *Time and Narrative*, vol. 3. Translated K. Blarney and D. Pellauer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ricoeur, P. (1992). *Oneself as Another*. Translated by K. Blarney. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Roosevelt, M., & Hussain, S. (2021). Prop. 22 is ruled unconstitutional, a blow to California gig economy law. Retrieved from: *Los Angeles Times* <https://www.latimes.com/business/story/2021-08-20/prop-22-unconstitutional>.
- Sabey, T. B., Rodell, J. B., & Matta, F. K. (2021). To and fro: The costs and benefits of power fluctuation throughout the day. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 106(9), 1357–1373.
- Sergi, V., & Bonneau, C. (2016). Making mundane work visible on social media: A CCO investigation of working out loud on Twitter. *Communication Research and Practice*, 2(3), 378–406.
- Sessions, H., Nahrgang, J. D., Baer, M. D., & Welsh, D. T. (2021). From zero to hero and back to zero: The consequences of status inconsistency between the work roles of multiple jobholders. *Journal of Applied Psychology*.
- Shapiro, E. R., & Carr, A. W. (1991). *Lost in familiar places: Creating new connections between the individual and society*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Siegel, J., Dubrovsky, V., Kiesler, S., & McGuire, T. W. (1986). Group processes in computer-mediated communication. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 37(2), 157–187.
- Sirola, A., Savela, N., Savolainen, I., Kaakinen, M., & Oksanen, A. (2021). The role of virtual communities in gambling and gaming behaviors: A systematic review. *Journal of Gambling Studies*, 37(1), 165–187.
- Sluss, D. M., & Ashforth, B. E. (2007). Relational identity and identification: Defining ourselves through work relationships. *Academy of Management Review*, 32(1), 9–32.
- Smircich, L., & Morgan, G. (1982). Leadership: The management of meaning. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 18(3), 257–273.
- Snow, D. A., & Anderson, L. (1987). Identity work among the homeless: The verbal construction and avowal of personal identities. *American Journal of Sociology*, 92(6), 1336–1371.
- Spradley, J. (1979). Asking descriptive questions. *The Ethnographic Interview*, 1, 44–61.
- Spreitzer, G. M., Cameron, L., & Garrett, L. (2017). Alternative work arrangements: Two images of the new world of work. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 4, 473–499.
- Spurk, D., & Straub, C. (2020). Flexible employment relationships and careers in times of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 119. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103435>
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1994). Grounded theory methodology. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 17(1), 273–285.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1997). *Grounded theory in practice*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research techniques*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Suh, A., & Prophet, J. (2018). The state of immersive technology research: A literature analysis. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 86, 77–90.
- Sveningsson, S., & Alvesson, M. (2003). Managing managerial identities: Organizational fragmentation, discourse and identity struggle. *Human Relations*, 56, 1163–1193.
- Swann, W. B., Jr., & Bosson, J. (2010). Self and identity. In S. T. Fiske, D. T. Gilbert, & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *Handbook of social psychology* (5th ed., pp. 589–628). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Swann, W. B., Jr., Johnson, R. E., & Bosson, J. K. (2009). Identity negotiation at work. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 29, 81–109.
- Tetlock, P. E. (1985). Accountability: The neglected social context of judgment and choice. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 7(1), 297–332.
- Thomas, R., & Linstead, A. (2002). Losing the plot? Middle managers and identity. *Organization*, 9(1), 71–93.
- Thornberg, R., & Charmaz, K. (2014). Grounded theory and theoretical coding. *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*, 5, 153–169.
- Thorndyke, P. W. (1977). Cognitive structures in comprehension and memory of narrative discourse. *Cognitive Psychology*, 9(1), 77–110.
- Turner, V. W. (1967). *Between and between: The liminal period in Rites de Passage. The forest of symbols: Aspects of Ndembu ritual*. Ithaca: Cornell UP93–111.
- Upwork & Freelancers Union (2017). *Freelancing in America: 2017*. Retrieved from: <https://assets.freelancersunion.org/media/documents/FreelancingInAmericaReport-2017.pdf>.
- Vaara, E., Sonenshein, S., & Boje, D. (2016). Narratives as sources of stability and change in organizations: Approaches and directions for future research. *Academy of Management Annals*, 10(1), 495–560.
- Van Gennep, A. (1908). *The rites of passage—A classical study of cultural celebrations*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press Chicago.
- Varotsis, G. (2015). *Screenplay and narrative theory: The screenplectics model of complex narrative systems*. Lexington Books.
- Vough, H. C., & Caza, B. B. (2017). Where do I go from here? Sensemaking and the construction of growth-based stories in the wake of denied promotions. *Academy of Management Review*, 42(1), 103–128.
- Weick, K. E. (1995). *Sensemaking in organizations* (Vol. 3). Sage.
- Weiss, R. S. (1994). *Learning from strangers: The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York, NY: The Free Press.
- Wheless, L. R., & Grotz, J. (1976). Conceptualization and measurement of reported self-disclosure. *Human Communication Research*, 2(4), 338–346.
- Winer, D. (2009). Narrate your work. *Scripting News*.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1975). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. In *Through Paediatrics to Psychoanalysis* (pp. 229–242). London: Karnac.
- Wrzesniewski, A., Dutton, J. E., & Debebe, G. (2003). Interpersonal sensemaking and the meaning of work. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 25, 93–135.
- Youshaei, J. (2015). The Uberpreneur: How An Uber Driver Makes \$252,000 A Year. *Forbes*. Retrieved from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jonyoushaei/2015/02/04/the-uberpreneur-how-an-uber-driver-makes-252000-a-year/#1a0c91544e8>.