



**MIGRATION AND
THE FUTURE OF
WORK**

**SESSION 3
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The platform economy: Racialized and gendered?

**An unlikely stepping stone? Exploring how
platform work shapes newcomer migrant
Integration**

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Meet Eli



“The normal economy pushed me to platform economy, that's the reason why I'm working with a platform economy like Uber...**Until I find what I want**, until I fulfill my goals, I will stick with Uber because there **is no other option** in front of me. Either to stick with Uber or to go working like before in retail with the minimum wage, which I don't want because I can do, as I told you, much better.”

Meet John

“For someone who's a new immigrant, I would say, if you can get on the platform economy for the first couple of months while you're here, while you're trying to find your feet, you should. Absolutely. Because what it does is it gives you some sense of... It's **like an anchor**. Perhaps it gives you some sense of '**well I'm here and I have something**'.”

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a black smartphone. The screen of the phone is visible, showing a map of a neighborhood with streets like "Ave Christophe-Colomb" and "Sir Wilfrid Laurier Park". Below the map, there's a snippet of an UberX app interface with a car icon and the text "Choose a ride, or swipe up for more".

Research questions

- > Is platform work a “stepping stone” or a trap into volatile, precarious work?
- > How do migrants engaged in platform work see their relationship with this work?

Notable challenges facing migrants

- Discounting of foreign credential recognition (Aydemir & Skuterud 2004; Basran & Zong, 1998)
- Education-occupation mismatch (Lu and Hou, 2020)
- Involuntary part-time work (Hira-Friesen, 2017)
- Self-employment (Wayland, 2011)

Research Design and Methodology

- “Conducting qualitative research that focuses on creating conceptual frameworks or theories through building inductive analysis from the data” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 187).
- Qualitative, semi-structured in-depth interviews
 - 24 participants
 - Virtual interviews
 - Greater Toronto Area and Metro Vancouver

Perception vs. Reality

- Platform work is not 'good' employment, but rather, it was simply considered better than the alternatives .
- Barriers faced by migrants in the labour market made platform work's low barrier to entry much more attractive.

Ethnic networks

Navigating the intricacies of a new platform

“A lot of people in the Turkish community that I met, when I came here, I saw that they were doing Uber and they told me, the pay is usually like \$25 an hour. If you go out at the peak time. So I thought that’s good and I didn’t know much about Lyft or like if there’s another platform. (...) I didn’t want to go and do something that I didn’t know about.”

The Role of Agency

Making sense of
migrant agency

Security...

Platforms perceived as a safety net

“But, always having an Uber on my side give me a kind of security. Not secure-secure, but kind of security because I can pay my insurance by working three days. Or I can pay my rent working seven days even though I earn a little bit.”

...vs. Insecurity

While it feels like a safety net, yet aware of being subjected to the whims of platform algorithm.

“Sometimes you don’t really make a lot of money. Sometimes you don’t really get a lot of orders and there’s no surge so you hardly make \$100. It was just sad. First thing is you’re paying your own oil, your car oil, your car insurance... it’s your own thing. (...) So it just depends on, day to day overall”

Control (and lack of)

- Katz's framework (2004) on agency
- Recuperation and Resilience

“They [Foodora] did not want that. (..) It was very bad news when we heard that they closed, but we were expecting it any moment, because they don’t have any reason to stay. (..) This is a gig economy until now, so we are trying to change something.”

Conclusion: Beyond precarity of platform work

1. Labour market barriers highlight the attractiveness of the platform economy.
2. Implications of economic recession/Covid-19 on migrants into platform work.
3. Contradictory nature of platform work.
4. Not passive subjects.

Have platforms become part of the immigration experience?

Policy:

- The increase in competition, saturation in the market – making “survival jobs” even harder.
- How is information passed on within migrant networks? (implications for settlement agencies)

Informal unionization

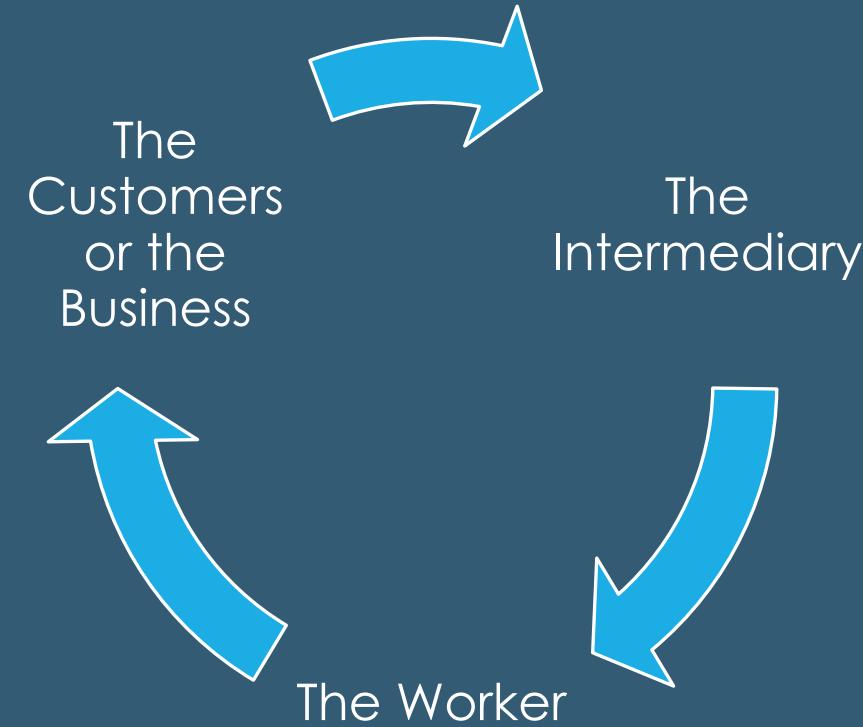
- What are migrants’ role in unionizing? How do they find community amidst a socially-isolating job?

Women and platform work

- Platform work is based under underutilization and idle capacity – what is the migrant women’s role?

Thank you

Platform economy



Triangular relationship described by Stewart and Stanford (2017)

- A landed immigrant to Canada, arrived at the age of 22 or over;
- A platform economy worker for at least 6 months;
- Currently working in some capacity on the platform economy (see examples listed above) *or stopped due to covid-19

