

Not all platform work is equal: Migrants' experiences of self-determination in relational and non-relational gig work

Laura Lam and Anna Triandafyllidou, Toronto Metropolitan University

Abstract

This presentation explores how digital platforms affect migrants' settlement experiences, particularly those that involve care- and domestic-work platforms. These platforms often operate in an invisible realm when compared to other popularized platforms that provide offline services, such as ride hailing or food delivery. The former services are also different in character in that they are often ongoing (e.g., regularly caring for a person or cleaning a person's house) and not one-off, instantaneous services, as are the latter. The presenters will argue that the former constitutes relational gig work, while the latter constitutes non-relational gig work. Drawing on 56 qualitative interviews conducted in Canada in 2021 and 2022, this presentation's analysis of relational and non-relational gig work is informed by self-determination theory and the study of motivation and psychological needs. People need to feel autonomy, competence, and connection in order to achieve psychological growth. Migrants are no exception. The presenters will compare relational and non-relational gig work in order to investigate how migrants experience different levels of autonomy (i.e., the feeling of control over their own behaviours and goals), competence (i.e., the ability to master skills and tasks), and connection (i.e., the sense of belonging with other people). This presentation builds on prior findings that not all migrants experience labour platforms the same way, which can have consequences on their settlement experiences.

Biographies

Laura Lam is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources, University of Toronto, and researcher at the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration, Toronto Metropolitan University. She holds a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship and an R.F. Harney Graduate Research Fellowship. Laura is also a PhD fellow at the Institute for Gender and the Economy, University of Toronto. Her research interests lie at the nexus of migration, precarious employment, and care, with a focus on the use of app-based digital labour platforms.



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Anna Triandafyllidou holds the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration, Toronto Metropolitan University. She was previously based at the European University Institute in Italy, where she held a Robert Schuman Chair on Cultural Pluralism in the Global Governance Programme. She is Editor of the *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, and her recent publications include *Rethinking Migration and Return in Southeastern Europe: Albanian Mobilities to and from Italy and Greece* (with Eda Gemi; Routledge, 2021) and two edited volumes: *Routledge Handbook on the Governance of Religious Diversity* (with Tina Magazzini; Routledge, 2020) and *Migrants with Irregular Status in Europe* (with Sarah Spencer; Springer Open, 2020).