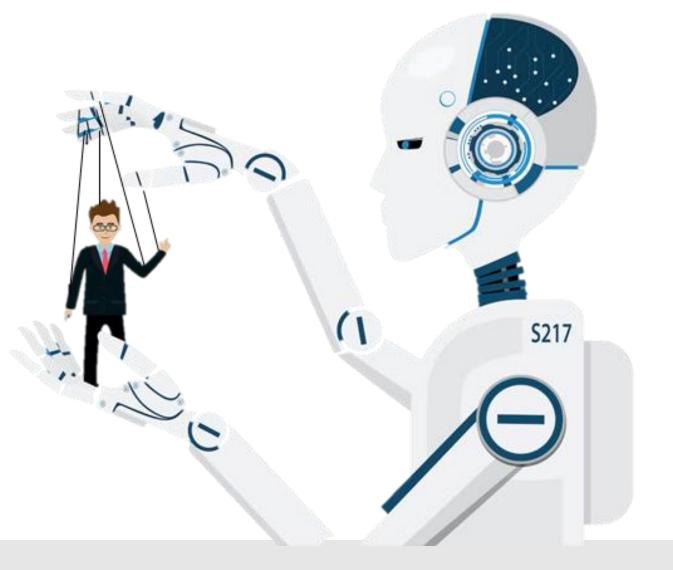# OBSCURE OVERSIGHT:
Opacity Drives Sensemaking and Resistance Behavior in Algorithmic Management

MOTIVATION & RESEARCH QUESTION

Algorithmic Management (AM) is becoming ubiquitous in the gig economy, where intelligent algorithms automate control activities previously performed by human managers. The functionality of AM is highly opaque, which raises the research question:

How do ride hail drivers perceive and react to opacity in the context of Algorithmic Management?

METHOD

To answer this question a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the uberpeople.net forum (UP) was conducted.

- **Final data set: 111 Threads containing 2200 posts.**
- **Analysis consisted of an exploratory phase, a theorizing phase, and a confirmatory phase.**

RESULTS

- Drivers engage in individual and collective sensemaking to create stories and alternative truths that help them cope with opacity by giving them a sense of control and agency
- Manifold interaction effects between opacity, sensemaking and resistance behavior
- Opacity acts as catalyst for resistance behavior only when financial pain is involved
- The void which opacity leaves is then filled with malevolent sensemaking, even intensifying resistance, while trust can mitigate negative consequences of opacity

→ **Opacity is an essential condition for algorithmic control to function**

FWF-PROJECT: UNDERSTANDING GIG WORKERS RESISTANCE TO ALGORITHMIC

Goal of the project is to gain a nuanced understanding of the mechanisms behind gig workers' resistance to algorithmic control. This is urgently needed for further research in this area, such as the socio-emotional and economic impact on workers, as well as ethical considerations for the use of algorithmic management.

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PAPER

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