Breaking the Managerial Silencing of Worker Voice in Platform Capitalism: The Rise of a Food Courier Network

Nadia K. Kougiannou [iD][1] and Pedro Mendonça[2]

[1]Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University, 50 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham, NG1 4FQ, UK [2]Business School, Edinburgh Napier University, Sighthill Court, Edinburgh, EH11 4BN, UK
Corresponding author email: nadia.kougiannou@ntu.ac.uk

This paper examines food couriers' utilization of voice mechanisms as mobilization against employer silencing within platform capitalism. The concepts of 'worker silence' and 'worker voice' are used to facilitate an understanding of the way in which workers respond to workplace problems, as well as their capacity to respond within this specific context. Findings illustrate the role of technology as a facilitator but also inhibitor of worker voice. In particular, online food delivery companies' over-reliance on algorithmic management and their online app drove couriers to silence. However, in reaction to managerial silencing, we show that couriers are not passive recipients of forces beyond their control, and attempt to explore new trajectories and modes of voice in order to influence their working conditions. Implications for theory and practice are discussed.

Introduction

Worker voice and silence are two concepts that have attracted much focus in organizational behaviour (OB), human resource management (HRM) and industrial relations (IR) literatures (Donaghey *et al.*, 2019). Both are linked to debates about their effect on organizational performance and development, and about worker rights and human dignity at work (Barry and Wilkinson, 2016). Although the interest has focused on the evaluation of different mechanisms of worker voice and their efficacy with regards to performance and worker representation, there is still a lack of understanding of how employee voice is raised initially, the multiple contexts where we find workers exercising voice and how this is managed (Townsend *et al.*, 2020; Wilkinson, Barry and Morrison, 2020).

Worker silence literature is dominated by studies conceptualizing it as a conscious choice to withhold information. Argyris (1977) notes that organizations have defensive routines and norms that

can prevent workers from saying what they know. Other scholars find that organizations can be intolerant of dissent and criticism and as a result, employees might choose to remain silent in order to avoid creating conflict or 'rocking the boat' (Kougiannou, 2019; Redding, 1985). Despite the recognition that employers have the capacity and the incentive to withhold information from and/or avoid dialogue with their workers (Hickland *et al.*, 2020), the literature has overlooked management's role in silencing worker voice (Donaghey *et al.*, 2019). Moreover, changes in employment patterns and work arrangements, coupled with the emergence of platform capitalism, can disrupt our traditional understanding of work (Duggan *et al.*, 2020) and how worker voice is managed. These changes require a different understanding of how voice and silence are assessed and, more importantly, how workers can communicate concerns and ideas about their work. For instance, the digital-on-demand nature of platform capitalism (Srnicek, 2017) sees workers classified as independent contractors, increasingly disposable,

with limited power over their working conditions (Duggan *et al.*, 2020). In this environment, very little is known about workers' reactions to employer silencing, and their tendencies and chosen trajectories of voice when this is finally exercised.

The nature of work is evolving along with technological advancements, creating a new form of employment which involves the use of online platforms. This has been dubbed the 'gig economy', or platform capitalism, and its rapid growth suggests that this style of work is popular amongst organizations and independent workers (Lobel, 2017). Platform capitalism has experienced significant growth (Kenney and Zysman, 2016) and scrutiny regarding its impact on employment practices (Cant, 2019). In this context, work can be transacted via platforms and delivered either remotely, or locally with the worker physically present (Huws, Spencer and Joyce, 2016). Local work consists of food delivery, which is the focus of this study, couriering and other sorts of manual labour, and has grown rapidly in recent years (Wood *et al.*, 2019). In the UK in the last 3 years it has more than doubled, and now accounts for 4.7 million workers (Partington, 2019).

Organizations within platform capitalism classify as technology companies (Shapiro, 2018), allowing them to categorize their workers as independent contractors or suppliers. This classification of the workforce can bring financial benefits to organizations as it enables them to alter the supply of workers in accordance with fluctuations in demand (Atkinson, 1984). Further, organizations in platform capitalism utilize management-by-algorithm techniques to monitor and control their dispersed workforce (Kenney and Zysman, 2016). Defined as 'a system of control where self-learning algorithms are given the responsibility for making and executing decisions affecting labour, thereby limiting human involvement and oversight of the labour process' (Duggan *et al.*, 2020, p. 119), algorithmic management can keep marginal and labour costs low (Schmidt, 2017). However, it can negatively affect the employment relationship and workers' rights at work, including their ability to exercise voice. Currently, there is a lack of understanding of the extent to which technology impacts voice and silence in this new sector of the economy.

This paper focuses specifically on managerial silencing of worker voice and how workers mobilize against silence by utilizing voice mechanisms that are beyond the control of the organization. Using evidence from a study of food couriers' experiences of managerial silencing, this paper explores their reaction to it with the creation of a worker voice network in a British city, the Food Courier Network (FCN). The research addresses the following questions:

1. How is managerial silencing and worker voice impacted by technologies and algorithmic management in local app work?
2. How do couriers utilize voice mechanisms to mobilize against managerial silencing?
3. What modes and trajectories of voice do couriers initiate to break the silence and ensure their voice is heard?

In answering these questions, this paper makes three important contributions. First, it identifies the processes and trajectories of self-initiated voice mechanisms as a reaction to managerial-driven silence, offering a wider understanding of the possibilities for voice. Second, it addresses the call for an exploration of worker silence in variable contexts (Donaghey *et al.*, 2019; Hickland *et al.*, 2020), namely food couriers in platform capitalism, to broaden our understanding of the role of managerial silencing in the function of voice. Finally, it contributes to our understanding of the role of technology in facilitating new modes of voice practice, but also its potential utilization by management as an inhibitor of worker voice.

This paper is structured as follows. First, it discusses the literature on worker voice and silence, with a specific focus on managerial-driven silence. Second, it shifts the discussion to platform capitalism's implications for voice and silence. In the following section it reports the methodology employed and the research setting, before presenting the findings. Finally, the implications of the findings for theory development and voice practice are discussed.

Worker voice and employer silencing

The term 'worker voice' generally refers to the ways in which workers try to influence their working conditions and may extend to having a say about the functioning of their organization (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2014). Worker voice can be expressed via representation, recognition and union membership, and via company-sponsored

participation mechanisms, such as joint consultative committees and direct employee involvement (Millward, Bryson and Forth, 2000).

Different disciplines conceptualize voice in different ways (Mowbray, Wilkinson and Tse, 2015). Within OB, voice is identified as extra-role behaviour where an employee 'proactively challenges the status quo and makes constructive recommendations for change' (Van Dyne, Cummings and Parks, 1995, p. 266). The focus is therefore placed on how voice can impact the organization by feeding critical information and positively affecting organizational learning and change (Bashshur and Oc, 2015). Importantly, organizational hierarchies are not challenged in this perspective and the employer's responsibility to utilize voice as a mechanism to consider and address workers' needs is disregarded. In HRM, worker voice is seen as a mechanism used to raise concerns about work-related issues and participation in decision-making processes (McCabe and Lewin, 1992). IR focuses on both direct and indirect forms of worker voice, seeking to capture the depth and scope of its influence on organizational decision-making (Nechanska, Hughes and Dundon, 2020). A common denominator in the above is a 'traditional' view of voice as an interaction between employees and their employer, but without much consideration for other stakeholders.

Conversely, there is the antithesis of voice: worker silence. Research has focused on when and how workers exercise voice or choose to remain silent (Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003), the reasons for such a decision, what types of issues they are likely to be silent about and how organizations might address this (Donaghey *et al.*, 2011). Typically, worker silence is conceptualized as information that is held back by workers intentionally, rather than not having anything to say or unintentionally failing to communicate (Tangirala and Ramanujam, 2008). A specific strand of the silence literature examines how an individual's fear of isolation from their co-workers diverts them from expressing true opinions that might be coming from a minority viewpoint (Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003). Alternatively, silence is seen as a survival strategy. In an effort to cope with the unpleasant aspects of their work, workers become detached and mentally withdraw from the organization (Ezzamel, Willmott and Worthington, 2001). In sum, this strand of the literature sees silence as the result of workers having insufficient avenues to articulate concerns to the detriment of voice and/or as a result of worker disengagement due to cynicism or lack of trust (Donaghey *et al.*, 2011).

Most of the silence/voice literature focuses on how workers refrain from speaking up (Barry, Dundon and Wilkinson, 2018; Morrison, 2011), resulting in a mistaken perception that silence is worker-led (Hickland *et al.*, 2020). However, a separate strand of the literature recognizes that worker silence can be influenced by management (Allen and Tüselmann, 2009; Donaghey *et al.*, 2011, 2019; Hickland *et al.*, 2020). Whether a worker decides to voice, or remains silent, depends on expectations about truly being listened to, the target of their speaking up and organizational norms that might encourage or discourage voicing (Mowbray, Wilkinson and Tse, 2015). A climate of silence may be prevalent where speaking up is perceived as dangerous or futile (Pinder and Harlos, 2001). Such worker perceptions may be created when management behaviour is seen as intolerant of dissent, and bottom-up communication is discouraged, resulting in workers being disinclined to voice their concerns, thereby organizing and perpetuating workers out of the voice process (Donaghey *et al.*, 2011; Hickland *et al.*, 2020). For example, management might confine workers' voice when it is perceived to raise issues that might be deemed as conflicting with the status quo (Burris, 2012). Thus, even when a voice structure exists but is inhibited by management in terms of its utility, it will become a 'hollow shell' (Charlwood, 2003), enforcing silence instead.

Arguably, worker silence can be facilitated by organizational policies and practices, creating a culture of silence by negating genuine voice through management inaction or lack of responsiveness. For example, management may be willing to act on worker voice when it concerns workplace problems, but be very resistant to act when voice concerns changes in working conditions or a manager's performance (Donovan *et al.*, 2016). Similarly, workers who engage in forms of voice that upset the status quo are viewed by management as more threatening. Consequently, management becomes more resistant and less likely to consider workers' input and concerns (Burris, 2012). Thus, whilst organizations may have the architecture in place for voice systems and structures, this does not necessarily mean they will engender an open flow of communication nor that management will be responsive to employee input (Holland *et al.*,

2011), or act upon them (Harlos, 2001; Morrison and Rothman, 2009). Where this occurs, the tension created within the employment relationship may encourage workers to pursue alternative voice avenues (Dundon, 2002). Such an examination of silence in action is a key element in identifying the value of worker voice, the extent to which management values worker input (Burris, Rockmann and Kimmons, 2017) and the degree to which management attempts to control the voice agenda.

Voice and silence in platform capitalism

Within this emerging literature, there are still aspects of worker silence that remain under-explored, specifically concerning how employers withhold information and restrict worker dialogue and opportunities to have a say (Hickland *et al.*, 2020). For example, the state of worker silence in platform capitalism and workers' efforts to break managerial-driven silence are unknown. This presents a challenge to our understanding of how employee silence emerges and develops within this rapidly growing sector of employment.

The labour performed within local app work is mediated by platforms and managed by algorithms. Platforms use self-learning algorithms based on a set of statistical models to automatically and autonomously govern the rules used to select and manage labour (Duggan *et al.*, 2020). Platforms and algorithms can then set the work conditions, identify the task, allocate it to individuals and manage their performance with minimum human intervention (Rosenblat, 2018). A key feature of platform capitalism is the use of algorithms to match supply and demand in the market (Shapiro, 2018), while also closely controlling and making decisions on the work performed (Cant, 2019; Gandini, 2019). In this sense, algorithmic management is a controlling system responsible for making and executing decisions affecting labour, where there is limited human involvement and oversight over the labour process (Duggan *et al.*, 2020).

Algorithmic management can make it easier for platform capitalism companies to drive workers to silence, especially if they do not value their speaking up. The removal of human supervision and intervention can provide companies with the capacity to become more efficient in the management of tasks and workers' performance

(Cant, 2019; Schmidt, 2017), but also raise significant barriers for worker voice and their capacity to make recommendations for change (Duggan *et al.*, 2020; Shapiro, 2018; Wood, Lehdonvirta and Graham, 2018). As mediators of supply and demand enabled by algorithmic management, these companies become the only party with full control over the labour process by setting strict rules and procedures (Gandini, 2019). Removing the capacity for workers to have a say within these processes, and essentially enforcing worker silence, can result in a less representative working relationship (Harvey *et al.*, 2017). For instance, algorithmic management can be used to create asymmetries within the employment relationship, which then serve to constrain human agency (Curchod *et al.*, 2020).

Indeed, the use of algorithmic management to mediate the employment relationship between platform capitalism companies and workers may raise issues in the way the latter contact the former (Rosenblat, 2018). In the absence of human management, workers are forced to contact the company via an email, or the app used. Responses to workers' concerns and queries are typically automated based on an algorithm's assessment of key words in the text (Rosenblat, 2018). Therefore, the lack of human interaction and the absence of a manager or an organizational partner that would advocate workers' needs (Gilbert, De Winne and Sels, 2011) can result in a decreased capacity to raise concerns and create barriers to worker voice, eventually forcing workers to silence. Another barrier relates to workers typically experiencing disperse work settings due to the lack of a physical workplace, as well as high levels of colleague turnover (Rosenblat, 2018; Shapiro, 2018). As a result, it becomes challenging for workers to share and define common interests and targets.

Interestingly, when trying to voice and resolve issues of concern, workers, by using technology (Conway *et al.*, 2019), consider varying factors to determine which mechanism to use to react to these restrictions and barriers (Townsend *et al.*, 2020). For example, in remote app work such as MTurk, workers use forums and group chats in order to identify clients that tend not to pay or pay late, or to share information on more profitable tasks and practices to deal with difficult clients (Lehdonvirta, 2016). Additionally, in specific types of app work, such as the transport of goods and people, workers are necessarily embedded in particular places, such as cities (Wood, Lehdonvirta

and Graham, 2018). These conditions may offer potential sites in which communities of workers are able to coalesce with the aim of making their voice heard, and influence platforms and clients (Cant, 2019). Therefore, workers' propensity for self-organization and willingness to voice their concerns is prone to happen, despite the adversarial conditions created by platform capitalism and algorithmic management. Similarly, technology can be used by food delivery couriers to boost worker solidarity and counterbalance power disparities that are reproduced by algorithmic management (Tassinari and Maccarrone, 2020). This context, where the 'workplace' conditions are influenced not only by the organization but also by the local economy and city environment, offers an opportunity to examine a range of voice mechanisms, aimed at different stakeholders that workers utilize to achieve change in the workplace.

Methodology

This research uses an in-depth qualitative case study approach (Yin, 2003), with our analysis primarily focused on food couriers' experiences of a newly created FCN in a British city, as a reaction to managerial silencing from online food delivery companies (OFDCs). To understand employer silencing and workers' mobilization against it in a platform capitalism context, one must study and analyse the conditions relating to that context and within that context, and a case study strategy provides the necessary tools for this.

Data triangulation protocols were followed (Creswell and Miller, 2000), with four main sources of data. Semi-structured interviews were used as this enabled us to explore the meaning and experiences of participants captured in their own words, whilst keeping question consistency across the interviews (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Participants were selected through purposive sampling as this ensured that the interviewees had the knowledge to respond to the questions (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Interviewed participants included the FCN's social leaders, who were later elected as the FCN's Chair, Secretary and Social Media Officer, couriers who were also FCN members and two OFDC managers.

The authors were also granted access to the network's private Facebook group page and Facebook Messenger chat. During fieldwork, an 'engaged' approach to research was followed (Milan, 2014) by building a relationship of trust with the interviewees and FCN members, while defining clear boundaries to maintain critical distance. Over the period of fieldwork, the authors engaged in repeated interactions with some key informants during FCN meetings and voice activities in the city, with the purpose of raising public awareness. This ongoing exchange of perspectives facilitated the building of trust, allowed for a longitudinal understanding of the case and increased the trustworthiness of the findings (Harrison, MacGibbon and Morton, 2001). The authors' engaged positionality also involved sharing knowledge of the sector with interviewees and contributing to increasing the visibility of their voice mobilizations to non-academic audiences, mainly via Twitter. These activities attempted to ensure the relevance of research knowledge for the subjects involved (Milan, 2014) and to fulfil ethical commitments to reciprocity (Harrison, MacGibbon and Morton, 2001). Table 1 presents details of these sources and how they were used in our data analysis. To guarantee anonymity, interviewees are identified with a code throughout the text. All couriers interviewed bar two were men, reflecting the male-dominated composition of the workforce; for 13 of them, food delivery was their main source of income; 24 were cyclists; and only three had a migrant background; three were members of a union. All data collection received ethical approval from the authors' academic institution before commencing.

The process of analysis was the same for all types of qualitative data gathered. Open coding was initially used to identify concepts, moving from in-vivo, which is a simple descriptive phase, to second-order codes based on thematic analysis (Maanen, 1979; Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Observation notes, recordings, minutes of meetings and online chats were particularly important for informing interviewees' recollections of events. Interviews and chats complemented observations, by giving a rich insight into how workers experienced the network and its meetings and what issues were discussed.

Data analysis followed an open-ended abductive approach, based on iterative stages of thematic coding of our qualitative data in NVivo (Version 12). Thematic analysis is a method that is used to systematically identify, synthesize and organize data, which offers insight into patterns of themes or meanings across a given dataset

Table 1. Data sources and use

Source	Type of data	Use in the analysis
Social media	1. Private Facebook group 2. FCN's Facebook Messenger chat 3. FCN's leadership Facebook Messenger chat 4. Public Facebook page	Gather information regarding voice items and levels. Understand the history of the creation of the FCN. Cross-check truthfulness of interview statements and observation notes.
Interviews	31 interviews conducted: 29 couriers and FCN members (including the FCN Chair, Secretary and Social Media Officer), two OFDC managers. All audio-recorded and transcribed. Note 1: Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 2 hours, with an average duration of 1 hour.	Gather data about how managerial silencing and worker voice is perceived; issues raised through FCN; levels of voice; role of technology in facilitating but also silencing worker voice.
Non-participant observation	Four FCN meetings: *15 February 2019, 4 March 2019, 25 March 2019, 10 June 2019* Researcher's handwritten notes. Last three meetings were also audio-recorded. Five FCN leadership meetings: *21 March 2019, 28 March 2019, 5 April 2019, 8 May 2019, 8 July 2019* Researcher's handwritten notes. All meetings audio-recorded. Note 2: Average duration of FCN meetings and leadership meetings was 2 hours.	Gather data regarding operation of meetings, procedures, practices and behaviours during meetings. Contextualize interview narratives. Triangulate facts.
Other documents	1. FCN meetings' minutes 2. Email communication between FCN and OFDCs 3. FCN demand letters to OFDCs 4. OFDCs' responses to FCN demands	Contextualize meetings and interview narratives. Triangulate facts.

(Braun and Clarke, 2006). Amongst the many methods of data collection, thematic analysis helps to uncover and decipher meanings and experiences, thereby helping us to appreciate the commonalities within the dataset. The significance of a theme in this research is that it captures something important about the overall research objectives (Braun and Clarke, 2006). To develop the themes for this project, an abductive approach was used. This approach enables the researcher to engage in a back-and-forth movement between theory and data in a bid to develop or modify existing theory (Awuzie and McDermott, 2017). Abduction allows for a tight but evolving framework (Dubois and Gadde, 2002), where the researcher can move between theory and participants' accounts, each informing the other in order to answer the project's research questions (Cunliffe, 2011).

Research setting

The data reported in this paper were collected between February 2019, when FCN was initiated, and October 2019. In the last 2 years, FCNs have been created across the UK (e.g. Birmingham, Bournemouth, Brighton, Bristol, Glasgow, Horsham, Leeds, Nottingham and York) in order to raise couriers' voice over poor pay and worsening working conditions. We were able to gain access to one of these networks from its creation and observe its formation and first 8 months of operation.

Although frustration was rising for several months, the initial motivator for the creation of the network was a sudden reduction of fees by one of the OFDCs. In the absence of meaningful voice with OFDCs, a need was then identified by couriers to form a network that would organize future actions and be the voice of couriers in the city. The main objective of the network was to enable

couriers to continue doing the job they 'love' (FCN Chair) with better conditions; 'the job is great, but the companies aren't' (FCN Chair). Additionally, they also aim to improve their 'workplace', which is the city they work in, by initiating dialogue with the City Council and OFDCs partner restaurants.

Most of the network's communication with members is through social media, specifically using a private Facebook group and Facebook Messenger chat, with its purpose being 'to discuss ideas, issues, events and announcements relating to courier work in the city and to provide help & support to riders' (Facebook group description). During the network's first meeting, it was commonly agreed that FCN would act as the formal voice body of couriers in the city, communicating work demands to OFDCs and other stakeholders (e.g. the City Council and restaurants). It was also agreed that the network would organize events to give back to the community and raise the public's awareness of the purpose and role of the network.

Findings

This section details the events that led to new modes and trajectories of worker voice as a reaction to managerial-driven silence. The findings highlight how couriers were driven to silence by OFDCs relying on algorithmic management, automated communication with couriers and the 'rider app' for their operations. The result is a model detailing new trajectories for voice in local app work within platform capitalism.

Managerial-driven silence and silenced workers

According to couriers' and managers' accounts, OFDCs substantially changed their approach to worker voice mainly to be in line with legal requirements for workers being categorized as independent contractors. Initially, OFDCs provided more opportunities for voice with 'Courier Leads' and offices in cities where couriers could interact face-to-face with a company representative who was also a courier. For instance, when OFDCs first attempted to establish themselves in a city, management delegated to a more experienced courier, named the Courier Lead, the responsibility for introducing new couriers to the labour process, the health and safety standards, and distributing the work uniforms and delivery boxes. This was

a channel through which couriers could not only access support, but also voice concerns related to working conditions. Although these direct voice mechanisms are shallow and narrow in terms of depth and scope, they did afford some opportunities for couriers to voice concerns and other issues at work.

However, responsibilities were stripped from couriers, and OFDCs gradually moved towards relying only on their platform and algorithmic management for any kind of voice afforded to couriers. By removing Courier Leads and moving to automated emails and later online forms, OFDCs essentially discouraged voicing and forced couriers to silence.

One theme emerging from courier interviews and FCN meeting observations is how the app allows OFDCs to actively silence couriers. There is a general lack of knowledge among couriers about how the system works, and the standards used to assign orders and payment. None of the OFDCs provide an opportunity for couriers to learn about the app, except for being chosen to take part in testing new features:

> They want to optimize the algorithm to maximize deliveries and orders and all that comes with it, but usually that means you become less familiar with the way work should be done. (P19)

Another important aspect of managerial-driven silence is OFDCs' termination tactics. These tactics happen exclusively via the app, where the courier receives an automated message from the OFDC. The termination is effective immediately and without a chance given to couriers to ask for an explanation or an opportunity to defend themselves. An example of such a message is given from the FCN's Facebook group discussion board, where the OFDC claims that a rider engaged in 'fraud' due to 'recent orders [being] incorrectly marked as delivered' and 'as a result, your Supplier Agreement will be terminated with immediate effect' (FCN Facebook group discussion board).

From the OFDCs' perspective, 'decision making is made at management level, and to an extent, app level' (P22, OFDC manager), with any significant changes always communicated to couriers after the fact. However, as P22 continues to explain, this is a broken communication system, which does not involve dialogue with couriers:

The company tests changes and based on several factors such as efficiency, flexibility, etc. will implement the ones that enable higher return on those factors… But these changes are not a result of direct consultation with the riders, if you ask me.

One important aspect of managerial-driven silence is how OFDCs' business model tends to privilege constant turnover of couriers: 'our business model is based on rotation and flexibility, anyone can and should log in and log out whenever they want' (P20). Findings indicate that this business model results in marginalization of experienced couriers within the OFDCs. One of the interviewed managers explains how the rationale of efficiency overrides worker knowledge and participation, specifically from tenured couriers:

> [Tenured riders] can become more dependent, which wasn't the company's goal; they can start treating this job as their main source of income, which was not the company's intention. In a way, new riders will have less misbehaviours… I think for OFDC, new riders will maintain operations more efficiently than tenured ones. (P20)

Couriers' knowledge and experience are ignored, as OFDCs consider that learning and operational improvement comes from technology and algorithmic management rather than workers' voice. The same manager provides insight into how the algorithm replaces worker knowledge and makes their voice redundant:

> [Tenured riders] will deliver faster because they know shortcuts and so on, but the learning curve is relatively quick, and the algorithm suggests the most efficient and fastest route to drivers anyway.

One courier, while corroborating with the previous managerial observation, highlights the negative impact this approach has for experienced workers' voice:

> I thought you would be using experienced riders who had knowledge of all the previous equipment, as this would give you an honest and true feedback. Once again, thanks for letting me understand my opinion as an experienced [rider] is not valuable. (Facebook group discussion board)

In sum, while OFDCs initially afforded some voice mechanisms to couriers, albeit superficial, these were all gradually abandoned. By removing the Courier Lead system and any training provided to new couriers, and increasingly relying on the rider app and algorithmic management to interact with couriers, OFDCs actively discouraged voice and forced couriers to silence. The managerial silencing that couriers were forced to experience had a direct impact on their work experience and the employment relationship. All couriers interviewed expressed concerns on how changes implemented by OFDCs substantially affected their work and communication with the company.

Interestingly, this process was different when the issue reported concerned live orders, where couriers can contact a 'Courier Support' call centre. The formal process to deal with live orders contrasts with the procedure that couriers follow when raising any other issue, such as working conditions or health and safety. In these circumstances, couriers complete a form through the online app and wait for a reply. Most couriers reported that OFDCs answered with a generic message and rarely followed up on couriers' requests. Other couriers found it difficult to spend time engaging with this new system and abandoned efforts to voice concerns via these means:

> I sent a form in June, so 4 months ago, asking for a new bag because the bag ripped on the inside, so it doesn't work thermally. I've sent them three reminders and nothing, and now I've given up. So that's the level of service we work by. (P13)

The automated scripted dialogue OFDCs use to reply to couriers' concerns, coupled with general lack of voice, contributed to couriers feeling underappreciated, not listened to and generally as just cogs in the OFDC machine:

> That's what I think is different on the employer side – the lack of communication, or acknowledgement. The lack of acknowledging us as real people working for them rather than just a dot on their screen, if you know what I mean. (P08)

Breaking the silence: Mobilizing against silence and self-initiated worker voice

Findings illustrate couriers' growing frustration over OFDCs' lack of consideration for couriers' voicing concerns over reduction in fees and changes in working conditions (e.g. change in vehicle priority). The frustration was mostly focused on three themes: (a) abandoning the Courier Lead system and any training provided to new

couriers; (b) the 'management robots' (P06) replying to couriers' emails when raising concerns about their work and working conditions and general lack of communication; and (c) OFDCs' perceived secrecy that is perpetuated by the way the 'rider app' works. These are examples of managerial silencing that motivated couriers to create FCN, their own voice mechanism:

> They'd only communicate anything to us if it made themselves look good. Anything else we don't get told. This is essentially why we created the network. (P06)

Data from interviews and meetings demonstrate couriers' motivation to create a collective voice mechanism that would enable couriers to initiate a formal dialogue with OFDCs and other stakeholders to 'influence positive change in the way we work' (FCN Chair). All interviewed couriers reported valuing having a voice and being listened to by the FCN. As a result, FCN members are engaging actively with the network and contribute to it in various ways, such as volunteering for charity events and promoting industrial action.

Our data reveal that self-initiated voice essentially removed the control of OFDCs in terms of the level and scope of voice and provided couriers with the freedom to create the network as they see fit. By focusing more generally on improving working conditions in the city, couriers explored the opportunity to create new trajectories and modes of voice. Resisting employer silencing and exercising voice was done not only by engaging with OFDCs, but also with the City Council, local restaurants and the public, creating multi-foci voice.

As a result, different modes of voice are used by couriers depending on the aspect of work they want to influence. For example, the Facebook group's discussion board is used to notify couriers about roadworks, road closures and road accidents in the city, so that couriers can modify their delivery routes accordingly. Similarly, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp are used to provide support for more immediate issues on the job (e.g. flat tyres, advice about deliveries, online polls about different decisions and actions the FCN must take). Given how particularly strike-prone food delivery platform workers are, it is interesting to note that for the FCN, industrial action, and striking in particular, is but one voice mode out of the several the couriers chose to use in their efforts to break the silence. In fact, they came to a realization that

strike action is not the only way to react and found varying ways to voice and influence change in their 'workplace'. Table 2 provides a detailed account of the issues the different modes of voice tackle.

Within the FCN, technology is used in various ways to support couriers' varied work tasks and schedules and remove obstacles that might hinder couriers from engaging with the network and exercising voice. For example, FCN meetings, from the second meeting onwards (4 March 2019), were also broadcast live on the FCN's private Facebook group. During the meetings, any members who could not attend but were viewing the live video could contribute to the discussion via commenting on the live video stream.

A closer look at the agenda items of FCN meetings, from initiation until the end of fieldwork (Appendix 1), reveals the scope of voice exercised in the network and the trajectories of voice this self-initiated mechanism affords. The topics range from issues that need to be negotiated with OFDCs, such as fees and the algorithms, where industrial action is considered, to issues that have to do with the city as a workplace, better cooperation with restaurants and interaction with the public. The different trajectories for voice were set out during the first FCN meeting on 15 February 2019.

Other trajectories involved engagement with the wider community. In order to raise public awareness of the issues concerning couriers, the FCN Chair held several consecutive interviews with local radio stations as well as the local newspaper. This served as a voice mechanism to engage with the wider public and inform them about the working conditions, instead of couriers just being seen as disturbances to the city (couriers were getting bad press for some demonstrations and closing down of streets). With the same objective of raising their profile with the public and creating new platforms from where their voice could be heard, the FCN started to actively organize charity events for the homeless in the city. The FCN requested local restaurants to offer free food so that couriers, during their working time, could deliver it to homeless people in the city. The event was met with a positive reaction from the wider public, as evidenced by sympathetic comments on social media and shouts of support during industrial action.

Another self-initiated voice trajectory was established by the FCN with the City Council. The members and FCN Chair were able to arrange an audience with council representatives to raise their

Table 2. Modes and issues of voice

Social media and chat groups	FCN meetings
Roadworks and road closures that might affect couriers' routes	Latest news on communication with City Council
Immediate support with work (e.g. help with flat tyre during delivery)	Consultation over local and national industrial action (e.g. strike, work stoppages)
Discussion on latest company changes affecting fees or the algorithm	Latest news on communication with restaurants
Polls on industrial action	Latest news on communication with OFDCs
Advice regarding 'difficult' customers and/or 'difficult' restaurants	Dealing with fraudulent orders
'How to' guides for new couriers	App design and changes
Industrial action participation promotion	Actions to raise profile/Charity events for public sympathy
Flagging up fraudulent orders	Dealing with bad press
Adherence to highway code, rules	Adherence to highway code, rules
Post FCN meeting minutes and OFDC demand letters	Engagement with union
	Discounts for couriers at local shops
	Fraudulent accounts (e.g. super-bikes)

Data source: FCN Facebook group discussion board, Messenger chat, observation and minutes of meetings.

concerns regarding several health and safety issues, and their desire to get involved with development and planning of the city's cycling infrastructure. Through voice, this is an active effort from the FCN and members to improve conditions of work in their 'workplace'.

Similarly, findings indicate couriers initiating voice with OFDCs' partner restaurants in the city to improve a variety of aspects of their workplace. The issues that emerge from the findings show couriers engaging with restaurant managers to deal with long waiting times, the need for a dedicated waiting area in the restaurant for couriers, as well as informing them about the industrial actions and asking them to log off from the app during that time. According to couriers, this was a necessary action in order to:

> Not affect their reputation with the customers due to orders being extremely late and of course for us the restaurants turning off the apps meant that strike breakers were not having any orders and it would also impact OFDCs' profits during that time. (P09)

The above illustrates that in the context of platform capitalism, where the workplace setting tends to be dispersed and not set, new trajectories of voice, allowing engagement with stakeholders beyond the boundaries of the organization, are key. The network engages not only with OFDCs, but also with other stakeholders who impact couriers' working conditions, highlighting different foci on which the FCN is exercising voice (as shown in Figure 1).

An interesting example of how voice was exercised in the FCN relates to the discussion of courier demands that were made to the OFDCs (FCN meeting observation, 25 March 2019). A lengthy and lively discussion ensued on the nature and importance of the demands and how these would be worded. The result was a detailed demand letter that – after several iterations and consultation with members, which continued on Facebook Messenger – was finalized and sent to the OFDCs on 23 April 2019 (see the summary in Table 3 and the full letter in Appendix 2). The letter shows the range of issues the network is trying to tackle in its relationship with the OFDCs, with greater focus at the time on operation of order priority and the algorithm's role in it. The wording of the letter demonstrates the lack of voice that the company offers couriers, but more importantly, increased courier knowledge of how the algorithm and deliveries can be improved to the benefit of not only the workers, but also the customers and consequently the company.

OFDCs' response to voice and worker outcomes

Usually, the FCN begins a dialogue that remains unresponsive from the OFDCs. As one manager explains, the OFDCs do not really respond to couriers' concerns unless these have a direct impact on the companies' business aims:
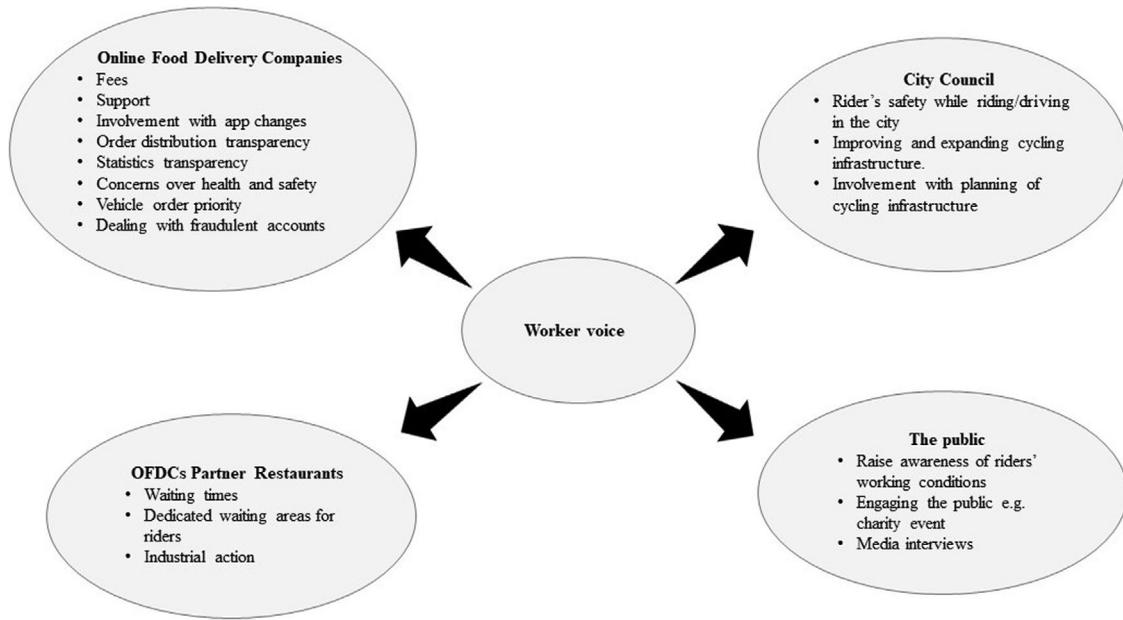
Figure 1. FCN multi-foci voice

Table 3. Summary of FCN's letter of demands to OFDC after March 25th meeting

Hi Team OFDC,

You have failed to meet our demands, you have failed to engage with us despite invitation and you have provided poor explanation and poor communication in regards to our demands and what you will do to fix these. Therefore, FCN and couriers in the city write to you today to give notice of strike action. On Saturday, 4th May 2019 for a period of 2 hours at any point between 17:00 & 22:00, couriers will refuse to take any order offered through the Courier App. This action and other measures we have planned will cause irretrievable damage to the food delivery platform that evening. We also anticipate disruption throughout the day due to our participation in the May Day event in the city.

Please see our full demands:

1. Paid restaurant waits.
2. A fixed distance rate.
3. Showing the destination of the second order when an order becomes a stacked order upon arrival at the restaurant.
4. No victimization of any courier taking action.
5. Freeze onboarding.
6. No couriers are ever terminated on any grounds without due process and adequate evidence.
7. Estimated ready time to be shown when being offered an order.

Data source: FCN Facebook group discussion board.

Riders voice their concerns and they do it through several ways like through the app, surveys we carry out, and through protesting as well. These are considered by the company to different extents, of course. And then they are analysed against the company's business aims and the data we had previously gathered. And the data that is gathered from riders is analysed against that framework. Sometimes, it happens that tested changes match what riders asked for… (P22)

After the last demand letter, however, a response came from the OFDCs and the FCN Chair communicated via the group's Facebook discussion board the following to the network's members:

On Tuesday (at the eleventh hour), OFDC responded to our demand letter with some of the usual fluff. After sifting through the bumf, some interesting points were raised: we've won an onboarding freeze, they've invited us to a user testing session to test new app features which will benefit the platform, and they have agreed to meet with us next week.

By the time of the last observed meeting (10 June 2019), with OFDCs responding positively

to courier demands and offering better fees, the climate in the FCN was very positive. Most of the meeting was spent on recognizing those latest achievements. It was decided at that meeting that the summer will be a 'recharging' period for the network, while keeping 'an eye out for changes over the summer when students are not around… As soon as the fee goes down, we must re-engage our action and refocus our efforts on industrial action, increase pressure on OFDCs once again' (FCN Chair). Summer was indeed a quiet period; however, the Chair's predictions were realized as one of the OFDCs moved to prioritize assigning deliveries to mopeds and cars over cyclists' courier accounts. This action was met with resistance from the network that took the form of increased and consistent industrial action throughout September, October and November 2019. Couriers were on strike every Saturday during those 3 months, demonstrated in the main city square and shut down deliveries from partnered restaurants in the city.

Discussion

Existing silence/voice literature focuses on how workers refrain from speaking up (Barry, Dundon and Wilkinson, 2018; Morrison, 2011), resulting in a mistaken perception that silence is worker-led (Hickland *et al.*, 2020). Silence is much more than workers choosing whether or not to speak out, and is driven by managerial preferences regarding worker dialogue and information sharing (Hickland *et al.*, 2020). Thus, managerial-driven silence provides an important new research avenue worth investigating. The novel conceptual insight in this paper is to enrich the silence literature by exploring how employers use technology and algorithmic management practices to curtail worker voice in local app work. Significantly, this paper shows that, in an effort to break managerial silencing and achieve change in the workplace, workers explore varying modes and trajectories of voice that are beyond the control of the organization. It is one of few empirical studies to examine the concept of employer silencing, and the first to do so in platform capitalism. A distinct context, where algorithmic management is used to curtail worker voice, and 'workplace' conditions are not only influenced by the employer but also by the local economy and city environment.

The rise of technology has changed channels dramatically (Conway *et al.*, 2019) and, this paper argues, modes and trajectories of voice. Findings demonstrate that technology can be an inhibitor of voice, essentially facilitating managerial silencing of workers. The gradual move to algorithmic management and exclusive use of OFDCs' platforms for any kind of communication perpetuated silence and substantially limited courier voice (Donaghey *et al.*, 2011). OFDCs' over-reliance on algorithmic management enables them to create and sustain unilateral control of communication and information channels, resulting in an effective intangible barrier to worker voice (Duggan *et al.*, 2020; Shapiro, 2018; Wood, Lehdonvirta and Graham, 2018). Essentially, managers choose to confine workers' voice as it is perceived to raise issues that are challenging or conflicting to OFDCs' business aims and status quo (Burris, 2012; Burris, Rockmann and Kimmons, 2017; Donovan *et al.*, 2016).

In this paper, this is seen through two main dynamics. First, OFDCs refuse to listen to couriers' input and learn from their experience, contradicting previous literature linking worker voice to organizations' learning and development (Bashshur and Oc, 2015). Instead, OFDCs rely solely on the algorithm to improve and increase efficiency in operations, such as matching supply and demand, setting up fees, as well as optimizing and planning routes (Duggan *et al.*, 2020). Second, OFDCs increasingly use technology to create barriers and hinder voice between couriers and OFDCs. The sole reliance on the algorithm and platform to interact with couriers strengthens OFDCs' control over workers (Cant, 2019) and locks out any potential dissent voice within the organization. These findings demonstrate the key role that management has in facilitating or inhibiting worker voice (Allen and Tüselmann, 2009).

Significantly, our findings also show technology playing a central role in facilitating and, more importantly, enhancing worker voice (Holland, Cooper and Hecker, 2016). The dynamics that fostered management silencing gave workers a greater appetite for voice and made them seek novel forms of voice (Barry, Dundon and Wilkinson, 2018). Therefore, an employer's attempted effort to avoid worker voice does not translate into absence of voice or conflict. This shows that, contrary to the argument that insufficient avenues to voice result in worker disengagement (Donaghey *et al.*, 2011),

a tension between company and worker prevails, which then results in workers pursuing other channels to voice their concerns (Dundon, 2002). Interestingly, these channels of voice were typically away from managerial monitoring mechanisms, which enabled workers to collaborate and draw strategies more effectively. This finding supports the argument made in previous studies (Curchod *et al.*, 2020; Tassinari and Maccarrone, 2020) that the focus on conflict and drive towards collective voice is a result of a digital labour process that reproduces and fosters power asymmetries within the employment relationship (Cant, 2019).

Second, this paper considered couriers' utilization of voice mechanisms to break managerial silencing. Despite the barriers imposed by the company, findings show couriers strategically setting up voice mechanisms to defend their interests in a more effective manner. This was one of the key steps related to the creation of the FCN. The purpose of this voice mechanism was to represent the couriers in the city, if needed organize industrial action and be the voice of the couriers, in the absence of meaningful dialogue with OFDCs. At the same time, couriers relied heavily on technology and social media as a more direct channel of voice, to promote the FCN and any industrial action, and provide immediate support and advice to couriers. Contrary to literature differentiating between direct and indirect voice and debating about the capacity of each to influence organizational decision-making (Barry, Dundon and Wilkinson, 2018), this paper highlights that these different modes of voice used by couriers to break managerial silencing are intertwined and complement each other. Couriers use these different modes of voice, and take advantage of available technology, with the overall aim to influence and improve their working conditions in the city in which they work.

Lastly, in answering the third research question, this paper highlights that couriers do not confine themselves to 'traditional' strike action to achieve change, but instead explore multiple voice trajectories to break employer silencing. Contrary to traditional employee–employer dyads, relationships in platform capitalism, and specifically local app work, involve multiple parties engaging in an exchange agreement (Duggan *et al.*, 2020). Likewise, our findings illustrate similar interactions regarding trajectories of voice. Couriers compensated the lack of formalized employer-led voice mechanisms by developing a broader inclusive strategy that

framed their working conditions as a community issue rather than an organizational or workplace issue. In doing so, the couriers used their capacity to engage with the wider community, and to produce disruptions in OFDCs' operations to make credible threats and promote their own interests. Key to this outcome is the central role that couriers, and the FCN, have in establishing coalitions with other actors in the community, with the aim to create a platform for their voice and to shape more efficiently their working conditions. Specifically, aiming to voice and address concerns over their working conditions, including their 'workplace' (i.e. the city), couriers initiated voice not only with OFDCs, but also with the City Council, the OFDCs' partner restaurants and the public. Voice is traditionally seen as internal to the company (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2014), however, our findings show that this self-initiated voice mechanism transcends the boundaries of the organization and uses the compounding effect of each trajectory to make worker voice stronger and more influential.

Conclusion

The findings presented in this study advance novel theoretical insights into managerial silencing of worker voice and provide a considerable contribution to the worker voice and silence literatures. First, we address the call for an exploration of managerial silencing of worker voice in variable contexts (Donaghey *et al.*, 2019; Hickland *et al.*, 2020), namely food couriers in platform capitalism, to extend the silence concept to reveal how employers curtail the function of voice, and how workers respond to managerial silencing. Theoretically, this paper contributes to current debates on trajectories of voice (Barry, Dundon and Wilkinson, 2018) by arguing that the detailed examination of the intersection between sectoral dynamics and organizational outcomes, which are rooted in technological advances, are key to understanding the factors influencing worker voice and silence. Finally, it expands our understanding of the role of technology in facilitating new modes of voice practice, but also its utilization by management as an inhibitor of worker voice (Donaghey *et al.*, 2011, 2019; Donovan *et al.*, 2016; Hickland *et al.*, 2020; Holland, Cooper and Hecker, 2016). In doing so, this paper contributes to current debates on voice and silence by offering

a wider understanding of the possibilities for voice within a climate of employer silencing. It is the detailed examination of the intersection between platform capitalism and workplace outcomes that is crucial for understanding the factors that influence workers' capacity to exercise their voice in an effective manner in this context.

In practical terms, by exploring other trajectories of voice, couriers increase their capacity to influence their working conditions. As OFDCs do not have the same fee or work system across the world – these are dependent on supply and demand in each city – decisions and processes over these aspects are flexible and prone to change based on OFDCs' business aims and costs. Couriers can use voice to negotiate better conditions and apply pressure to OFDCs for a fairer fee system and more transparent operations. OFDCs, in contrast, should reconsider their approach to voice and over-reliance on algorithmic management, and move from silence to voice. Couriers, especially experienced ones, have particularly valuable information and knowledge to share that is crucial for sustainable individual and organizational functioning.

References

Allen, M. and H. Tüselmann (2009). 'All powerful voice? The need to include "exit", "loyalty" and "neglect" in empirical studies too', *Employee Relations*, **31**, pp. 538–552.

Argyris, C. (1977). 'Double loop learning in organizations', *Harvard Business Review*, **55**, pp. 115–125.

Atkinson, J. (1984). 'Manpower strategies for flexible organisations', *Personnel Management*, **16**, pp. 28–31.

Awuzie, B. and P. McDermott (2017). 'An abductive approach to qualitative built environment research: a viable system methodological exposé', *Qualitative Research Journal*, **17**, pp. 356–372.

Barry, M. and A. Wilkinson (2016). 'Pro-social or pro-management? A critique of the conception of employee voice as a pro-social behaviour within organizational behaviour', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, **54**, pp. 261–284.

Barry, M., T. Dundon and A. Wilkinson (2018). 'Employee voice: conceptualisations, meanings, limitations and possible integration'. In A. Wilkinson, T. Dundon, J. Donaghey and A. J. S. Colvin (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Employment Relations*, pp. 251–265. London: Routledge.

Bashshur, M. R. and B. Oc (2015). 'When voice matters: a multilevel review of the impact of voice in organizations', *Journal of Management*, **41**, pp. 1530–1554.

Braun, V. and V. Clarke (2006). 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, **3**, pp. 77–101.

Bryman, A. and E. Bell (2015). *Business Research Methods*, 4th edn. New York: Oxford University Press.

Burris, E. R. (2012). 'The risks and rewards of speaking up: managerial responses to employee voice', *Academy of Management Journal*, **55**, pp. 851–875.

Burris, E. R., K. W. Rockmann and Y. S. Kimmons (2017). 'The value of voice to managers: employee identification and the content of voice', *Academy of Management Journal*, **60**, pp. 2099–2125.

Cant, C. (2019). *Riding for Deliveroo: Resistance in the New Economy*. Cambridge: Polity.

Charlwood, A. (2003). 'Willingness to unionize amongst non-union workers'. In H. Gospel and S. Wood (eds), *Representing Workers*, pp. 67–73. Abingdon: Routledge.

Conway, E., P. Rosati, K. Monks and T. Lynn (2019). 'Voicing job satisfaction and dissatisfaction through Twitter: employees' use of cyberspace', *New Technology, Work and Employment*, **34**, pp. 139–156.

Creswell, J. W. and D. L. Miller (2000). 'Determining validity in qualitative inquiry', *Theory Into Practice*, **39**, pp. 124–130.

Cunliffe, A. L. (2011). 'Crafting qualitative research', *Organizational Research Methods*, **14**, pp. 647–673.

Curchod, C., G. Patriotta, L. Cohen and N. Neysen (2020). 'Working for an algorithm: power asymmetries and agency in online work settings', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **65**, pp. 644–676.

Donaghey, J., N. Cullinane, T. Dundon and A. Wilkinson (2011). 'Reconceptualising employee silence', *Work, Employment and Society*, **25**, pp. 51–67.

Donaghey, J., T. Dundon, N. Cullinane, T. Dobbins and E. Hickland (2019). 'Managerial silencing of employee voice'. In P. Holland, J. Teicher and J. Donaghey (eds), *Employee Voice at Work*, pp. 113–128. New York: Springer.

Donovan, S., M. O'Sullivan, E. Doyle and J. Garvey (2016). 'Employee voice and silence in auditing firms', *Employee Relations*, **38**, pp. 563–577. https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-05-2015-0078

Dubois, A. and L. E. Gadde (2002). 'Systematic combining: an abductive approach to case research', *Journal of Business Research*, **55**, pp. 553–560.

Duggan, J., U. Sherman, R. Carbery and A. McDonnell (2020). 'Algorithmic management and app-work in the gig economy: a research agenda for employment relations and HRM', *Human Resource Management Journal*, **30**, pp. 114–132.

Dundon, T. (2002). 'Management choice and employee voice', *Industrial Relations News*, pp. 19–23.

Ezzamel, M., H. Willmott and F. Worthington (2001). 'Power, control and resistance in "the factory that time forgot"', *Journal of Management Studies*, **38**, pp. 1053–1079.

Gandini, A. (2019). 'Labour process theory and the gig economy', *Human Relations*, **72**, pp. 1039–1056.

Gilbert, C., S. De Winne and L. Sels (2011). 'The influence of line managers and HR department on employees' affective commitment', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **22**, pp. 1618–1637.

Harlos, K. P. (2001). 'When organizational voice systems fail', *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, **37**, pp. 324–342.

Harrison, J., L. MacGibbon and M. Morton (2001). 'Regimes of trustworthiness in qualitative research: the rigors of reciprocity', *Qualitative Inquiry*, **7**, pp. 323–345.

Harvey, G., C. Rhodes, S. J. Vachhani and K. Williams (2017). 'Neo-villeiny and the service sector: the case of hyper flexible and precarious work in fitness centres', *Work, Employment and Society*, **31**, pp. 19–35.

Hickland, E., N. Cullinane, T. Dobbins, T. Dundon and J. Donaghey (2020). 'Employer silencing in a context of voice regulations: case studies of non-compliance', *Human Resource Management Journal*, **30**, pp. 537–552.

Holland, P., B. K. Cooper and R. Hecker (2016). 'Use of social media at work: a new form of employee voice?', *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, **27**, pp. 2621–2634.

Holland, P., A. Pyman, B. K. Cooper and J. Teicher (2011). 'Employee voice and job satisfaction in Australia: the centrality of direct voice', *Human Resource Management*, **50**, pp. 95–111.

Huws, U., N. H. Spencer and S. Joyce (2016). *Crowd Work in Europe: Preliminary Results from a Survey in the UK, Sweden, Germany, Austria and the Netherlands*. Brussels: Foundation for European Progressive Studies.

Kenney, M. and J. Zysman (2016). 'The rise of the platform economy', *Issues in Science and Technology*, **32**, p. 61.

Kougiannou, K. (2019). 'Employee silence and voice: addressing hidden inequalities at work'. In S. Nachmias and V. Caven (eds), *Inequality and Organizational Practice*, pp. 179–197. Cham: Springer International.

Lehdonvirta, V. (2016). 'Algorithms that divide and unite: delocalisation, identity and collective action in "microwork"'. In J. Flecker (ed.), *Space, Place and Global Digital Work*, pp. 53–80. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lobel, O. (2017). 'The gig economy & the future of employment and labor law', *USFL Rev*, **51**, p. 51.

Maanen, J. V. (1979). 'The fact of fiction in organizational ethnography', *Administrative Science Quarterly*, **24**, p. 539.

Marshall, C. and G. B. Rossman (2011). *Designing Qualitative Research*, 5th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McCabe, D. and D. Lewin (1992). 'Employee voice: a human resource management perspective', *California Management Review*, **34**, pp. 112–123.

Milan, S. (2014). 'The ethics of social movement research'. In D. D. Porta (ed.), *Methodological Practices in Social Movement Research*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Milliken, F. J., E. W. Morrison and P. F. Hewlin (2003). 'An exploratory study of employee silence: issues that employees don't communicate upward and why', *Journal of Management Studies*, **40**, pp. 1453–1476.

Millward, N., A. Bryson and J. Forth (2000). *All Change at Work: British Employment Relations 1980–1998 as Portrayed by the Workplace Industrial Relations Survey Series*. London: Routledge.

Morrison, E. (2011). 'Employee voice behavior: integration and directions for future research', *Academy of Management Annals*, **5**, pp. 373–412.

Morrison, E. W. and N. B. Rothman (2009). 'Silence and the dynamics of power'. In J. Greenberg and M. S. Edwards (eds), *Voice and Silence in Organizations*, vol. **6**, pp. 111–134. Bingley: Emerald Group.

Mowbray, P. K., A. Wilkinson and H. H. M. Tse (2015). 'An integrative review of employee voice: identifying a common conceptualization and research agenda', *International Journal of Management Reviews*, **17**, pp. 382–400.

Nechanska, E., E. Hughes and T. Dundon (2020). 'Towards an integration of employee voice and silence', *Human Resource Management Review*, **30**, art. 100674.

Partington, R. (2019). 'Gig economy in Britain doubles, accounting for 4.7 million workers', *The Guardian*, June 28.

Pinder, C. C. and K. P. Harlos (2001). 'Employee silence: quiescence and acquiescence as responses to perceived injustice'. In *Research in Personnel and Human Resource Management*, vol. 20, pp. 331–369. Bingley: Emerald Group.

Redding, W. C. (1985). 'Rocking boats, blowing whistles, and teaching speech communication', *Communication Education*, **34**, pp. 245–258.

Rosenblat, A. (2018). *Uberland: How Algorithms are Rewriting the Rules of Work*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Schmidt, F. A. (2017). *Digital Labour Markets in the Platform Economy: Mapping the Political Challenges of Crowd Work and Gig Work*. Berlin: Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung.

Shapiro, A. (2018). 'Between autonomy and control: strategies of arbitrage in the "on-demand" economy', *New Media & Society*, **20**, pp. 2954–2971.

Srnicek, N. (2017). 'The challenges of platform capitalism: understanding the logic of a new business model', *Juncture*, **23**, pp. 254–257.

Strauss, A. and J. Corbin (1990). *Basics of Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Tangirala, S. and R. Ramanujam (2008). 'Employee silence on critical work issues: the cross level effects of procedural justice climate', *Personnel Psychology*, **61**, pp. 37–68.

Tassinari, A. and V. Maccarrone (2020). 'Riders on the storm: workplace solidarity among gig economy couriers in Italy and the UK', *Work, Employment and Society*', **34**, pp. 35–54.

Townsend, K., A. Wilkinson, T. Dundon and P. K. Mowbray (2020). 'Tracking employee voice: developing the concept of voice pathways', *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*. https://doi.org/10.1111/1744-7941.12271

Van Dyne, L., L. L. Cummings and J. M. Parks (1995). 'Extrarole behaviors: in pursuit of construct and definitional clarity (a bridge over muddied waters)', *Research in Organizational Behavior*, **17**, pp. 215–285.

Wilkinson, A., M. Barry and E. Morrison (2020). 'Toward an integration of research on employee voice', *Human Resource Management Review*, **30**, art. 100674.

Wilkinson, A., T. Dundon, J. Donaghey and R. Freeman (2014). 'Employee voice: charting new terrain'. In A. Wilkinson, J. Donaghey, T. Dundon and R. Freeman (eds), *The Handbook of Research on Employee Voice*, pp. 3–16. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Wood, A. J., V. Lehdonvirta and M. Graham (2018). 'Workers of the Internet unite? Online freelancer organisation among remote gig economy workers in six Asian and African countries', *New Technology, Work and Employment*, **33**, pp. 95–112.

Wood, A. J., M. Graham, V. Lehdonvirta and I. Hjorth (2019). 'Good gig, bad gig: autonomy and algorithmic control in the global gig economy', *Work, Employment and Society*, **33**, pp. 56–75.

Yin, R. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 3rd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Nadia K. Kougiannou is a Senior Lecturer in HRM at Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University, UK. She has published in *Human Resource Management Journal*, *Journal of Business Research* and *British Journal of Management* and is an Academic Associate of the CIPD. Current research projects include investigating the impact of trust and justice on the efficacy of information and consultation (I&C) bodies, employee voice in the gig economy and the role of line managers in the implementation of employee engagement.

Pedro Mendonça is a Lecturer in Human Resource Management and Organizational Behaviour at Edinburgh Napier University. Previously, he was a lecturer at Nottingham Business School and part of the Changing Employment Research Project, Marie Curie Network Actions, as an Early Stage Researcher. His research focuses on changes in labour markets, comparative industrial relations, employee voice and agency in the gig economy, job quality in supply chains and labour process theory.

Supporting Information

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of the article.

Appendix 1
Appendix 2