

## **Varieties of Platform Work. Platforms and Social Inequality in Germany and the United States (No. 7)**

### **Citation:**

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- The authors assert that the relationship linking social inequality and platform work (i.e., Uber, Door Dash, etc.) can be distinguished in three domains, which are: (1) which communities participate in platform work; (2) consideration of what conditions platform work provides, economic mobility; and (3) possible studies that emphasize the relationships between the diverse communities, focusing on SES, hours worked, and other factors.
- The authors attest that the estimated employment in the crowd-working domain in Germany and the United States is between 1 and 4 percent of the federal workforce; platform work creates unpredictable self-employment that is developing social inequality.
- The authors affirm that five mechanisms cause platform employees to experience disempowerment, which is:
  1. Employers (i.e., platforms) control trade and can change terms unilaterally.
  2. Employers control access to information and job availability, and prices while having open access to all information.
  3. Employers control the interface between employees and consumers.
  4. Employers can limit employee access to the platform and the consumers.
  5. Employers define the algorithm (i.e., ranking and reputation systems) that influences employees to access jobs.
- The authors maintain that the current increase in temporary employment, decrease in bargaining coverages (i.e., union protections), and contracting out employees results in the expansion of the lower socioeconomic class and the increase in self-employment (i.e., no job security).
- The authors avow that the culture in the United States supports entrepreneurship and dismisses interest convergence ( see Dr. Derrick Bell's interest convergence theory) for the benefit of the society; American unions have endured antagonistic interactions with federal, state, and private entities, weakening their effectiveness in protecting employee interests.
- The authors believe that platforms focus on two task types, in terms of context and level of skill to complete an activity (i.e., task or problem), which are:

1. Micro-tasks focus on routine (e.g., categorization, data verification, and transcription) or activities that require minimal skill or knowledge (e.g., product testing and review), allowing for the activity to be chunked into short, manageable tasks; and
  2. Macro-tasks are complex, requiring a high level of knowledge and creativity (e.g., design, programming, product development, reasoning, and scientific problem-solving), which are limited in their ability to be chunked into manageable tasks.
- The authors substantiate that people without tertiary education worked elevated hours on platforms, indicating that crowd-workers are often more likely to use platforms as a primary source of income.
  - The authors affirm that American crowd-workers tend to be university-educated and are using platform employment as a resource to generate income due to the flexibility and the lack of social benefits (i.e., welfare).
  - The authors allege that unions are attempting to scrutinize regulations on self-employment and supporting crowd workers class actions against platforms; the platform economy can create positive or negative effects on labor markets, the weaker the supportive social services (i.e., American and German social welfare systems).