Reassessing Precarious and Immigrant Work: A Psychoanalytic Investigation of Workers' Subjectivity and Affective Experience in Food-Delivery Gig-Work.

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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Management Studies

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May 2024

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Declaration

This thesis is a presentation of my own original research. Wherever contributions of others are included, every effort has been made to indicate this clearly by making reference to the literature.

Acknowledgments

I want to thank my family, friends and colleagues. Special thanks to my supervisors.

Abstract

In contemporary research on low-skilled immigrant workers, scholars have highlighted concepts such as precarity, exploitation, and racism as key loci of problematisation. Furthermore, how migrant workers experience exploitative and racist work-environments is also a topic that draws the attention of researchers, as these challenges influence and relate to workers' subjectivity, affect and perspectives of otherness. Additionally, how subjectivity relates to resistance and what forms of control and consent influence the subjective manifestations of resistance—from an organisation studies perspective—is an important factor to examine as a fundamental attribute of workers' lived-experience. My focus lies in the intersection of these three lines of thought and in particular how lived-experiences of precarity and otherness should be investigated within a framework that takes into consideration the combination of affective-experiences, subjectivity and practices of control and resistance at work. Lacanian psychoanalysis offers a methodological tool that can assist in shedding light on this interrelated perspective of the lived-experience of migrant workers as well as in analysing their subjectivity and affective economy in a multilayered fashion. To this end, the present study examines these questions by collecting a rich set of empirical data from migrant-riders who work in food-delivery platform-work in England. The analysis of the data collected is made from a psychoanalytic perspective which traces the different identifications that workers' employ in their speech. Thus it allows the examination of the food-delivery subject—with its lack and different objects—along the modes of enjoyment that support their articulation. In this way, the suggested findings may improve our understanding of how migrant-workers experience their precarious and exploitative working conditions. The main contributions of this study rest on how riders embrace the precarious conditions of food-delivery in a way that sustains their commitment to this work, and secondly, on how the algorithmic system of control functions as a human resource management practice in food-delivery gig-work.

Introduction

There is well-established interest in the investigation of the dimensions of immigrant labour in organisation studies. Wars and other natural disasters across the globe in recent decades have resulted in more immigrants seeking a better life in the countries of the west. According to the Migration Observatory, in 2021, there were 9.5 million immigrants in the UK. More than three million of these residing in the city of London (Vargas-Silva & Rienzo, 2022). The figures do not include the foreign visitors who come to the UK with tourist visas and who may gain informal access to work. Thus the actual numbers of formal and informal immigrant workers could be even higher. Given the above, the employment relations of migrant workers (Könönen, 2019) and their lived-experience at work (Grossman-Thompson, 2019) are important areas of research. Additionally, in many cases they are likely to experience unfavourable treatment at work as they are dependent on visa sponsorship from their employers to remain in the country and potentially to gain the right to remain indefinitely in the future (Webb & Lahiri-Roy, 2019). These conditions push the migrant workers towards increasingly more precarious employment where uncertainty, low income, limited social benefits and long working-hours are dominant attributes of the work environment (Lewis et al., 2015). Therefore, there is a strong interest in examining and exploring how migrant workers situate themselves and how they cope within these precarious and alienating modes of work, especially in terms of their subjectivity and affective-experiences.

At the same time, a new mode of work is quickly gaining ground over the last decade, opening up new opportunities for work and profit. This is platform capitalism and it operates through the interconnectivity that the internet and smart-phones provide. Platform capitalism inaugurates new modalities of work in which the usual employment relation is that of freelance-workers who are not entitled to any employment rights (Liang et al., 2022). Workers experience hyper-precarity as there is never any guarantee in terms of work consistency in the future, and monthly wages may fluctuate a lot. Platform companies such as Uber and Deliveroo have witnessed global growth. More and more people are trying to find work through their in-phone applications, in what are advertised as free and flexible jobs where one can be one's own boss (Cano et al., 2021). This has led researchers in organisation studies to investigate the new forms of organisation and management practices that these automated-algorithmic applications offer for controlling and managing the workers (Ivanova et al., 2018; Woodcock, 2020). For

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example, Woodcock and Johnson (2018) argue that this new management practice relates to gamification in the workplace and which opportunities for resistance are to be found therein. Following autonomism and situationism, they adopt a sociological perspective which draws from Standing's account of the precariat as a class formation (Standing, 2011). Other scholars in the sociology of work have debated: whether the precariat should be considered a separate social class (Kalleberg, 2012); what hyper-precarity is; its relationship with forced-immigrant labour (Lewis et al., 2015); in addition to the different nuances that need to be taken into consideration when jumping from precarious work to precarious workers (Campbell & Price, 2016). All of these have sparked interesting debates and discussions. There has also been a thread of research investigating the 'challenges and contradictions' of normalising the effects of precarious work to migrant workers (Rubery et al., 2018) and the implications of precarious and migrant work in theory and research (Kalleberg & Vallas, 2017). In this intersection of social work and precarious and migrant labour there has also been a call to examine the effects of the normalisation of precarious work in the mental experiences of immigrant workers via a psychosocial approach (Margherita & Tessitore, 2023). This would enrich the research on precarious and immigrant work in a way that looks at the embodied aspects of the work and how these develop along the social dimension. As Zhang et al., claim the multiple parameters that influence precarious migrant labour need to be viewed through an intersectional lens to better understand migrant workers' experiences and facilitate their inclusion (Zhang et al., 2022). Understanding the experiences of migrant workers in this new precarious work is critical to their social inclusion and assimilation, and it is equally important to reflect on how these new forms of algorithmic management influence the subjectivity of the workers in cases such as the food-delivery riders of platform applications. This is the first intersection that forms one part of the foundation upon which this research study is posited. It is an intersection that calls for an in-depth exploration of migrant and precarious workers in terms of their experiences and the subjectivity that develops between this new algorithmic mode of management and freelancing gig-work.

The remaining pillars of this research are to be found in how resistance and control are experienced in the workplace and how psychoanalysis provides a unique methodological lens to enhance our understanding of these experiences. To this end, scholars in critical management studies have explored workers' subjectivities as discursively produced outcomes of how resistance and control manifest in the workplace (Ball & Wilson, 2000; Contu & Willmott, 2003; Kenny et al., 2014; Knights & Willmott, 1989). For example, Kenny et al. argue that

understanding organisational identity involves an exploration of 'the meaning-making and narratives told by actors about "who we are," while suspending consideration of the accuracy or veracity of such claims' (Kenny et al., 2014, p. 147). Such a proposition designates two important points. the first point is that in order to investigate workers' subjectivity—and how management's control and workers' resistance interact and mutually influence each other—one has to capture how the workers speak about themselves in relation to these practices of control and resistance. The first point leads to the second, which is a consideration of auto-ethnography as one of the methods to collect such empirical data, as it facilitates the conditions of capturing the 'who we are' of the workers and adds the dimension of comparing and contrasting these narratives to those of the researcher (Però, 2020). Lastly, as Watson expands, auto-ethnography is more than a research method, and it provides a supplementary perspective to the study of work through both its social and formal aspects as well as the researcher's insights on the two (Watson, 2012). The investigation of subjectivity is thus enhanced by looking at how workers articulate the 'who we are' in their speech, particularly in relation to practices of control and management in their workplace, thereby suggesting that auto-ethnography could be a suitable starting point to collect this information.

Researchers in organisation studies have employed Lacanian psychoanalysis as a methodological tool to facilitate this mapping-out of the workers' subjectivity, as it allows to deepen our sense of subjectivity by connecting it with the role of fantasy and modes of enjoyment (Costas & Taheri, 2012; Hoedemaekers & Keegan, 2010; Roberts, 2005). With this in mind, Hoedemaekers claims that Lacan's theorisation of language and subjectivity could be very insightful in examining the case of migrant and precarious workers as it enables us to trace the different ways in which otherness and precarity are experienced through fantasmatic identifications that may shape subjectivity in alignment with the companies' objectives (Hoedemaekers, 2009). Additionally, psychoanalysis offers a rich conceptual-toolkit to better analyse these discursive configurations as well as to incorporate within the research lens the dimension of the affective, lived-experience of the workers (Dashtipour, 2014; Fotaki et al., 2012, 2017; Kenny, 2012). Kenny and Fotaki stress the importance of affect at work and intersubjective relations, and maintain that affect as a concept has 'no single and overarching interpretation' (Kenny & Fotaki, 2014, p. 22). In accordance, this research develops an examination of subjectivity by adopting a Lacanian perspective on affective-experiences and study how modalities of enjoyment connect with fantasmatic identification thereby reinforcing certain forms of subjectivity. This would then finalise the second intersection which constitutes

the basis of this research, as in order to better understand the migrant workers' subjectivity and lived-experience I choose the discursive analysis of resistance and control practices in their work through a psychoanalytic lens as the most pertinent manner to conduct this study. This also favours an auto-ethnographic approach as a suitable method to collect empirical data, precisely by enabling the researcher to adopt an insider's perspective on the affective-experience and practices of control and resistance that the workers also experience (Kearsey, 2020). Of course, this is not the only possible way of studying the topic and I do not claim that this combination will unveil the whole truth about the situation in precarious and immigrant work. However, I firmly believe in its potential for constructively examining the discourse of the workers and highlighting the role of affective-experiences in their subjectivity. Therefore, this study investigates the subjectivity and affective-experience of delivery-riders working for platform companies, through a close examination of the practices of control and resistance from a psychoanalytic perspective via an auto-ethnographic approach. The study contributes to the growing discussions in the field of organisation and management studies concerning the control and exploitation of migrant and precarious workers. It also sheds light on how the workers experience their own precarity and foreignness as influences upon their subjectivity, contributing to psychoanalytic perspectives of subjectivity and affect in organisation studies. Furthermore, it also expands on past literature on psychoanalytic contributions to migrant status and how the algorithmic system constitutes a new version of Human Resource Management (HRM).

Overview of structure

Chapter one provides an extensive review of the respective literature upon which this study is based. The first part of the chapter provides an overview of the research on migrant and precarious work, breaking it down into three main categories. The first focuses on affective experience, the second on control and consent and the third on resistance as important aspects of the investigation of migrant and precarious work. The second part of the chapter looks at past research on workers' subjectivity in organisation studies and follows critical approaches that inspect subjectivity through control, consent and resistance, as well as the research which is psychoanalytic informed. The psychoanalytic informed branch is further broken down into research which explores: identification; practices of control, consent and resistance; and lastly how psychoanalysis can study affect at work. The third part combines the similarities of the aforementioned perspectives, and in the fourth part the overlapped focus of the study is

presented. In the fifth part, the precise scope of the study is illustrated, and the sixth part contains the research questions that guide this research.

In chapter two, I present the main concepts from psychoanalytic theory which play a role in the analysis, and I indicate the ways in which the movement from the clinical setting to the context of a social analysis is made possible. In the first part I begin with an introduction to the Lacanian registers of Symbolic, Imaginary and Real and how they can be utilised in tracing the different identifications of the riders in their speech. I then pass on to discuss the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy, as this allows the analysis to connect to questions of desire and symptomatic formations. In the second part of the chapter, I explore the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis and their potential for enabling new analytical perspectives. The third part of the chapter goes into a political reading of psychoanalysis by presenting Lacan's four discourses as the possible social bonds that are generated by a rotation among four terms, implicating the subjects' enjoyment in different positions each time. The chapter concludes by summarising the available tools that psychoanalysis offers as they are pertinent to an examination of the migrant-workers' subjectivity and affective-experience.

In the third chapter, I begin to present the methodology of the research by introducing the basic premises of the methodological approach. In the second part I highlight the epistemological impossibility of psychoanalysis and its ontological impasse as it is structured around a fundamental lack and a primordial loss. In the third part, I proceed to develop the data collection methods. This study was conducted using an ethnographic process of observation and participation in food-delivery work. It was supplemented by psychoanalytic informed interviews with migrant riders. The fourth part expands on the different variations of discourse analysis that have previously been used in similar research. The fifth and sixth part converge on a path of discourse analysis that allows for a psychoanalytic investigation of the workers affective-experiences. The seventh part highlights some final remarks on Lacanian discourse analysis and the ethics and reflexivity that guide this research, before summarising the main methodological points that are brought into the data analysis chapters that follow.

The first chapter of the data analysis begins with a presentation of the fundamental elements of food-delivery work and is divided into three parts. The first part illustrates how this work is advertised as a casual source of secondary income where one can be one's own boss. The second part focuses on the attributes of freedom and flexibility that food-delivery allegedly offers. The third part illustrates the different transgressions that riders employ in

terms of account renting, the use of multiple applications and miscellaneous transgressions. The second section of the chapter expands on the daily experience of the riders and is comprised of three main parts. Firstly, what is the role of efficiency and knowledge in their daily experience? Secondly how do they speak about positive and negative experiences in their work? Finally what are the riders' goals and how do these relate to their temporary perception of this job? The main points of this first data analysis chapter along the observed contradictions between the researcher's auto-ethnographic and the majority of participants' perspective were taken as the first locus of investigation through a psychoanalytic framework in the second data analysis chapter.

The second data analysis chapter begins with a discussion which highlights the fluctuation of the riders' experiences in the pursuit of delivering orders. Then it traces the riders' different identifications as they articulate these experiences, while simultaneously locating the object of the food-delivery work and the distribution of enjoyment these offer, thereby constituting the drive for delivery-work. The next part connects these identifications, through the metonymic and metaphoric dimensions of language, with the desire and symptoms of the workers. The final part of this chapter summarises the findings and arranges the transition to the discussion chapter.

In the discussion chapter, I begin with an outline of the previous analysis presenting the main findings that emerged from the analysis in each chapter. The second part connects the findings to the existing literature of migrant and precarious work for food-delivery gig-work. The third part positions the findings within the prior literature on subjectivity and affect in organisation studies delineating one of the main empirical contributions in terms of how delivery-riders experience their precarious subjectivity. The fourth part connects the part of the findings which aligns the algorithmic system of control in this work with human resource management literature and develops the second main contribution of this research which highlights the role of freedom and control in the algorithm as a management system. The final part of the chapter summarises the empirical contributions of the research.

The thesis concludes by summarising the insights from all the previous chapters and emphasises how migrant-riders' subjectivity is experienced in their precarious work. A psychoanalytic framework enabled an in-depth investigation of the subject and the object of food-delivery work and related those with the concepts of jouissance, desire and being. The key insights provided in the thesis are underlined, and include the way in which the algorithmic

system of control operates as the law of food-delivery propagating a quantifiable subjectivity for the workers. These forms of quantifiable subjectivity, where value is totalised, allow the riders to construct their individual fantasies and accept the precarity of their job. They also allow riders to enjoy the pursuit of additional orders which simultaneously offers and denies the opportunity of full enjoyment as this is always transposed to the future and the deliveries yet to be completed.

1.Literature Review Chapter

This literature review surveys the existing research on migrant and precarious labour, to map its empirical material and its existing conceptual and theoretical contributions. The topic of my research touches upon: the immigration and precarious labour literature; organisational theory on employees' subjectivity and their embodied experience; studies on resistance and its manifestations in the contemporary workplace; and lastly, psychoanalysis and psychoanalytic theory. My purpose is to indicate how these different spheres of literature intersect with one another and to highlight the gap in the literature where the contribution of my research is situated, together with the ground for intellectual problematisation over contentious principles that are granted the status of organisational truths. In the first part of the chapter, I present how the research has posited itself in relation to the main attributes of affective lived-experience, resistance, control and consent as important aspects to consider in understanding migrant and precarious work. Then I will present how research in organisation studies has studied subjectivity and how the facets of affective lived-experience, resistance in the workplace, control and consent have also been viewed as important elements that influence organisational subjectivity. Consequently, I identify research which employs a psychoanalytic framework to investigate workers subjectivity as well as migrant labour. Lastly, I identify the overlapping perspectives and articulate the gap in which my research problematisation is based.

1.1.Immigration and precarious labour

In western countries, immigration has been a controversial issue for management scholars for many years in relation to concepts of identity, inclusion, integration and its effects on the labour market. The UK labour market is an intriguing case, especially after the Brexit deal between UK and the European Union (EU). The case of immigration carries particular weight, as it is not only the managerial and economic aspect that is being researched, but also its political and social aspects which are of major importance (Leruth & Taylor-Gooby, 2019). Mark Gilbert, at his economic column in Bloomberg, comments that post-Brexit Britain will still rely heavily on immigrant workers (Gilbert, 2019), placing into the spotlight the debate that Leave-supporters, who wanted to see the immigrant influx reduced following Brexit, will discover that the country cannot live without them. Moreover, concerns around immigration have been amplified in the UK political discourse in recent years, suggesting a contemporary

mobilisation against immigrants by political actors influencing public opinion (Eberl et al., 2018; Portice & Reicher, 2018). Thus, in the post Brexit era, the question of migrant workers in the UK labour market and its ramifications become more relevant than ever.

1.1.1 <u>Embodied experience and the positionality of Immigrant Workers</u>

Scholars have drawn attention to the ways that class, gender and race play a fundamental role in the embodied experience of migrant workers and their ramifications. For example, Schierup et. al. (2023) have investigated how transversal narratives of solidarity emerge in global migration governance. They underline how the positionality of migrant workers through exposure of 'the features of a class, gendered and racialised crisis in migration' (ibid., p. 242) calls for alternative imaginaries and solidarities as a space for inclusion of vulnerable immigrants. Katartzi has analysed how the influence of migrant positionality delimits young migrant workers' aspirations in terms of their occupational horizons and social mobility (Katartzi, 2021). She concludes, following Bourdieu, that the migrant workers face a significant loss in economic, social and cultural capital, and although habitus exerts its durable, long-lasting power, migrant status and gendered positionalities are constantly transformed by external conditions. This enables migrant workers to mediate the restricted opportunities and fosters their capacity 'of colonising the future' (ibid., p.41). Moreover, Deshingark attests to the importance of positionality in examining the subjectivity of migrant workers as race, gender and ethnicity reproduce power inequalities and precarity in migrant lived-experiences (Deshingkar, 2019). This line of research highlights the importance of considering racial, gender and class attributes that intersect the knot of precarious and migrant work and influence the workers' lived-experience and the structure of their subjectivity. As Ferguson and McNally argue the reproduction of a global working class relies on gendered and racialised relations that mark the processes of migrant workers (Ferguson & McNally, 2014). A recognition of the role that the positionality of migrant workers plays in examining their work is fundamental, and the embodied aspect of their lived-experience is something that deserves to be investigated as a crucial component of their subjectivity. This recognition of the body as more than an inscripted surface directs this research towards an 'exploration of embodiment as a process of being in perpetual motion – moving towards others within the world of objects and spaces' (Del Busso & Reavey, 2013, p. 59). Nevertheless, the recognition of the body as a surplus of inscription that is fuelled by the embodied aspects of

gender, class and race should also be considered through the lens of misrecognition. As Sebrechts et al. (, 2019) point out the ambivalence of recognition in everyday life points towards a research path that acknowledges a dynamic flux of recognition with misrecognition. More specifically, in this complex intersection of precarious and migrant work, the processes of recognition are not without ambiguities in terms of how each element influences the workers' embodied experiences of precarity. Perhaps the psychoanalytic tools that this research aims to adopt will offer an enhanced way of viewing these embodied aspects of experience and the role of misrecognition therein. Therefore, the need to discern the role of immigrant workers' lived-experience and its signification in the workplace becomes more pertinent than ever in order to improve our understanding of migrant labour and to facilitate their acclimatisation. Consequently, the presence of migrant workers renders studying them in management an extremely complex task as—in addition to organisational, managerial, cultural and power issues—one has to deal with questions of nativeness, race and difference as well. The discourses on immigration in the UK have polarised in recent years, especially in the post-referendum era. In these discourses, the notion of work has been a crucial hinge. As researchers, we have a responsibility to understand how this affects the role of immigrant identity in the workplace, and how workers construct their identity as workers in relation to managerial, media and socio-political discourses. It is important that we understand such processes of identification and subjectification not simply through metaphors of assimilation or coping, but that we also conceptualise the diverse ways in which resistance plays a role in the embodiment of migrant labour. Taking this into consideration, I will now move to investigate how the literature has connected migrant and precarious work with the affective dimension.

1.1.2 <u>Immigrant Work as precarious labour and affective experience</u>

These broader discursive shifts have occurred alongside a rise in economic precarity linked to heightened job insecurity and a decline in labour rights globally over the past several decades. The combined factors of precarity and prejudice have, in turn, catalysed a growing wealth of valuable research into the interconnected social, political, and economic challenges faced by migrant workers—especially those who are considered to be 'low-skilled' and, hence, particularly vulnerable to economic precarity. To begin with precarious labour has already been related to a negative impact on well-being and to the affective experience of its workers. The negative effects of precarious work to the affective-experience of workers have been

researched in a number of different workplaces and economies (Patulny et al., 2020). For example, as a study in Canadian libraries indicates, precarious library workers are negatively impacted with added stress, marginalization, burnout, high turnover rates and reduced performance (Henninger et al., 2019). Researchers have also found that insecure employment poses a high risk to workers' well-being, their ability to construct meaningful identities and to adopt significant social status and roles (Irvine & Rose, 2022). Butler and Stoyanova Russell have examined how precarious workers in the gig-sector manage and experience affects in the industry of stand-up comedy, underlining the heavy toll of emotional labour on employability and survival (Butler & Stoyanova Russell, 2018). The link between affective-experience and precarious work has been established and it is pertinent to investigate how this link is further reinforced in the case of migrant workers who frequently find themselves in hyper-precarious work.

Scholars have increasingly focused on the need of workers to 'produce positive affects' such as a good attitude in order to psychologically cope with and professionally survive the economic precarity of neoliberalism. Veldstra's point is that negative feelings are predominantly viewed as something workers willfully experience and therefore are pushed, by the demands of affective labour and their precarious situation, to wilfully change this experience and produce positive affects (Veldstra, 2020). Organisations actively counter the risk of viewing negative feelings as an embedded structure and a function of the capitalist culture in the workplace, since this view would facilitate the possibility of resistance and collective bargaining by the workers. Andrijasevic et al. illustrate the dynamic processes through which the identity of foreign worker is constructed, enacted and resisted (Andrijasevic et al., 2019). They find that class, race and gender serve as the foundations of foreignness which is central to the meaning and lived-experience of work. Whereas Veldstra previously highlighted how precarious workers hide or forcefully change their negative emotions as they are subjected to affective labour, we see now how the constitution of foreignness may add additional attributes of marginalisation which can then be utilized as a coercive lever of power and potential exploitation. In this regard, foreignness bears a similarity to the embodied-aspects of the lived-experience mentioned previously and further underlines the different elements that play a role in the lived-experience of migrant workers.

In a similar fashion, Carastathis illustrates a connection between xenophobic discourses and the economic crisis in Greece (Carastathis, 2015). He underlines how racialized and gendered modes of belonging and estrangement affect subjects differently, and how certain

subjects are considered vulnerable and precarious, while other subjects enjoy an entitlement to national space and remain unaffected by austerity measures. This brings forward the question of how certain discourses structure these perceptions of foreignness and entrench the precarious nature of migrant workers. Zulfiqar investigates how notions of foreignness and dirt are employed symbolically and together with strict surveillance reinforce the control of worker bodies and enforces the wage model in domestic work in Punjab, Pakistan (Zulfiqar, 2019). The aforementioned literature converges on highlighting the differences inherent in human subjects, how this process establishes foreignness inside the organisation and produces inequalities where migrant workers are unable to contest the prevailing narratives that deem them lesser and hence more susceptible to multiple forms of coercion and exploitation in the workplace.

To summarise this section, researchers have investigated how precarity is experienced by migrant workers in terms of negative consequences for their well-being (Henninger et al., 2019; Irvine & Rose, 2022; Patulny et al., 2020), affective-experience and emotional-labour (Butler & Stoyanova Russell, 2018; Veldstra, 2020), as well as identifications of foreignness and experiences of racism (Andrijasevic et al., 2019; Carastathis, 2015; Zulfiqar, 2019). The gap in this literature is due to the fact that scholars have not combined the elements of negative affective-experiences, with embodied aspects of racism and foreignness. They have not viewed them comparatively with the corresponding identifications under which these experiences are articulated and have not utilised a theoretical framework that can support such a combinatory analysis. This opens up a space to investigate how attributes of foreignness not only influence identifications in the workplace, but also their implications in the affective-experience of the migrant workers and their susceptibility to exploitation. Thus, an important facet of the workers' affective-experience is also influenced by the practices of control, consent and resistance in the workplace which I turn to next.

1.1.3 Control and Consent in Immigrant, Precarious Work

This section examines how certain practices of control and consent of migrant, precarious workers are fundamental to investigating and understanding the lived-experience of these workers from a holistic perspective. For example, western countries such as Canada and the UK have embraced policies of managed migration which institutionalise access for migrant workers to low-skilled occupations beyond agriculture and caregiving. Sectors including

construction, food-services, manufacturing and hospitality employ migrant-workers in temporary contracts with under-paid and undesirable working conditions. The workers willingly accept these conditions as they perceive them to be coveted pathways to citizenship in the foreign country in which they find themselves (Polanco, 2016). Certainly, human rights and institutions provide legal frameworks that aim to keep exploitation and harassment of migrant workers in check; nevertheless, the efficiency of such legislative frameworks is often put to question. For instance, Perry et al. demonstrate how subnational legislative frameworks conceal the power imbalances of employment relationships in precarious labour in Ontario, Canada (Perry et al., 2019). They note that harassment and employment standards violations are interrelated phenomena which are perceived as abuses of power and strategies of control, and which take place in a context covered by the existing legal frameworks. Moreover, Campbell et al. investigate the puzzle of temporary migrant workers' reluctance to challenge poor wages and working conditions (Campbell et al., 2019). Their findings include various rationales such as employer reprisals and the downplaying of the significance of low-payments by highlighting the ephemeral nature of the current job. They conclude that reluctance to complain is closely related to social relations within and outside the organisation that enable the employers to present their narratives as unassailable in the migrant workers' perspective and thus prohibit any complaints from being voiced. Additionally, Hande et al. have researched narratives of migrant workers, in the setting in Ontario, revealing how they are exploited in the workplace due to limited access and knowledge of workplace rights as well as their limited access to protection and employment opportunities (Hande et al., 2020). Moreover, a study-case of migrant workers in a French manufacturing factory underlines the importance of government regulations in organisational diversity and inclusion (Yang & Bacouel-Jentjens, 2019). They note that ethnic minorities experience discrimination in their workplace which is encouraged at a governmental level. This highlights the need for the further protection of minorities, as well as the disparity between government regulations and the official public discourse which encourages such actions of discrimination. Similarly, Reeves examines how deportability and the case of illegal residents in Russia serves public discourse into articulating grievances against the 'illegals' through celebrating the unity of a Russian orthodox 'we' (Reeves, 2015). She concludes that the governance of immigration can obfuscate actions of power and coercive technologies, and that how laws operate not as intelligible as they are assumed to be, keeping certain bodies vulnerable, tractable, or deportable.

Evidently, the narratives that fortify the notion of foreignness are widely endorsed by public and political discourse and legal frameworks (Perry et al., 2019) set in place by institutions and authorities (Yang & Bacouel-Jentjens, 2019) often fail to safeguard immigrant workers from exploitation and harassment in the workplace (Campbell et al., 2019; Hande et al., 2020; Reeves, 2015). As Yu observes, institutional frameworks regarding migration and employment practices are in need of continual review (Yu, 2019). Even frameworks specifically related to females can overlap with control logic and constitute layered mechanisms of power that limit women's mobility, as a case of Nepali women migrant workers illustrates (Grossman-Thompson, 2019). Lastly, the case of new stricter laws on immigration often leads to situations where migrant workers find informal access to work and through a combination of their aspirations and the employers' promise of the right to remain indefinitely, they consent to work in precarious jobs, under strict control and threats of deportation (Polanco, 2016). The gap that I observe in the literature is the lack of an investigation into the impact of socio-political and regulatory discourses on the subjectivity of migrant-precarious workers, and on the ways workers construct their fantasies and identities as a result of their own lived-experience under such conditions. This delineates a space where embodied-aspects of experience combine with socio-political discourses to reinforce the control of migrant-workers and their consent to be exploited, thus increasing the need to investigate the factors which play an important role in the workers' lived-experience both in terms of subjectivity and modes of enjoyment.

1.1.4 Resistance in Immigrant and Precarious Work

In this space where control and consent are experienced by migrant-workers in such unfavourable ways, it is important to investigate the forms of resistance workers exercise as supplementary practices which also, in turn, influence the workers' identity and mould their lived-experience. The apprehension of degrading symbolism is taken up by Teo's critical analysis on how social behaviour represents migrants as inferior subjects and maintains an ontology of the subhuman (Teo, 2020). This is closely related to racism and fascism as he concludes that to overcome subhumanism the need for a collective, anti-fascist political and economic front is required, one that focuses on the commonwealth of all human beings and has as its pillar a coalition of the marginalised and their allies. On this note, Hlatshwayo comments on the concept of precarious resistance in the case of Zimbabwean migrant women who work

in Johannesburg (Hlatshwayo, 2019). He defines precarious resistance as borderline illegal strategies and tactics employed by the workers. Since they are isolated and individualised, they fail to have the greater impact which a collective and organised resistance could potentially offer. The notion of collective resistance as the rudimental approach to counter migrant workers' precariousness is a concept that scholars frequently tackle. For example, Keegan mentions how West African youths in the USA redraw the boundaries of affective citizenship, mobilising emotions of solidarity and conviviality to construct feelings of belonging and openness to difference (Keegan, 2019). Comparably, Kearsley explores the collective resistance of precarious workers in the hospitality sector where anti-union practices appear to be dominant (Kearsey, 2020). Despite this, the case of a union-planned strike in TGI Fridays shows how the camaraderie and community of precarious workers can serve as the foundation of workers' collective struggle against precarity. This is also in close alignment with how Jiang and Korczynski develop the possibilities of organising in precarious workplaces despite the barriers of the work-conditions and marginalisation of the workers that direct their control and consent through a strict individualisation (Jiang & Korczynski, 2016). It is through a close investigation of the barriers to collective resistance within the unrecognised individualised forms of resistance, that we may reveal the emergence of conditions and nascent potentialities for creating broader collectives and social mobilisations.

From discursive practices that affectively downgrade migrant workers' identity to collective struggle as a means to resist the precarity and exploitation they experience, recognition plays a central role in how precarity is perceived and cumulated in life arrangements (Motakef, 2019). Motakef argues further that reciprocal relations of life dimensions may mitigate or intensify precarious employment by bringing forth aspects of love, health, rights and participation. Subsequently, Cohen & Hjalmarson argue how migrant farmworkers' everyday practices of resistance are fundamental to recognising and renegotiating their predicament and to a continuous struggle for dignity and humanity (Cohen & Hjalmarson, 2020). It is small acts of everyday resistance that offer the opportunity for more creative processes which may lead to modes of collective actions to improve the working conditions that migrant workers experience (Mansour-Ille & Hendow, 2018). Additionally, it is by paying attention to the different meanings and limits that these practices entail that a better understanding of the agency of migrant workers in the UK is possible (Rydzik & Anitha, 2020).

As has been illustrated, the pertinence of immigration issues is apparent in post-Brexit UK. The discursive practices that constitute the foreignness of migrant workers, that facilitate

their control and that elicit their consent, along with ways of resisting their precarity and exploitation, are fundamental elements of their identity and crucial pieces of their lived-experience. The whole topic is complex with multiple layers of power, and with intertwined political and social issues. Processes of the assimilation and the resistance of migrant workers remain closely related to their affective experience in the workplace and deserve to be explored more thoroughly. In a recent article, Sadhvi Dar examines the role of assimilation and diversity in white academia (Dar, 2019). Her arguments, drawing from Ben Jonson's play 'Jacobean Masque', question the ontology of foreignness and provide a counter-narrative to people who experience exclusion and racism at work in vast contrast with other academics of colour who are endorsed and celebrated by white hierarchies. This resonates, with what Frantz Fanon debates in his book 'Black Skin, White Masks' about how identity and in particular 'blackness' is constructed (Fanon, 2016). He asserts that the colonised black man must appropriate the culture of the coloniser and acquire status symbols within the colonial ecumene. In order to be accepted and assimilated he has to construct his white mask. To better understand the interrelation of subjectivity and affect he claims that 'only a psychoanalytic interpretation of the black problem can lay bare the anomalies of affect that are responsible for the structure of the complex' (Fanon, 2016, p. 3). To recapitulate the literature gap under this section, research on migrant and precarious labour has examined questions of embodied aspects of lived-experience, affective-experiences, forms of control, consent and resistance, and identifications of foreignness. The gap that my research aims to address involves combining these elements under a psychoanalytic perspective which enables us to trace the relationships between migrant workers' affective-experience and forms of control and resistance. This will illustrate the different identifications and their roles, not simply as a result of consenting to work in such unfavourable conditions, but also as the particular function that sustains and repeats this consent. With this in mind, I will now review the research on organisational subjectivity that draws from psychoanalysis as a research direction to fill a gap in the field; this will assist in highlighting the importance of applying a psychoanalytic tool to the case of migrant workers.

1.2.Organisation Studies and Subjectivity

Research on management and work subjectivity has been a continuous point of interest for many scholars bringing into the spotlight concepts of employee identity and investigating the self at work from an intimate aspect of employee experience. Collinson demonstrates the

importance of subjectivity and how, by focusing on subjective practices, researchers may enhance our understanding of the reproduction, resistance, or even transformation of power relations in the workplace (Collinson, 2003). Furthermore, Land and Taylor highlight how corporations set our lives at work beyond the time and space limits of the organisation, so as to produce limitless value without any clear distinction between work-identities and life-identities (Land & Taylor, 2010). Given the blurred borders between specific identities confined to specific spaces, it is evident that the lived-experience of work spills over and influences the subjectivity of the workers even beyond the workplace. This is why Spicer et al. advocate a focus on the performative element of management as an integral part of any research project in critical management studies (CMS) (Spicer et al., 2009). They argue that it is through the performative element of language that management narratives interact with workers, and that how workers speak about these and their own practices is fundamental in the structuring of their subjectivity. This dovetails with the research gap identified in the previously discussed research on migrant and precarious work. It brings together the embodied elements of lived-experience and affect with the effects and changes in the subjectivity of the workers. How are these embodied experiences of affect spoken about from the workers themselves and with what influence to their subjectivity? It is the interactions between these different elements that construe positive and negative meanings for the workers' practices and identity through the ambiguity of recognition and performativity in language. This is illustrated by Shepherd et al. in their study of rag pickers in Mumbai. They identify multi-focal meaning making processes in this intractable dirty work through which the workers 'construct a functionally ambivalent constellation of meanings' (Shepherd et al., 2022, p. 4). In this case, they conclude that these positive and negative meanings co-exist and support each other in a functional ambivalence that enables both the acceptance of their working conditions and affirms their sense of agency as well. It is this ambivalence of meaning that the present research attempts to investigate. It does so through the lived-experience of the migrant and precarious workers, and their affective interpretation and practices of control and resistance which mould their subjectivity in their vulnerable and exploitative state. Hence, research in organisation studies needs to pay attention to such practices and their performative role while they investigate identities at work if we hope to better understand and possibly improve organisational and individual lives. For example, Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) illustrate how the interplay between the fragmentation and integration of meanings is fundamental to exploring subjectivity. They claim that 'we need to listen carefully to the stories… interactions, the discourses and roles' of those we research and explore the many different dimensions through which they define and re-define themselves

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(ibid., p. 1190). This significant approach in CMS—which emphasises the discursive process of shaping employee subjectivity in the workplace—underlines all the different practices through which subjectivity is influenced. For example, Driver explored food practices and their relation to social activities as a strong influence upon the struggle of embodied subjectivity in organisations (Driver, 2008), Lapping and Glynos (2018) explored the associative chains of meaning that overdetermine the subjectivities produced within performative practices of remuneration. Such examples further validate the approach of looking collectively at the embodied aspects of migrant and precarious workers, their affective interpretation and then connecting these to an investigation of their subjectivity as mutually intertwined processes. Additionally, this line of research is supplemented by a large corpus of research that critically investigates organisational subjectivity through the elements of resistance, control, power and affect as elements which discursively shape subjectivity. I will now review these categories respectively and point out what they are seeking to address, in their own right, and to indicate the space in which this research project situates itself in an attempt to problematise and bridge a gap in this constellation of research.

1.2.1. Control, Consent and Resistance

The way that power and practices of control and resistance are key in formulating subjectivity in the workplace have been a locus of interest for researchers for a long time. Knights and Willmott illustrate the importance of power relations and how practices of control influence subjectivity in terms of a fetishisation of work-identity (Knights & Willmott, 1989). Such practices of control are embedded in the organisational narratives and reproduce individualisation as a form of consent to the capitalist mode of work (Contu & Willmott, 2003, 2006). Other researchers have contributed to this area of research that attempts to explain how practices of resistance in the workplace tend to have the opposite impact than initially intended. The researchers focus on the critical performativity of non-conformity (Hodgson, 2005), and undertake a discursive inspection on the different meanings in the micro-politics of resistance (Thomas & Davies, 2005). Therefore, there is a relationship between the practices of control and resistance—and the different meanings these navigate—which influence how subjectivity is developed and recognised in the workplace. As Commisso comments, the practices of resistance operate as a process of structuring identities where the struggle of subjectivity can

be assumed as the arena where antagonistic social forces are 'played out, expressed and experimented' upon (Commisso, 2006, p. 163). Additionally, researchers investigate the dynamics of resistance and consent, in order to find out how the workers surrender their autonomy as a result of the coercion of management in the rewarding and punishing power of organisational bureaucratisation (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016). Cutcher et al. have explored how older workers who position themselves as both vulnerable and resistant cause a disruption to managerial recognition through which the workers are managed. They conclude how the dynamics of resistance, vulnerability and resistance are malleable to change over time, thereby rendering performance management schemes susceptible to further resistance and/or ridicule (Cutcher et al., 2022). These examples validate the rationale of this research to examine the influence that practices of resistance, control and consent have on subjectivity and also to connect this to how these interact with the lived-experience of vulnerable and precarious workers. These are all valuable paths of examining the interrelations between subjectivity and organisational forms of control, consent and resistance. What could further supplement these approaches is a theoretical framework which is able to connect discursive practices with the corresponding identifications and modes of enjoyment that support them in the process of constituting workers' subjectivity. For instance, in their analysis of power and resistance in a consultancy firm, Kärreman & Alvesson (2009) depict a double level of power and resistance at play which—through the normalising effects of ambition and autonomy discourses— effectively cancels the forms of resistance and renders compliance irresistible. This would be further illuminated by connecting them to the modes of enjoyment that are made accessible in this way and thereby explain their role in the lived-experience of the workers. What is the relationship between irresistible compliance and an identification that makes it possible to enjoy such compliance? A strand of research which moves in this direction employs a psychoanalytic lens to offer a better understanding of how practices of control, consent and resistance inform organisational subjectivity.

1.2.2. Psychoanalytic informed Research

A wave of psychoanalytic informed research has been developing in organisational studies and has investigated subjectivity and workers' experience through many different areas of research. For example, scholars have argued how different organisational narratives develop

multiple identifications in the workplace and how certain fantasies structure subjectivity in the workplace and endow it with a veil of wholeness (Gabriel, 1995; Muhr & Kirkegaard, 2013). Other researchers maintain that how a Lacanian perspective in management allows for a new, different, and insightful way in which organisational dynamics and change might be examined (Arnaud, 2002; Essers et al., 2009; Kenny, 2009). Scholars have also researched the topic of leadership and entrepreneurship through a Lacanian lens and provide a radical re-conceptualisation of identifying entrepreneurial attributes and the impossibility of an ideal true-self for any leadership (Costas & Taheri, 2012; Ford & Harding, 2011; Jones & Spicer, 2005). Woźniak discusses psychoanalysis and science in organisation studies and develops an argument about how a Lacanian framework is changing for the better the theoretical coordinates in the field (Woźniak, 2010). She concludes that Lacanian theory allows the researcher to enhance the perspectives that 'animate their relationship with the object of their investigation as well as the consequences of the scientific propensity to obliterate this relationship' (Woźniak, 2010, p. 408). Such an enhancement allows the researcher to connect different parameters to the object of his study and investigate their relationships by taking the theoretical accomplishments of the past as well as their criticisms seriously. For instance, Johnsen and Gudmand-Høyer debate the lack of humanity in human resource management and the implications of idealising the human worker (Johnsen & Gudmand-Høyer, 2010). They conclude that the Lacanian perspective offers a radical opportunity to view practices in HRM, 'where the acts and conduct of subjects must be considered without "man" playing a central role' (ibid., p. 341). This points to the potential for researching the relationships between subjectivity and the different practices of HRM and connecting them to the lived-experience of migrant and precarious workers without negating or formalising the affective dimension of the subject which always remains an open question. To this end, Cederström & Grassman investigate how forms of organisation that oppose neo-normative culture are a possible method of providing workers a way to enjoy their symptom in the workplace (Cederström & Grassman, 2008). They argue that the concept of affect should not be 'blackboxed' and Lacanian theory offers the concepts of the symptom, pleasure and enjoyment that offer a unique way with which we can articulate connections between subjectivity, practices of resistance and control and the affective dimension in a way that illustrates how the organisation of work is also an organisation of affect (ibid., p. 55). The richness of the aforementioned research highlights the suitability of Lacanian psychoanalysis for researching complex themes where multiple elements intersect, as it adds to the existing perspectives on subjectivity and organisational control, the ability to juxtapose the elements of affect and lived-experience and interpret their

relationships. In this research context, the psychoanalytic framework demonstrates more effectively how such conjunctions influence subjectivity by enabling an analysis of the workers' identifications as they manifest in forms of resistance, control and consent, and to develop their relation to enjoyment. Additionally, a Lacanian approach has the potential to explain how these configurations are repeated and maintained by providing the dynamic grid of enjoyment that supports the workers' identifications and fantasies, even if these change. Since this study focuses on the migrant workers' subjectivity, forms of control and lived-experience, I restrict the review to the ways in which psychoanalytic informed research has examined and combined topics of identification, resistance and affect in organisation studies.

1.2.2.1 Psychoanalytic informed Research – On Identification

Lacanian psychoanalysis provides a very elaborate theory on the subject and identification which has contributed to organisation studies and subjectivity research. For instance, Driver has argued how Lacanian theory informs organisation studies on the impossibility of totalising every identity, how imaginary identifications and unconscious processes disrupt organisational identity and guarantee its inevitable failure (Driver, 2009c). She explains how the imaginary identification of our idealised self always succumbs to failure which, if given the opportunity to be reflected, allows for a creative potential and new ways to relate with others. In similar fashion, Hoedemaekers has argued extensively how subjectivity is constructed with different imaginary and symbolic identifications through the intermediary of the Other as a locus of recognition, the birthplace of desire and the idealisation of particular images (Hoedemaekers, 2009). He contends that contradictions are inherent in these processes of identification and that interruptions always ensue after any harmonious first impression of identification. However, it is in these interruptions of discourse that possibilities of resistance to management practices and the re-signification of identifications are guaranteed (Hoedemaekers, 2010). Furthermore, Hoedemaekers has reasoned how an analysis of subjectivity through the Lacanian registers of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, knots together a specific mode of jouissance that underpins the subject and its distribution of enjoyment, providing an insightful new way to theorise about subjectivity in organisational contexts (Hoedemaekers, 2008). In this fashion, one can highlight the particular ways in which subjectivity is reproduced in discursive contexts, and correlate a homologous foundation of enjoyment under the singularity of each particular subject. Comparably, Harding has emphasised the importance of the Other in the encounters between organisational identities and

subjects, since they are always in the process of becoming and unable to be finalised either inside or outside an organisation (Harding, 2007). The function of the Other is crucial as it is through this mediation of an(O)ther as a third party, that any two subjects interact, disrupt and inform their identities. Any attempt to use language necessarily relies on this Other as the locus of speech which authorises and deflects meaning in order to maintain its fluid mobilisation. Stavrakakis has also elaborated on the topic of subjectivity through the organised Other, arguing that Lacanian theory may help us illuminate the negative dialectics of human subjectivity and explain how fantasies, enjoyment and symbolic presuppositions of authority and power, sustain obedience and neutralise resistance in organisations (Stavrakakis, 2008, 2010). Moreover, the role of the mediating Other as a guarantor of meaning has an added dimension of importance for minorities in a society as is the case for immigrant workers, highlighting the need for an analysis that would elaborate and clarify what role the Other plays. These significant advancements in subjectivity and organisation studies through a psychoanalytic lens, illustrate the potential of Lacanian theory in enhancing our understanding in the research of migrant workers and their precarious subjectivity (Lapping, 2013). For instance, one could explore how forms of control and migrant workers' resistance speak through different aspects of the subject's 'I' and how these aspects are underlined by a corresponding jouissance that affirms them. Taking this into consideration, I now look at how psychoanalysis has improved our views in examining subjectivity through practices of control, consent and resistance.

1.2.2.2 Psychoanalytic informed Research – On Control, Consent and Resistance

Lacanian psychoanalysis has a rich conceptual toolbox which, in combination with the already dominant research current, of taking practices of control, consent and resistance into consideration for the investigation of workers' subjectivity, may bring new aspects of meaning into how workers make sense of their selves and their experience (Lapping, 2007). For example, through adopting a Lacanian perspective, unobtrusive forms of control may be better examined and analysed through the registers of the Symbolic and the Imaginary, to render the implications of control systems clearer and more evident to the workers (Driver, 2009a; Lok & Willmott, 2014; Resch et al., 2021; Styhre, 2008). Likewise, the ways in which workers are compelled by organisational narratives to willingly surrender their autonomy and consent to further exploitation and alienation, may be better understood and have their ramifications

outlined more clearly by locating the inconsistencies and contradictions that are observable in these narratives and the possible identifications that they offer (Bloom, 2013; Fotaki, 2009; Hoedemaekers & Keegan, 2010; Larty & Hopkinson, 2021; Parker, 2007). Analogously, forms and practices of resistance in the workplace may be taken up along with their wider socio-political discourses and through a psychoanalytic interpretation of their meanings improve our understanding of social-phenomena and the role of marginalised groups therein. For example, Fleming and Spicer have written extensively on power, resistance and subjectivity as workers' resistance may take cynical forms which, instead of disrupting work and exploitation, promotes organisational compliance and performance all the same as it induces dis-identification on the part of the workers (Fleming & Spicer, 2003, 2007, 2008, 2014). Furthermore, Fleming concludes his problematisation on these forms of cynical resistance by arguing in favour of a more inclusive exploration of resistance and views it as 'symptomatic of wider struggles over self-determination', perhaps pointing towards a connection of resistance and its symptomatic effects on enjoyment (Fleming, 2016, p. 109). In parallel, Contu argues that the predominant forms of resistance in the neo-liberal workplace, which manifest as cynicism, parody, and humour, are effectively decaf resistance in the sense that they provide feelings of resistance while they actually do not produce any result in terms of challenging and changing the power relations that bind the subjects (Contu, 2008). She argues that such forms of resistance bear a specific parasitic enjoyment along with them, hence they are 'regulated and governed by a certain phantasmatic formation that domesticates enjoyment by commanding and directing it' in such a way that it does not disrupt the economy of enjoyment that ties us to our master (ibid., p. 376). In this sense, psychoanalysis allows researchers to shed light on why certain practices which emerge with a specific goal in their nascent form, quickly fail to achieve this original aim and achieve the opposite of what the subject was targeting when developing them. The reason is that in many ways these practices serve an affective role which is usually missed by the conscious subject as in the cases that Fleming and Spicer discuss. Lacanian theory offers a way to combine subjectivity—along its different identifications—with the object of desire, and trace the displaced affective elements that are generated from these relationships. This is where the review of the literature will now focus, on the investigation of affect at work through a Lacanian lens.

1.2.2.3 Psychoanalytic informed Research – On Affect at Work

The richness of psychoanalytic theory has informed organisation studies that take affective experiences and emotional states into consideration. For example, Kenny has argued how incorporating the concept of affect can enhance our understanding of identifications in the workplace, as it connects the different identifications with the affective experiences that are inscribed behind moments of recognition that structure and navigate these identifications (Kenny, 2012). She argues how 'complex, affect-laden recognition' lies behind any identification and that it is when power struggles result in a refusal of the expected recognition that debilitating affective-experience takes hold of the subject, sustaining current power relations, but also enabling new positions to be attained (ibid., p. 1189). It is in these moments where recognition is granted or denied by anOther, that the fragility of imaginary identification is rendered visible—by the accompanied affective-experience—that the present research aims to map out the lived-experience of precarious and migrant workers. Similarly, scholars in CMS have published on the importance of including affective experiences in the analysis of work as it is a fundamental part of the workers' lived-experience. They highlight the different ways in which the inclusion of affect may produce insightful research in organisation studies (Fotaki et al., 2012, 2017; Kenny & Fotaki, 2014). For instance, Fotaki et al. illustrate how psychoanalytic approaches can 'enrich understanding of how self and identity come to be caught in wider flows of power in organisations (Fotaki et al., 2012, p. 1108). This research takes these wider flows of power to be coextensive of the different embodied aspects that migrant workers carry with them—such as foreignness, class and gender—and investigate them in the context of the affective-experience that the workers express by connecting them to recognition and the variety of their identifications. Additionally, researchers have commented on how a Lacanian take on affects and anxiety may illuminate the ways in which entrepreneurship effects social change and how at the same time it might induce anxiety (Dashtipour, 2014; Dashtipour & Rumens, 2018). Moreover, researchers have also viewed affect at work through the lens of other psychoanalytic theories, as for example Christophe Dejours' psychodynamics of work (Dashtipour & Vidaillet, 2017, 2020). In the present research, I focus on Lacanian psychoanalysis firstly, because it offers the most dialectical approach to affects, through which the displacements of affective states may be traced back to a series of identifications (Soler, 2015, pp. 3–4). This allows the exploration of the structural arrangement of affect, power, identifications and recognition in the lived-experience of precarious and migrant workers. Secondly, Lacanian psychoanalysis presents us with a conceptualisation of affects that moves furthest away from a psychological treatment of emotions and feelings (Parker, 2003, 2009). This entails adopting a hermeneutics of suspicion

towards taking any signified affect at face value, and in contrast, exploring its role through the different layers that structure the human psyche, thereby illuminating its function in the wider economy of enjoyment. Thus, the contribution of psychoanalysis in examining workers' subjectivity and lived-experience is highlighted, precisely through enabling a radical approach towards the practices of control, consent and resistance as well as the affective part of the workers' lived-experience. I will now argue in favour of an approach that combines a psychoanalytic perspective with migrant studies and review the corresponding portion of the literature.

1.3. Psychoanalytic Perspectives and Migrant Studies

With this in mind, the case of immigrant workers in the UK presents an excellent opportunity for exploring migrant employee subjectivity in the workplace through the manifestations of their consent and resistance to managerial control, and the discourse in which it emerges. Utilising the psychoanalytic concepts as tools enhances the scope of the analysis in a manner which enables us to locate and understand the contradictions and oppositions in the organisational discourse as presented by both employees and managers. Anthropologists and social theorists studied workers in manual labour linked with questions of consent, productivity and the subjectivity of the modern worker (Burawoy, 1979, 1982; Castel, 1996, 2003). The underlying issue emerging from Castel's research, is the connection of work with its social aspect and function, intertwined with concepts of recognition and utility. Burawoy focuses on issues of productivity and matters of consent on the part of workers. This context is exceptionally fertile for addressing the questions raised in this study and an inquiry into immigrant workers in the UK, working in low skilled jobs, has not been fully examined. Therefore, an interesting context for examining these concepts of resistance and its signification would be the case of immigrant labour workers in the UK. Moreover, this framework contains enlightening aspects in the dialectics of I and the Other, as the case of immigrant workers is, by definition, a rich subject including multiple levels of signification of otherness, ranging from social and cultural attributes to class and self-identities, all the way to the relations between management and workers.

There have been recent studies exploring the theme of otherness in the case of immigrant workers; for example Harris investigates the case of Chinese migrants in the multicultural, yet racially stratified country of South Africa (Harris, 2018). His analysis draws

from the colonial influence of the country, illustrating how the xenophobic stereotypes rooted in colonialism were integrated into the multiculturalism of South Africa. Another researcher, Yu, looks into the case of skilled migrant workers in the finance and accounting sector of Australia and the consequences of the signification of otherness in terms of not performing cultural work in relation to the means of migrants' resistance against pressures for conformity (Yu, 2019). In a similar fashion, Yoltay analyses the case of LGBTI spaces in the capital of Turkey. They offer a manifestation of subjective formations and spatial representations of vulnerability, to organise and resist the power of the other (Yoltay, 2019). This illustration of the power of the other, as the other who is different and seeks to superimpose his spatial dominance, resonates with the aim of this study. This is to examine the equivalent manifestations for the case of migrant workers in the UK as their existent different identities strive to make sense of the new cultural and organisational context in which they find themselves.

To demonstrate the potential contribution of psychoanalysis to understanding social and organisational contexts, a rich conceptualisation of the process of identification through the dialectic between subject and Other can be found in the work of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. From a psychoanalytic point of view, when Lacan explores the analysis of resistances[1], he states that at every instant of the analysis the point is 'knowing at what level the answer should be pitched' (Lacan, 1988, pp. 42–43).. Drawing upon this remark, the significations of the organisational discourse in a holistic perspective, with its political and social ramifications, offer fecund ground for exploring the precise manifestation of the forms of resistance and how they came into existence, inasmuch as the forms of resistance are contingent products of historical and socio-political contexts (Hilde & Mills, 2017). For instance, Shubin et al. have explored the imaginaries of the ideal migrant worker through a Lacanian lens and have argued how an interplay of lack and loss may find investment in a fantasy object which attempts to fill the void of the Other's desire (Shubin et al., 2014). Furthermore, it is compelling to locate the nodal points that upholster such fantasies and how they are finding their support in forms of control, consent and resistance, drawing from them what the object is that the Other desires and how this object acquires its fixed meaning inside the organisational signifying chain. This enables the emergence of the signifiers which hold a

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[1] Resistance in the psychoanalytic treatment is not equated with resistance in the workplace, nevertheless there are parallels we can draw from these two different concepts and enhance our scope for analysing resistance in the workplace from their similarities.

hegemonical position in the organisational discourse and provide the necessary tools for its interpretation.

The concepts of desire and lack of the Other come into play as the determining factors in this process of understanding the interplay of signifiers and signification in the case of migrant labour subjectivity. Discussing the dialectics of desire, Lacan states that 'I desire that, means—*You, the other, who is my unity, you desire that*.' (Lacan, 1988, p. 51), thereby introducing the dual relationship between the I and the Other as constitutive of desire. Moreover, in the organisational context, it is worth investigating the relationship of employees and management as the I of employees and Otherness of management and vice versa. A similar approach to this has been employed by Osmar in his study of management stereotypes and how a positive stereotype of a manager who belongs to a minority in the workplace has the potential to achieve racial equality and inclusion (Osmar, 2020). The signification of such concepts in the organisational discourse, albeit ambiguous and precarious, offers the opportunity for a dialectical investigation of employees' relations to unveil the points of misrecognition in the process of signification. As Ainslie et al. expand in their article on a psychoanalytic view of migrant experience, there is a variety of elements that relate through language to the affective-experience of leaving your home country (Ainslie et al., 2013). These may range from trauma to loss and mourning, but at the same time the recalibration of selfhood and otherness may offer a therapeutic variable to reimagine the meaning of the migrant self. . Meaning is always engaged with its opposition, or in other words with its difference, precisely acquiring its slipping signification through vacillation on the sides of different chains of signifiers. This renders the psychoanalytic approach—that this research adopts—most suitable for an examination of migrant subjectivity as it follows recent urges for more dialectical reasoning on multifaceted and critical research projects (Spicer et al., 2016). Having illustrated the synergy between psychoanalysis and an investigation of migrant work, I will now delineate the precise space in which this research is posited.

1.4. Overlap of the different Gaps and Scope of Research

Thus far I have identified a number of gaps in the literature. The first is in the migrant and precarious work research. There is a gap in examining the embodied elements of the lived-experiences of the workers in a way that if addressed, would enable an investigation of how workers make sense of these elements through their work practices of control and resistance.

The present work connects the elements of their lived-experience to the identifications and fantasies that structure their subjectivity and sustain their working-selves. It is of vital importance to understand how migrant workers willingly agree to work in such unfavourable conditions and the ways in which they develop their subjectivity to cope with their work in the long-term. The second gap has to do with questions of subjectivity at work in research in organisation studies. This led me towards an examination of migrant and precarious work which explores practices of control, resistance and consent, as well as the influence of those factors on the affective-experience of the workers. The overlap between these two gaps led this research towards the interrogation of migrant and precarious workers' subjectivity and affective-experience as these are elaborated in the workers' discourse and through practices of control, consent and resistance. The third gap concerns the most suitable way in which to conduct such an examination of subjectivity and affective-experience, in order to set the proper foundations for the exploration of the affective-experience, as well as the experiences of otherness and recognition of migrant workers. To this end, after reviewing research in critical management studies as well as psychoanalytic perspectives on migrant status, the framework of Lacanian psychoanalysis emerged as the most appropriate to address these gaps in the literature.

Lacanian theory offers the tools to investigate subjectivity by paying attention to the different identifications that workers employ in their speech, and to trace therein the affective-elements of their role in sustaining such identifications. Additionally, psychoanalysis enables this research to shed light on the elements of foreignness, recognition/misrecognition and the impact of socio-political and regulatory discourses, since it is through language that otherness is introduced and inscribed into the experiences of immigrant workers. Processes of recognition, the role of a mediating Other in the course of identifications, the dialectical analysis of affect along with the concepts of fantasy and enjoyment, render psychoanalysis an appropriate framework to examine migrant workers' subjectivity. Psychoanalysis provides a nuanced focus to investigate how workers structure their subjectivity, how immigrants relate to the precarious situations they find themselves in, and their response to techniques of control and resistance. Hence, the present research is posited at the intersection of research into migrant and precarious labour, research on workers' subjectivity that is informed by the examination of how consent, control, and resistance manifest in the workplace, and of research which explores and considers the affective-experience of the workers in these instances as it connects back to the shaping of their subjectivity. This identified gap led me to focus on a mode of work

that provides easy access to migrant workers, is upcoming and growing in the recent years and at the same time highlights the vulnerable and exploitative conditions of the workers.

One contemporary mode of work that has already emerged in this literature, albeit at the more highly-skilled end of the spectrum, revolves around precarious freelancing gig-work (Butler & Stoyanova Russell, 2018). Research indicates that many migrant workers find freelancing jobs in the opportunities that the platformisation of work now offers (van Doorn & Vijay, 2021). This new mode of work is based on platform capitalism, an on-demand economy that makes good use of technology and digital platforms by offering job opportunities online, usually through mobile-phone applications. In this outsourcing of contingent labour, long gone are the basic working rights such as sick-pay, minimum wage and the eligibility of the workers for social benefits (Vallas, 2019). This creates even more radically precarious conditions for migrant workers who find work in online gig-work. As Vallas argues, what started with the advent of Uber in the ride-hailing industry has now been followed by a plethora of courier platforms like Uber Eats and Deliveroo, therefore signifying the proliferation of online platforms and on-demand low-skilled workers. This presents a very intriguing and rather new mode of work which fits right in the overlapping space within which my research is based. I will now review how the existing literature of courier-platforms connects with the themes I have underlined so far and the precise gap/scope of this research study.

1.5. Scope of Research: Food-delivery Gig-Work

Researchers have highlighted the connection of the requirement of the courier-platforms' for on-demand low-skilled workers with the increasingly precarious and exploitative working conditions that these workers now face (Mendonça et al., 2023). Moreover, precisely because they are largely based online, these job opportunities often present informal access to work for migrant workers who do not have the right to work in the UK (Gebrial, 2022). The way that companies attract more riders to their platforms, and at the same time deny the accusations of exploitation and precarisation at work, is by expanding an organizational narrative of freedom and flexibility as the main attributes that this line of work offers (Barratt et al., 2020; Cano et al., 2021; Franke & Pulignano, 2021). Thus, this mode of work offers a different and new system of control since the workers are their own bosses and there is a complete lack of management to control them. In place of managers or bosses there is an automated algorithmic system that monitors and supervises workers (Ivanova et al., 2018;

Veen et al., 2020; Woodcock, 2020). This provides a very interesting context for the investigation of the different forms of consent and resistance to this algorithmic control that governs food-delivery gig-work. Moreover, the ways in which the algorithm interacts with the workers through messages and notifications in the mobile-application has been theorised as a system that fosters the gamification of work. Gamification embraces a game system of competition and rewards, through a quantification of behaviours and actions, in a non-game domain like food-delivery work (Woodcock & Johnson, 2018). This raises new questions of how such a system may be resisted or obeyed and what implications this would have for the affective-experience and subjectivity of the workers. Recent research has already been undertaken in this direction (Sun, 2019; van Doorn & Chen, 2021; Vasudevan & Chan, 2022; Woodcock & Johnson, 2018). However, a research approach that investigates this new mode of managerial control through a psychoanalytic framework, and which simultaneously looks at the affective experiences of the workers and their unique modes of consent and resistance has not yet been applied. As recent studies have shown, the illusion of freedom and the control of the alleged autonomy of the workers deserve further examination (Ivanova et al., 2018; Umer, 2021). Furthermore, the way in which meanings and significations are produced in this context are fundamental to igniting collective forms of resistance that may improve the working conditions (Popan et al., 2023). I will now turn to how this thread of research connects with the investigation of the affective-experience of workers.

Research that investigates into the well-being of workers and the meaning of work in the case of precarious food-delivery riders, has been touching upon the affective aspects of the work-experience in different ways. For example, researchers have assessed the subjective meanings of well-being of food-riders in China and found that despite the stressful conditions, the riders in their sample have achieved a relatively high state of mental well-being (Wu et al., 2022). However, their approach is quantitative and as such offers limited potential to penetrate the deeper subjective layers of experience. Other researchers have qualitatively assessed the relationship between the meaning of work and career commitment, and found out that the obligation to work carried particular weight for Chinese riders (Lin et al., 2020). This needs to be explored further, and in a comparative fashion by taking up the case of migrant riders in the UK. Additionally, research on the job-quality of the Australian-based food-delivery sector has investigated job-enjoyment through a psychological dimension that viewed enjoyment only through facets of job satisfaction (Goods et al., 2019). At this point in time, it is most pertinent to undertake a case-study which explores the affective dimensions of the migrant riders'

experience—through and by the forms of control as well as the practices of resistance and consent that are experienced in food-delivery work. The psychoanalytic element of this study enables an in-depth inquiry into the subjective meanings of these practices and traces the multiple identifications that migrant riders are subjected to both in this line of work and by the broader socio-political discourses. This approach has the potential to enrich our understanding of migrant-riders subjectivity—in relation to the precarious, exploitative and ambivalent mode of work that food-delivery platforms offer—by allowing the analysis to grasp the subject and object of this work together with the conditions that sustain their multiplication. It is in this way that the thesis builds upon prior research on the control and exploitation of migrant workers in precarious labour. It draws insights from scholars who have investigated the embodied aspects of the lived experience, the affective-experience of these workers, and their practices of control and resistance as discursive influences to their identities. Then this research connects these elements to map out the interrelationship between affective-experience, subjectivity and practices of control and resistance so as to investigate the function of their underlying structure by adopting a psychoanalytic framework. This allows the connection of recognition, enjoyment and subjectivity mediated through lack and fantasy, as psychoanalytic research in organisation studies has demonstrated, to enhance our understanding of workers with migrant status in contemporary forms of work. Hence, this research aims to contribute to the literature on the control and exploitation of migrant workers, to psychoanalytic research in organisation studies, as well as psychoanalytic perspectives on migrant workers' status. I will now conclude with the formulation of the research questions that this thesis addresses, always keeping in mind the fundamental question of how language shapes the subject of food-delivery gig-work.

1.6. Research Questions:

To summarise, the aim of this study is to improve our understanding of contemporary migrant and precarious work with regard to the subjectivity and lived-experience of the workers. The literature review has underlined how studying migrant workers' subjectivity and lived-experience necessitates a consideration of control, resistance and affect. This is conducted through a close examination of the manifestations of consent and resistance to the control systems in place at work, as well as interrogating the affective dimension of their lived-experience. As elaborated, the case of migrant riders in the UK's food-delivery market emerged

as a suitable case in which to apply this research focus, since the current social and political circumstances highlight the precariousness and importance of the current situation. Moreover, even though there has been similar research conducted in the past, what sets the current study apart is that it examines the subjectivity and identifications of delivery-riders as they manifest in the discursive articulation of their affective-experience and forms of control and resistance through a psychoanalytic perspective. This means that it investigates how riders' identifications are structured and developed in relation to the affective-experience and the forms of control and resistance in this work, by clarifying what the role of fantasy and enjoyment is in these relationships. Additionally, by mapping out the identifications that designate the subject and the corresponding object of food-delivery work, this research attempts to identify the distribution of enjoyment in these relations. The distribution of enjoyment as a dynamic mode of jouissance explains how delivery-riders' structure and sustain their subjectivity, as each identification follows a homologous foundation of enjoyment under the singularity of the riders' fantasies and their individual agency as particular subjects. Finally, through this comparative perspective the present thesis also attempts to enhance our understanding of how Human Resource Management (HRM) is conducted in food-delivery platform-work. What are the modern practices of control and management that come to fill the lack of managers and bosses in this line of work, and underpin the forms of resistance and consent as they are experienced by the workers?

The following research questions guide this exploration:

Q1: How do migrant riders make sense of their precarious working conditions and what identifications do they develop—with their unique fantasies and particular objects—to structure their subjectivity and sustain their working-selves?

Q2: What modes of enjoyment underpin their lived-experience and how are these maintained and repeated in the different forms of control, consent and resistance that emerge in their work? How do processes of identification and subjectification enable and mediate these?

Q3: What are the modern practices of control and management in food-delivery work that are instrumental in constituting these identifications and modes of enjoyment, thereby designating the coordinates of an HRM system in this line of work?

These questions are interrelated in a circular fashion that renders answering them in a linear way inadequate. Instead they should all be kept in focus throughout the analysis and

reconnected with each other at each stage of the research journey. They will also be conceptualised through a Lacanian lens, where key psychoanalytic concepts, such as the lack of the subject, jouissance and lack—alongside symbolic and imaginary dimensions—will aid us in our quest to analyse migrant workers' subjectivity and to locate the nodal points of their experience through the examination of their discourse. Firstly, how is workers' subjectivity influenced by control, resistance and consent and how are these expressed and practiced in the immigrant food-delivery gig-work in the UK? These manifestations will be filtered through a psychoanalytic point of view, to clarify how specific meanings are crystalised in their work and towards which identifications these point. What are the corresponding objects of this work that these identifications direct the workers towards, and how is the affective-experience configured in this context? Secondly, how do immigrant workers encounter changes in their identity through their affective-experience in the work, both with fellow colleagues and customers, as well as through the practices of managerial control and their consent or resistance to it? The interplay of desire and lack of the Other, in the case of immigrant workers, sheds light on a detailed level of analysis for the misrecognition of meaning and the dislocation of affect, as well as the roles of resistance and consent in affirming the workers' identifications and enjoyment. This would thus illustrate how migrant-riders are able to sustain and continue doing their work. Thirdly, what system of practices and control are used to manage the migrant workers—facilitating their enjoyment and their configuration of subjectivity—in order to assimilate them in one workforce entity with the corresponding operational success? The starting point of the analysis is the migrant workers' lived-experience alongside the modes of resistance and consent that underline the different identifications and modes of enjoyment that they develop. This is then followed by a scrutiny of the discourse structured around them, in order to locate the parameters that constitute the HRM system in food-delivery work that acts as the catalyst for the lived-experience of the migrant riders.

2.Lacanian Theory Chapter

In this chapter I expand on the key features of Lacanian psychoanalysis which I perceive as particularly useful and insightful in the research context of my thesis. I start with an introduction to Lacan and his approach to psychoanalysis, pointing out along the way why this is important for the research objectives of this study. This is followed by an elaboration of his key concepts and their relevance in enhancing the research lens for the investigation of the research questions of this thesis. The second half of this chapter focuses on two central seminars from Lacan's work which are also crucial to this study. The first one elaborates the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, and I illustrate how they can assist my analysis, drawing mainly from Lacan's Seminar XI: 'The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis'. The reason I chose this seminar is because it marks a pivotal moment in Lacan's work where he revises some of his prior positions. In Seminar XI, he elaborates the relationships of symbolic alienation and lack, their connection with the Real dimension of the body and the object cause of desire, which are important conceptual tools for the forthcoming analysis. All the while, Lacan illuminates the concepts of repetition, transference, the unconscious and the drives which offer very fertile opportunities to assist in the analysis of the lived-experience of workers as I will illustrate. The next seminar which I focus on informs the psychoanalytic perspective by drawing from Marxist theory and how Lacan's work is situated in relation to it, drawing mainly from Seminar XVII: 'The Other Side of Psychoanalysis'. The choice of this seminar is important because it presents us with a relationship between the social and political aspects of work and how these connect with enjoyment as the process of repeating an oscillation that allows the lack to be experienced as a surplus. These elements are crucial to the analysis of my empirical data and connect with the input that is filtered in the rest of this chapter. Lastly, I suggest some limitations of Lacanian theory and provide a summary of the theoretical inputs that are distilled from this chapter.

2.1. Introduction to Lacanian Psychoanalysis

Jacques Lacan was a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist who became very influential in the psychoanalytic world in the mid-1900s with his famous return to Freud. To accomplish this return, he incorporates many different philosophical, anthropological, even theological texts into his teaching, where, along with an import from structural linguistics, he deconstructs Freud's work to illustrate its precise groundings and interrelations. He searches

for what was intimate in Freud's work, what was presupposed by Freud in a way that was not exterior to his theoretical concepts but already included as an interior exteriority in his discovery of psychoanalysis (Miller, 1995). This generated many backlashes from the mainstream psychoanalytic establishment who accused him of betraying the Freudian orthodoxy and who made some criticisms which will be addressed in the later part of this chapter. Nevertheless, since the late 1990s, Lacanian theory has increasingly influenced organizational research, critical management studies, business scholarship, and public administration across both sides of the Atlantic. Scholars in these fields have drawn on key Lacanian concepts—such as the mirror stage, the divided subject, the *objet a*, desire, *jouissance*, fantasy, and discourse—to shed light on various aspects of organizational dynamics (Nobus, 2016). In this chapter, I will revisit the original texts of Lacan and reconnect them with the contemporary research on organisation studies that draws from psychoanalysis in an attempt to nuance my own distillation process of psychoanalytic concepts that will assist me in investigating the lived-experience of migrant food-delivery workers.

2.1.1. The Three Registers: Symbolic, Imaginary and Real

Lacan starts his teaching in the early 1950s with the argument that most of his contemporaries have reduced psychoanalysis to the simplistic notion that the end of the treatment should aim at reinforcing the patient's ego by mirroring the analyst's ego. In order to illustrate how wrong such an interpretation is, he begins to articulate the different registers of the Symbolic and the Imaginary which serve at this early moment as a way to differentiate between imaginary and symbolic identification. What ego-psychologists effectively attempted to achieve by focusing on the ego of the analysand was to further strengthen the imaginary identifications instead of dissolving them. To this end, Lacan argues that the constitution of the ego is a primary imaginary process through which the subject reacts to the introduction in the symbolic realm of language by developing a relation with our specular image. His paper on the mirror stage and his early seminars indicate precisely this, how by virtue of being born into a world of language, the symbolic integration is experienced as a loss—symbolic castration— and for this reason the first attempt to balance out this loss is made through the affective investment in the specular image of the mirror (Lacan, 2006, p. 76). So, on the one hand there is language with the words we use to communicate, think and act, that constitutes the Symbolic register and its incompleteness as there is no way to convey the full meaning that encapsulates

the subject as a whole. And on the other hand, there is the Imaginary register which constitutes the ideal image of the self where we can be seen as a whole, desirable entity, in a way that serves as an attempt to counteract the subversive lack of the Symbolic. Of course, this attempt will always fall short, as the constitution of the ego is fundamentally an imaginary process not without its own shortcomings and lacks. Many times, the subject will face problems when the demand to match or meet its ideal-image falls short. No matter what the subject does the ideal-image will remain beyond its reach. This is a very important point and perhaps a parallel can be drawn here with contemporary research on workers' subjectivity. The predominant way that management scholars, outside critical management studies, investigate the affective and lived-experience of workers seems to be directed towards the worker as the individual conscious ego, with his narratives being taken at face value and as products of rational actions. For example, Mats Alvesson argues that the dominant way of perceiving interview accounts in management research is as reflections either of the interior reality of interviewees or of the exterior social reality, rather than recognizing that such a separation is impossible, as the interior surface leads and connects to the exterior in an inseparable way (Alvesson, 2003). Furthermore, Driver has investigated stories of organisational change as encounters with failed fantasies (Driver, 2009b). She analyses her empirical data through identifying the central lack that her participants express in their stories of loss and how this lack disrupts the imaginary constructions around their work, self and organisation. She concludes that stories where lack adopts a central role are exemplary lived-experiences of failed fantasies. By focusing on the 'omissions, silences, unusual constructions and other failures of speech' we might provide further insight on how certain struggles with the other, but also within ourselves, revolve around repeating an attempt to capture the lack of the subject (ibid., p. 366). This research aims to underline once more how the individual is decentred from the subject, and to turn the search spotlight from the individual worker to the subject of the unconscious and the merits this entails in terms of highlighting the underlaying mechanisms through which the subject misses the encounter in the acts of repetition (Lacan, 1988, p. 9,47).

Illustrating the connotations of the Symbolic and the Imaginary, Lacan says that the symbolic is always directed towards the big Other whereas the imaginary is related towards the small others (Lacan, 1988, p. 236). The big Other is the treasure trove of signifiers, the swarm of signifiers, language as such. The Other contains the rules of language with its grammar and lexicality, and it even stands to represent the social conventions that organize life under the category of the law. Whenever the subject speaks he aims to address this true Other, but

precisely by virtue of the constitution of the ego in the specular image, the subject can never reach the Other, his attempts are reflected towards the imaginary little others by the wall of language (Lacan, 1988, p. 244). The little others are constructed through fantasy, in which the other person is objectified by his ideal-image and the imaginary identifications are enabled through reflection. Another way to view this is by connecting the Other with otherness, the otherness of speaking beings as such is usually an anxiety provoking and dreadful encounter. The fact that people encounter other people with unknown desires may frustrate the subject and oscillate him along the categories of frustration, aggression, and regression (Lacan, 2006, p. 503). For this reason, the subject attempts to familiarize this radical otherness of language, by investing in the ideal-image with which he identifies others and navigates his judgement between friends or enemies. In other words, the Imaginary register is based on language but instead of allowing the subject to direct his speech towards the big Other, it endows his reality with imaginary identifications and sets the premises through which reality itself is experienced by the subject. We could say that the way most people perceive reality is purely fantasmatic— reality is perceived through a specific meaning that belongs to the imaginary register (Žižek, 1989, p. 47). In contrast, the symbolic is language as pure signification, the phonetic aspect of language in which different meanings resonate and flow. Therefore, the symbolic and the imaginary should not be taken in isolation as they work together in the operations of language, but each with its own distinctive traits and effects for the subject. For instance, Kenny et al. (2020) have explored the role of fantasies in social enterprise (SE) creation by connecting the workers' fantasies with illusions of control and anxiety and how these relationships allow SE creation to emerge as a powerful object around which fantasy coalesces. Furthermore, they have argued how 'present tensions and future anxieties are both intrinsic and constitutive aspects' which facilitate the intertwined construction of work fantasies that act as support for the object of work to become invested with affect that at the same time allows relief of anxiety and a commitment that drives the continuation of work (ibid., p. 117). Their contribution underlines the relationship between fantasy as an anchor for mitigating uncertainty and as a powerful affective investment in the object *a* of work that answers the Other's lack and underpins workers' identifications amidst organisational ambiguities and power struggles (Driver, 2017b; Stavrakakis, 2008) . In a similar way, the imaginary register will assist in identifying the interplay of otherness and subjectivity in how migrant riders constitute their illusion of a unified identity by a (mis)recognition of the specular image. At the same time, the symbolic register will explain how this illusion is the consequence of the impossibility of the

symbolic to totalize meaning and enable the investigation of the identifications that provide the workers' lived-experience its dominant signification.

Lacan will supplement the registers of the Symbolic and the Imaginary by bringing forth the third register of the Real later on. Although he contemplated the Real as the third register that is distinct from reality for some time, it would be in his 11th seminar that the proper dimensions of the Real are set out; the Real as what opposes all verisimilitude and points towards the impossible (Lacan, 2018b, p. ix). The Real is the addition that will serve as the final register that knots the other two registers, in a topology that requires all three of them to hold together. If only one of them is removed the other two will fall off as well. But what is effectively the role and function of the Real? As mentioned, the Symbolic suffers from a lack, an internal impossibility of language itself which prevents the crystalisation of any meaning. The impossibility to totalise any identity for the subject is a natural consequence of this inherent trait of language. Meaning will always be directed towards a different meaning and any attempts at closure will fail. Thus, by entering language the subject suffers a loss, a symbolic castration which prevents him at all times from saying exactly what he means to say. It is impossible to encapsulate all the meaning of desire in one sentence—something will always escape his words—rendering any enunciation of desire to a demand that misses its aim. The first attempt to balance out this loss is effected by the constitution of the ego through fantasy, the imaginary endows the ideal representation of the subject with a narcissistic perspective that enables him to imagine his access to an unlimited enjoyment. Nevertheless, the imaginary itself is not without a lack as well and the ideal-image will not fulfil its promise and will not deliver any unlimited enjoyment to the subject. This failure of the imaginary to fully compensate for the lack in the symbolic, requires a third term that will provide the other two, not with what they are missing, but, by a reversal of properties, it will hold together the two as three (Julien, 2021, p. 135). The Real is the third register that supplements the lack in the symbolic and the ineffectiveness of the imaginary. It represents the impossibility of overcoming the shortcomings of the other two registers. It contains contradictions, non-meanings and the unsymbolisable knowledge of the unconscious. It is the other side of language, but never reaches the level of a metalanguage. By staying inside the discursive horizon, but in a position of exteriority, the Real is extimate[2] to discourse. Yet, the subject can experience a glimpse of

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[2] Extimate is a neologism that Lacan coined to designate that which is closest to the subject even if it is outside the subject (Lacan, 2023, p. 194). It helps us in moving beyond the traditional opposition of exterior reality and psychical interiority by joining ex-teriority with in-timacy, towards a more accurate topological circumscription of the unconscious.

the Real as a sublime fleeting moment, similarly with moments of surprise in analysis when fragments of unconscious knowledge are deciphered and revealed.

What is accomplished by the addition of the Real to the other registers is that by reversing the lack, the hole that both the symbolic and the imaginary possess, into the register of the Real, Lacan illustrates how the Real as a void of negativity can give birth to something that may take positive content, and that is the object-cause of desire, *a*. The inconsistencies of the Symbolic and the Imaginary find their counterpart in what motivates and sustains desire. Therefore the Real's sole consistency is provided through the inconsistent object *a*. It is inconsistent because object *a* stands in for the missing object, the fundamental loss that the subject suffered through his introduction to language. It is the lost counterpart that however can never be reclaimed. As Zupančič elaborates the object *a* is Lacan's take on the materiality of the lack in human finitude (Zupančič, 2007, p. 52), the lack in mortal human beings that is more than the finitude of their mortality. Furthermore, it would be a mistake to consider that the object *a* only belongs to the Real. It would be more accurate to say that the object *a* is shared by the Symbolic and the Imaginary, but requires the support of the Real to render it. This is also the reason why Lacan places object *a* at the centre of the knot that is configured by the three registers (Lacan, 2016, p. 57). Thus, the introduction of the Real is what enables the subject to find consistency in the knot through the inconsistencies of each register, the three registers are knotted as support for the subject. In organisation studies, this theorization of the three registers has been employed to investigate workers' identifications (Driver, 2009b). For example, Hoedemaekers has illustrated how the three registers can be utilized in 'exploring the links that Imaginary identities have to the Symbolic order, […] and to the Real as the lack within' the other two registers (Hoedemaekers, 2010, p. 382). He investigates this by examining the dominant significations in participants' testimonies and unravelling the course of identifications through ideal-images and responses to lack, where the narratives become fragmented and contradictory, thereby indicating the failures of identity. Additionally, Hoedemaekers (2008) has expanded on how certain configurations between these registers allow for an affective-experience to be developed inside organisational contexts. He argues that the experience of jouissance amidst an organisational setting can be investigated through the Imaginary as a knot of jouissance that draws from fantasmatic consistency and harmony, through the Symbolic as a knot that revolves around repeated signifiers which entertain alternative meanings and therefore contradictions, and lastly through the Real as enjoyment that is 'beyond mere cynicism or transgression and resists representation by alluding towards

a cut of the other two registers' (Hoedemaekers, 2008, pp. 75–76). In the case of the migrant workers, I will attempt to combine these two perspectives and investigate how the workers' employ the three registers for different facets of their subjectivity and then how these correspond to a specific knotting of jouissance that elaborates their affective-experience. Moreover, by tracing the workers' identifications in these different registers I will detect how delivery-riders knot their subjectivity along fantasies that allow the object of food-delivery work to emerge as their object *a*. The way that object *a* comes to materialize the lack of human finitude is not as an infinite element in human beings, but like an element of this infinity that is parasitic to the finitude of humans themselves (Zupančič, 2000, p. 249). This alludes to the connections of object *a* with jouissance, the Lacanian term for this type of parasitic introjection of infinity in the human finitude, or in other words a certain type of enjoyment, an enjoyment that feeds on dissatisfaction. Jouissance is one of the most elusive and ambiguous terms in Lacan's work and a full exposition of it here would be impossible. It should be sufficient to state here that jouissance is a type of enjoyment that may be experienced consciously as displeasure while simultaneously the unconscious would be enjoying. Taking this into consideration, I examine the affective-experiences of the delivery-riders through this lens and investigate if, when they willingly consent to their exploitative and precarious working conditions, they experience at the same time an aspect of this parasitic enjoyment. Moreover, this will also shed light on the riders' identifications and their alignment towards a mode of surplus-jouissance, which will be developed later in this chapter. Having introduced the three registers that delineate the different identifications and supports of the subject, I now elaborate the import of structural linguistics to Lacanian theory and how they are significant for the effects of language on the subject, with the subject as a product of discourse.

2.1.2. The instance of the Letter: Metaphor and Metonymy

Lacan's goal to return to Freud aims on the one hand against the misconceptions of ego-psychology but additionally, he wishes to elaborate Freud's theory with helpful concepts that would better illustrate the effects of the unconscious. To this end, he turned towards the work of Roman Jakobson and Ferdinand Saussure on structural linguistics. Saussure's work is fundamental for Lacan, who imports the distinction between signifier and signified, between the acoustic image of the word and the concept or meaning of the word respectively (Saussure, 2004). Furthermore, Lacan argues how the subject is the effect of the signifier and not of the

signified, he separates the signifier from the signified with a bar—S/s, signifier over the signified—highlighting in this way the supremacy of the signifier in the topology of the unconscious (Lacan, 2006, p. 418). This is in accordance with the two registers of the symbolic and the imaginary, as the signified meaning is aligned towards the imaginary dimension of language, and the signifier with the symbolic aspect of discourse. Moreover, Lacan revisits the Freudian texts of 'Interpretation of Dreams', 'Psychopathology of Everyday Life' and 'Jokes and their relation to the Unconscious' and connects the main processes of displacement and condensation that Freud elaborates as the basic processes of the unconscious, to the linguistic mechanisms of metonymy and metaphor. For Lacan it is through metaphors and metonymies that the signifying chains connect—they hook into one another—and meaning is rendered as an effect of these signifying functions. The importance of these mechanisms for psychoanalysis is fundamental as it is through metaphors and metonymies that the unconscious speaks. When a slip of a tongue or the forgetting of a name occurs in everyday life, it is considered as a manifestation of the unconscious which by employing one of these functions attempts to reveal a meaning or a connection that the subject, by virtue of repression, is unaware of. I now illustrate Lacan's formulas for metonymy and metaphor.

Metonymy is related to what Jakobson called the combination of constituent parts (Jakobson, 2023, p. 75). Lacan then comments, through the example of the 'thirty sails' that come to represent thirty ships, how the word-to-word combination (sails to ships) comes to signify ships when one utters the statement of thirty sails. The argument is that this connection between sails and ships is nowhere to be found except in the signifier itself. It is not found in reality that one ship has one sail and therefore the thirty sails come to represent the thirty ships. In order for meaning to assume its place in this structure, where the part is taken as the whole, the effect is constituted by the signifier itself. Lacan symbolises metonymy with the following formula:

$$f(S \ldots S')\, S \cong S\,(—)\,s$$

The formula of the metonymic function, that connects one signifier to another, is almost equal to the signifier that is elided, almost equal because it comes with a subtraction of meaning. In other words, in the example with the sails, the signifier that is elided is ships, and although we understand that sails stand in for the ships, we are not aware of what kind of ships, how many sails each ship has, and so on. However, it is understood that ships are implied by

the signification's referral value (sails) to direct us to think the meaning invested is towards ships. Furthermore, Lacan relates the function of metonymy with desire, as a mechanism of language which constitutes desire. Through the elision of one signifier the subject is able to invest his desire in the lack that supports it. In other words, the metonymic function comes to revolve around the fundamental lack which propels desire by instating the lack-of-being in the object-relation—this is why Lacan also calls object *a* the metonymic object. By always referring to the lack of missing the metonymic object, object *a* involves a structural elision that can only be represented by a supplement. As Miller elaborates object *a* is like a hole, and can thus be equivalent to the frame, the window, as opposed to the mirror since object *a* cannot be captured in the mirror (Miller, 2018). Hence, the lack-of-being is concealed through the objectification of desire which aims at a metonymic object of which the object *a* is just the frame and never the content of the object. This indicates the resistance of passing from the signifier to the signified, the metonymy maintains the separation of S/s and moves along the bar of the signifier with its uncompromising resistance of signification. Therefore, the forthcoming analysis pays attention to identifying the difference between the frame and the content of the image in the discourse of delivery-riders, to trace how the metonymic mechanisms circumscribe the riders' desire and its effects upon the lack and being of the subject.

The mechanism of metaphor follows a structure that is similar, but different from metonymy. Whereas metonymy relates to a combination of constituent elements in language and to Freud's displacement, metaphor is connected to substitution, dealing with elements which are only conjoined in the code of the message (Jakobson, 2023, p. 75), similar to Freud's condensation. For example, in Victor Hugo's verse that Lacan often employs 'His sheaf was neither miserly nor hateful…', the metaphor's spark is not to make the reader realise that this sheaf did not occupy the attributes of miserliness and hatred, but to inform us that the sheaf stands for the sheaf's owner, Hugo's character Booz (Lacan, 2006, p. 422). Thus, we have the metaphor's formula of substituting one word for another: the metaphor flashes between two signifiers where one of them will have replaced the other in the signifying chain, but the effaced signifier will still resonate in the signified meaning by virtue of its metonymic connection to the chain. Lacan symbolizes the metaphoric structure in this way:

$$f\left(\frac{S'}{S}\right)S \cong S\,(+)\,s$$

The signifying function of the substitution of one signifier for another is almost equal to the effaced signifier plus an added meaning that highlights the contrast of metaphor to metonymy in terms of substitution against combination. Here one word is substituted for another, crossing the bar of the signifier and therefore producing a surplus of meaning as denoted by the plus sign in the brackets. The poetic or creative aspects of the metaphor are thus produced by the crossing of the signifier to the signified and this is what matters for the subject, this surplus of signification in the effect of the metaphor. This brings the subject of the unconscious to the ineluctable oscillation between the metaphor's surplus of meaning and the metonymy's lack of meaning. This is also the domain where the unconscious manifests and speaks—the signification of meaning is fleeting along the signifying chain that produced its effects. This is also the reason why Lacan distanced himself from the Cartesian cogito and re-articulates the proposition as 'I am thinking where I am not, therefore I am where I am not thinking' to underline how meaning flees and how the subject of the unconscious is radically decentred from the conscious individual. Moreover, Lacan connects the structure of the metaphor with the symptomatic formations of the unconscious and states that the symptom is a metaphor (Lacan, 2006, p. 439). The ways in which a neurotic subject conceals his divided self by substituting one signifier for another in his speech, is a way to keep at a distance the fact that the signifier represents the subject for another signifier, as that would lead to the recognition of symbolic castration and his lack-of-being.

The manner in which metonymy and metaphor implicate the subject with his desire and symptom illustrate the link of metonymy and metaphor with lack and the question of being respectively. In parallel, the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy also bear the potential to illustrate how certain discursive configurations fix the meaning by tying certain symptomatic formations with the desire that motivates them. An investigation in terms of locating the point where the metaphor presupposes the metonymy in an interplay of combination and substitution of words that renders certain signifiers hegemonic has great consequences for the subject, as the metaphorical function of discourse has the subject encountering the effect of the cause as lack. To connect this with the broader dimensions where this study is posited, the socio-economic conditions that migrant workers find themselves in is not be taken as the exterior causality that affects the workers and gives birth to their subjectivity—strictly speaking the metonymic structure of language is already interior to the subject and its cause is simply metaphorised in the external reality (Althusser et al., 2016, p. 257; Miller, 1968, p. 97). For example, in organisation studies, Driver (2014) has investigated narratives of the stressed

subject by underlining that what stresses workers consciously is a lack-of-having, but if we look deeper, we can uncover a lack-of-being. She illustrates how analysing the participants' accounts by locating their constructions of imaginary self indicates how their answers to a lack-of-having can serve as temporary sutures of a lack-of-being. Nevertheless, she argues that such fantasmatic constructions of self often fail, 'the imaginary is always already unsettled, and lack-of-being resurfaces' thereby allowing the workers to entertain the possibility of an emancipatory experience and agency through which they can roam the nothingness of work, self and organisation (Driver, 2014, p. 102). In this research context, I plan to utilize the relationships between metaphor and metonymy, lack-of-being and lack-of-having and connect them with the delivery-riders' fantasies as the symptomatic framework of delivery-work and its consequences for riders' agency and freedom. At this point one could ask why choose psychoanalysis as the theoretical framework for this research, and not some alternative critical theory of subjectivity such as Foucault's theory of power relations or Butler's critical performativity? My answer would be that psychoanalysis is not another theory of subjectivity, rather, it combines several contradictory theories of subjectivity. Psychoanalysis presents rich conceptualisations which connect these contradictions in constructive ways that accord better with the complexities of human relationships than many other theoretical frameworks (Parker, 2019, p. x). It offers the theoretical tools to investigate the identifications of the delivery-riders through the registers of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, and allows comments on questions of being and its lack through the examination of metaphor and metonymy in the rider's discourse. It provides the tools to scrutinize how the game is played between perception and consciousness for the subject of the unconscious. Between the self and the radical otherness that is contained and reflected through language to others, along with its jouissance, object *a* and castration. Furthermore, it is precisely through these tools employed by psychoanalysis that it illustrates not just how the current situation of migrant-workers is structured in food-delivery, but also the possibility of change and new subjectivities being generated by a repositioning of the current terms. After presenting a brief introduction to Lacanian psychoanalysis and instantiating the role of metaphor and metonymy, I proceed to present the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis.

2.2. The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis

Lacan's seminar on the fundamentals of psychoanalysis begins in 1963 and it marks a new era in his teachings compared to the previous 10 seminars. In the preface, of the English edition of the Seminar, Lacan begins by commenting that when an utterance no longer carries any meaning or interpretation, only then can one be sure that he is confronted with the unconscious domain, one knows—and in this space it is sufficient for one to be aware of that fact to find himself outside (Lacan, 2018b, p. vii). The Möbius strip topology is strongly foreshadowed here as Lacan is already contemplating the concept of the unconscious in terms of an extimate topology (Lacan, 2018b, pp. 156, 235). It is precisely this line of thought, present in the totality of Lacan's teaching, that makes psychoanalysis such a compelling methodological tool for organisation studies. This change in perspective allows one to think of the outside as inherent to the inside, permits new points of view in conceiving, articulating and reflecting on the organisational issues that the contemporary management field wishes to tackle. For example, an attempt to target issues of alienation and exploitation in the workplace requires an introduction of negative quantities as a way to understand the function of cause as it is presented in any conceptual apprehension. This gap between crossing and connecting exterior with interior points is not only applicable for the unconscious but for any cause. As Bloom (2013) astutely illustrates the negative effects of alienation are not externally imposed upon the workers, but rather there is a connection between the super egoic injunction to take control of ones' own employability and a reinforcement of alienation. As he concludes the 'drive to overcome our alienation is manifested in a fetishized desire not to end capitalist exploitation, as such, but instead to become its master' (Bloom, 2013, p. 802) It is through these kind of surprising perspectives, that through a psychoanalytic lens, issues in the workplace may be unveiled, creating an anamorphosis of the predominant way they are represented in the management field. Below, I will expand on the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis, that is the unconscious, transference, repetition and the drive, while keeping in mind that 'there is no truth that in passing to awareness, does not lie; but one runs after it all the same' (Lacan, 2018b, p. vii).

2.2.1. The Four Fundamental Concepts: Unconscious, Transference, Repetition and Drive

In this seminar, Lacan focuses on four concepts that originate in Freud's work and at the same time he introduces a new basis on which psychoanalysis is founded—originating in

Freud and elaborated by Lacan. It is these four concepts that guide the analytic experience, and the clinical practice is structured around them. It is my goal to illustrate how these concepts may be utilised in a context away from the clinical couch and provide fruitful articulations on workers' subjectivity and their subjective experience in the workplace. As Miller comments, this seminar poses the question of 'what is talking', how should the phenomenon of the speaking subject be grasped in analysis (Miller, 1995, p. 23)? In this regard, Lacan points to the gaps, failures, impediments, and the splits that constitute the unconscious. The way he targets these splits is through repetitive occurrences in the analysand's discourse. He emphasizes that the repetition of the unconscious always points to the same thing. It shapes the fissures that encircle the unconscious—nevertheless, repetition is always veiled in analysis owing to the identification of repetition with transference in the analyst's position (Lacan, 2018b, p. 54). The analyst occupies that place where the desire is prompted forward, he represents the object-cause of desire, objet petit *a*, for the subject. This connection made by Lacan, between repetition and transference is an original one in this seminar and presents transference as an effigy with relation to absence, the absence of the real in the function of repetition. It is precisely through this absence of the real that the function of repetition is generated, a course which is closely related to the real as that which is unassimilable in the repetition, the missed encounter. It is in this form, that the 'transference is the enactment of the reality of the unconscious' (Lacan, 2018b, p. 146). Taking this into account, Driver (2017a) has explored the identity work of social entrepreneurs from a psychoanalytic perspective by identifying converging patterns of meaning in her participants' narratives and arguing that entrepreneurs, in their attempt to overcome their lack continuously engage in reconstructing their imaginary-selves. This repetition of idealized fantasies keeps failing, but at the same time, entrepreneurs transfer the Real dimension of their fantasmatic object in each repetition of their imaginary construct as that gets them one step closer to fulfilling the lack in the Other. What is achieved by this configuration are the ineludible discursive movements that sustain their work by 'eroding the economy of desire and blurring its horrific and beatific fantasies' (Driver, 2017b, p. 731). She concludes by suggesting that future research could further investigate the implications of such repetitions to highlight lack and their connection with subjectivity. Hence, in the context of this study I will investigate the repetitions not as patterns of behaviour, but rather as discursive configurations which repeat specific significations. These significations— through their repetition—point towards the position of the workers against the Other from which they seek recognition by virtue of their transference. Secondly, the unconscious reality that is enacted by this will point towards what the effect of this discursive signification is—

which unconscious meaning is elided by virtue of the meaning that is proffered as identities are incessantly failing and being reconstructed.

The difference between Real and reality is important to note here, as it is a fundamental distinction. Miller clarifies that 'the reality of the unconscious is always ambiguous and deceptive, whereas repetition is connected to the Real, which does not deceive.' (Miller, 1995, p. 26). Therefore, we have connected the transference to reality as deceptive and the Real, which does not deceive, with repetition. These are two different elaborations of the unconscious, functioning in the analytical setting, and pointing towards the affirmation that the unconscious is not truth itself without being a lie simultaneously. 'The analytic concept of truth is connected with lying' (ibid.). The influence of Lacan's contemporary French philosophers as well as of Hegel is evident. Lacan starts from Being and Nothingness by Sartre, who elaborates the dialectic between the dialectical forms of For-itself and In-itself: 'The For-itself, through its self-negation, becomes affirmation of the In-itself. The intentional affirmation is like the reverse of the internal negation.' (Sartre, 1957, pp. 216–217). This means that each determinant of the opposition contains, and at the same time excludes, the other side; therefore contradiction is a source of movement that will play a pivotal role in Lacan's later topologies. Then, utilising this contradiction, Lacan follows Merleau-Ponty's statement that nothingness and being are not united but remain connected as 'the same thing in two contradictories' (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 69). This helps him conceptualise the unconscious as ambivalence, as well as the illusory nature of consciousness which is irremediably limited and based on misrecognition (Lacan, 2018b, p. 82). The way that psychoanalysis tends to navigate such ambiguities and contradictions is also useful outside the clinic and particularly in this case study. For example, in a similar fashion, Hoedemaekers (2021) investigates the contradictions in the lived-experience of freelancers. He identifies that one of the key challenges in freelance working is the potential for ambiguity and contradiction in freelancers lived-experience amidst 'the uneasy co-existence of opposite underlying ends of fabrication and community' (Hoedemaekers, 2021, p. 361). He concludes that many freelance workers navigate insecurity and precariousness by maintaining a tension between self-representation and the privations of precariousness. They do so through a disidentification of their precarious working conditions and a focus on autonomy and freedom with which their freelancing status provides them. More specifically, in this research framework, the psychoanalytic lens enables the analysis of the riders' discourse to locate the gaps in repeated meanings and to illustrate their wider effects as functions of cause in the signifying chain. Additionally, the way that unconscious repetitions

are configured and with what consequences for the subjectivity and self-representation of the riders will also be of interest, especially how these are elaborated in the interviews through contradictions and ambiguities and the interplay between precariousness and autonomy. The three concepts presented so far, the unconscious, repetition and the transference, are closely connected, with a certain kind of movement not only between their common elements but between their contradictions as well, and the same holds true for the final concept of the drive.

The drive is the propelling force of the subject's pursuit of pleasure. Freud states that the subject is always able to find pleasure at some level. In Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud elaborates this by illustrating that the subject may obtain satisfaction in apparent unhappiness or even displeasure (Freud, 1989). The beyond the pleasure principle is something that still remains an internal beyond the pleasure principle, as when the pleasure principle fails the reality principle is triggered, taking the task of pleasure upon itself (Miller, 1995, pp. 26-27). The reality principle is an unwieldy mechanism for reaching enjoyment through the use of fantasy. We see again the difference between reality as illusory, the reality that protects the subject with the use of fantasy in the same way that the dream protects the subject's sleep, and the real as impossible, an always missed enjoyment, an obstacle to the pleasure principle (Lacan, 2018b, pp. 166-167). It is precisely a protection from reaching this enjoyment—the real of the fantasy—or as Lacan calls it jouissance. This is why Lacan claims that the unconscious is exactly the hypothesis that the subject does not dream only when he sleeps (Lacan, 1999, p. 56). In this sense, in my analysis of the riders' discourse I aim to pin-point which enjoyment is aimed at and missed and what is enabled by precisely missing the targeted jouissance.

The drive has an object and an aim. The aim is the iterative convergence of the object without ever reaching it, a constant force of repetition with the attempt to go beyond the pleasure principle where enjoyment is experienced as suffering. This holds great importance for Lacan who conceives the compulsion to repeat as the death drive—the principle beyond pleasure—to bring enjoyment back to death, the animate state back to the inanimate (Lacan, 1988, pp. 80–81). This can be done only along the roads of life, as life is that which resists death and one can approach death only by living. The subject is therefore engaged in a perpetual hunt for an object that is lost (psychoanalysis posits the mother as the fundamental fantasy/primary object that through the paternal metaphor is always forbidden and lost). This pursuit off the lost object constitutes the inherent lack of the subject and, even though it attains many different representations in the life of the subject (the object is always a partial object),

the consistent fact is that the repetition to recover it always fails and misses. For instance, Dashtipour et al. (2021) have investigated the idealisation of compassion in trainee nurses' talk through a psychosocial lens, finding that idealisation allows a continued belief in compassion as the solution to healthcare, failing both at a personal and an institutional level. They conclude that the case of trainee nurses as a less-powerful occupational group employs defenses such as idealisation and the splitting of the object of compassion as a way to cope with the organisational lack and provide protection for their affective exposure during work. Lastly, as a future research path they suggest, the further exploration of how 'unconscious and affective dynamics function through interactions within groups, and the role of these in maintaining or contesting dominant discourses' (Dashtipour et al., 2021, p. 2120). In the case of migrant-riders, this enables us to locate the discordance between their different identifications and the objects of desire in delivery-work as idealised ways to fulfil their lack. Connecting this with the affective dynamics of the drive repetitions, we can conceptualise the object *a* of their work as posited between the self and Other, towards which riders are directing their efforts. This is precisely because, by missing this object, the enjoyment of the drive is enabled and it fuels the repetitions of deliveries. The relationship of subject and Other is something Lacan takes great care in articulating. One of the most compelling concepts to follow in this clarification is the gaze as the object of the scopic drive. Thus, I investigate how delivery-riders perceive and incorporate the gaze of the Other—both in terms of objectifying themselves, and along with the objects *a* of their work as possible answers to the enigma of the Other's desire.

Lacan distinguishes his approach to the gaze from Sartre's substantiation of the gaze as something that surprises the subject by changing the perspectives of seeing. On the contrary, Lacan insists, the gaze is not a seen gaze, but a gaze that is imagined by the subject and that originates in the field of the Other (Lacan, 2018b, p. 84). The Other is a fundamental axis in Lacan's conceptualisation of the subject. The subject is constituted in relation to the Other. This is why Lacan claims that one's desire is the Other's desire (Lacan, 2018b, p. 235). Lacan follows Hegel once more, in connecting desire with recognition, desire as a pursuit of recognition, a recognition as the object of the Other's desire. It is in this sense that the dialectic between gaze and the eye is articulated, not as a coincidence but as a lure that instils desire. For example, in the case of lovers, when one solicits a look from the other, what is always missing and creates a certain dissatisfaction is that 'you never look at me from the place from which I see you' (Lacan, 2018b, p. 103). The solicited look always misses the gaze from which I imagine myself looking at you, the gaze as object *a* of my desire. An interesting way to

understand this radical change that the gaze enables, is that the gaze provides the frame through which the object of desire appears compelling and appealing. In the case of the delivery-riders, the analysis aims to locate the gaze that frames the object *a* in their perceived ideal-image. The gaze is that which conceals the lack of the subject—it is the perception of the image in fantasy caught under the gaze that secretly bears castration—because it is linked to an excessive jouissance that is forbidden for this reason. This change of perspectives in viewing intersubjectivity is something which the dialectics of the gaze enable and offer a conceptual tool for analysing and interpreting workers' subjectivity in a radically different way than what is predominantly encountered in managerial discourses. For example, in the case of food-delivery work where the main narrative claims a work without managers and that the worker can be his own boss, I explore what stands in for the gaze of control that is usually incarnated by managers and how the workers incorporate and situate themselves with regard to this missing gaze and its imperatives. Following this line of thought, the four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis presented so far offer rich conceptual tools that are helpful in a discourse analysis of the precarious labour of migrant workers. They have the potential to reverse misrepresented depictions of subjectivity and perception in a similar but different fashion than how it is accomplished in the clinic. In order to further facilitate the apprehension of these concepts outside the clinic, I now turn to the most political seminar of Lacan—The Other Side of Psychoanalysis—to provide psychoanalytic reflections on the social and the political dimensions as well as elaborating the concept of surplus-jouissance that powers the repetitions of the drive.

2.3. The Other Side of Psychoanalysis

The seminar 'The Other Side of Psychoanalysis' takes place in Paris in 1969, following the turbulent year of 1968. In the context of the newly founded Department of Psychoanalysis at the Universite de Paris VIII (Vincennes), Lacan investigates Freud through Marx and Hegel. He does so with regard to the changing patterns of social relations and the nature of knowledge, a particularly pertinent topic considering the impact of university knowledge on psychoanalysis and vice versa. In the beginning of that year, Lacan introduces the mathemes of the four discourses that are able to transmit the fundamental structure of social bonds without loss. The four discourses are as follows in Figure 1:

Figure 1: The 4 Discourses

Discourse of the master

$$\uparrow \frac{S_1}{\$} \rightleftarrows \frac{S_2}{a} \downarrow$$

Discourse of the university

$$\uparrow \frac{S_2}{S_1} \rightleftarrows \frac{a}{\$} \downarrow$$

Discourse of hysteria

$$\uparrow \frac{\$}{a} \rightleftarrows \frac{S_1}{S_2} \downarrow$$

Discourse of the analyst

$$\uparrow \frac{a}{S_2} \rightleftarrows \frac{\$}{S_1} \downarrow$$

Terms:

$\$$ = subject
a = surplus *jouissance*
S_1 = master signifier
S_2 = knowledge

Positions:

$$\frac{agent}{truth} \quad \frac{other}{production}$$
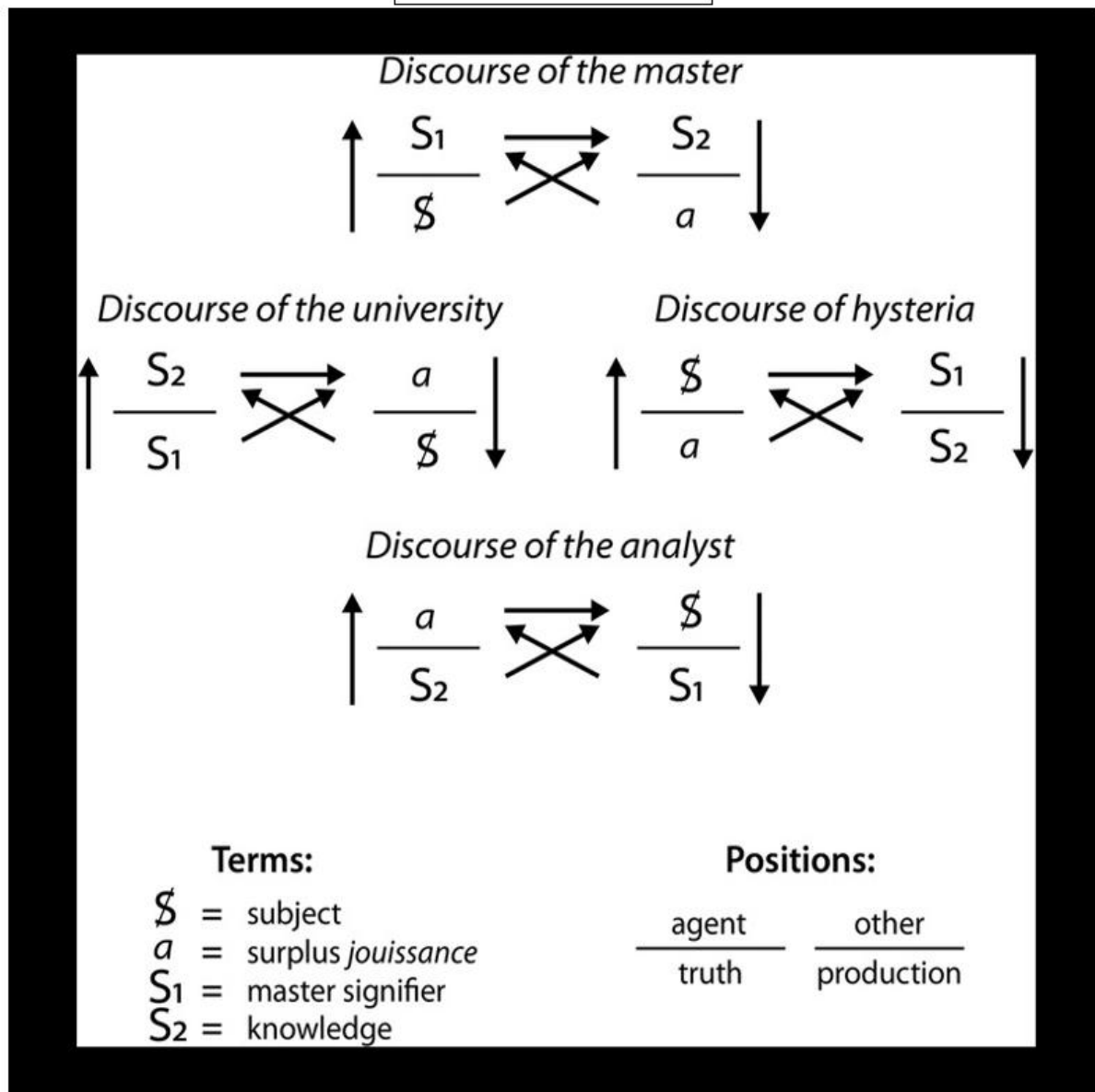
The origin of this formulation of the four discourses is to be found in the Lacanian definition of the signifier as that which represents a subject for another signifier (Lacan, 2007, p. 29). This proposition conveys not just that the subject is a split subject because of language, but also the signifier's diacritical properties—each signifier is defined through its opposition and difference to other signifiers (Clemens & Grigg, 2006, p. 7). In this seminar, through the formulation of the four discourses, Lacan brings a new aspect of jouissance into the spotlight. In Seminar XI, as discussed above, jouissance bears a certain relationship with the real and is opposed to the symbolic as such. Now Lacan illustrates an invasion of the jouissance into the realm of the signifier. This underpins a relationship between the subject, enjoyment, the master signifier and knowledge as they are depicted in the four discourses. These formulations are not

independent of each other, and they are produced by shifting the terms by 90 degrees. Lacan privileges the Master's discourse as the dominant[3] one and this is not without good reason. The position of S_1, in the agent position, is what inscribes the subject as the unary trait which provides the starting point of the subject's identity. The unary trait, originating from the Other's treasure trove of signifiers, will mark the subject and consequently the road to jouissance for the subject. The conclusion then is that the human being is introduced to the signifier through jouissance (Verhaeghe, 2006, p. 32). This inscription of the unary trait is an ongoing process where repetition of the inscription produces knowledge (S_2), knowledge as a means to jouissance. Hence, the repetition supports this knowledge up to a certain limit, a limit of jouissance that is closely related to the death drive, in the sense of a path towards death. This elusive jouissance can never be attained in life, yet it is along the paths of life that it is sought, through repetition, as the invasion of jouissance, and at the same time the lack or loss of the signifier and the unary trait that oppose it (Lacan, 2007, pp. 14–19). This dovetails with the research aim of this study. One pole of analysis investigates how certain repetitions of the riders are tied with jouissance and how these modes of unconscious enjoyment are parts of the motivational force that propels riders to reengage in delivery-work and endure the long hours. I further discuss these concepts in the following chapter of methodology to elaborate more precisely how this investigation is accomplished.

This point of simultaneous loss and gain of enjoyment through the effect of the signifier receives a unique articulation in this seminar. Lacan connects Marx's concept of surplus-value to jouissance, presenting surplus-jouissance or surplus-enjoyment as a new concept, closely connected to repetition as the conditioning factor of the gain precisely because of the corresponding loss. This is similar to the way that surplus-value is generated in capitalist society by creating products and services. Surplus-value has to be spent in order to consume these products and services—this always provides a partial and temporal satisfaction, further increasing the need to consume more, in a vicious circle of ever-expanding capitalism and consumerism. This is highly pertinent to this study as it allows us to draw from Marxist theory, highlighting the influence of socio-economic factors both for platform-work and immigrant labour. Moreover, the way that these Marxist imports connect with psychoanalysis facilitates

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[3] It is worthwhile to note that Lacan states that dominant doesn't imply dominance in this case (Lacan, 2007, p. 43-45). It refers to the dominant position of the Law that is occupied by S_1 and is due to structural laws that are in effect in this formalisation of discourse, Law will always be in this dominant position in the Master's Discourse. This position is the effect, the root of the structure when the formalisation of discourse is put to the test and the inherent impossibility is revealed. For example, the impossibility of constituting a sovereign good at the heart of the world, the impossibility of the particular to be transformed to the universal and vice versa.

the investigation of the workers' subjectivity and affective-experiences in terms of value generated, surplus and lack. The insight which can be brought into an analysis of food-delivery work is the ways in which the impasse of the precarious working-conditions is superimposed upon another (for example the impasse of encountering racist and harassing behaviours if you are a migrant worker) as a way to conceal the original one and to direct the subject towards the other. This superimposition is connected with a corresponding mode of surplus-jouissance which not only conceals the lack but also allows the loss to be experienced as a surplus. The acquired loss provides enjoyment. Hence, there might be an affective access to enjoyment by allowing oneself to freely work in such conditions and persevere the adversities. This part of the theory chapter drives the topic back to how the function of discourse as structure is employed in the signifying chain as a cause to conceal what is most fundamentally misrecognized in the subject. For example, Fotaki and Harding (2013), in their exploration of sexual difference in organisation and management theory have expanded on the four discourses as potential discursive positions for academics in CMS. They advocate for a hysterical critical-management scholarship as the Master's discourse aims at totalising knowledge and producing unquestioned surplus-jouissance, the University's discourse produces uncritical subjects by institutionalizing the Master's knowledge and the Analyst's discourse would prove insufficient in the academic context since 'even the analyst is not free from the illusions of the imaginary' and it would render academics 'to act as subjects supposed to know' reinforcing mastery and the fantasy of the finitude of knowledge (Fotaki & Harding, 2013, p. 165). Thus, they conclude that the hysterical discourse in CMS would allow scholars to ask uncomfortable questions of the surplus-enjoyment and the object of their research, to forego certainty and closure in research results and entertain contradictions and incomplete conclusions. In this spirit, the goal of the present analysis is not to resolve contentious conflicts or to engage in a search of absolute truth in food-delivery work. Rather, it is an effort to illustrate how the signifying elements already contain the attributes that constitute cause and effect as represented in the form of discursive structure. It is an effort to demonstrate the possibility of rearranging them in different configurations as constitutive elements of subjectivity that do not resolve tension, but show how the tension functions in experience. It is the intertwined relationship of being and desire for the subject, as they are circumvented from the action of discourse to invest in objects that apparently fill this lack. This raises the questions of how such an evasion is made possible and what sustains it in terms of enjoyment and affective-experience. I now look more closely at the concept of affect for Lacan and some criticisms that surround this topic.

2.4. Lacan: Affect and Criticisms

As we have seen so far, the concept of embodied affective experience in Lacan is complicated and without a clear definition (Cederström & Grassman, 2008). The concept of surplus-jouissance that was expanded in the previous section provides the most interesting elaboration of affect in Lacanian theory because it connects the idealization and fantasies that render an object desirable with work and surplus-value. It articulates a relationship between the truth produced from the lived-experience of work, and the lack that is constantly emerging in the repeated failures to grasp this idealized object. These missed encounters allow workers to access the surplus of enjoyment. This conceptualisation of affect follows a radical problematization of the inside-out dichotomy in relation to the subject and helps us to understand 'the ways in which subjects relate to influential norms and discourses along with the idea that affect is something that exists between bodies, neither individual nor social' (Kenny & Fotaki, 2014, p. 21). Additionally, the surplus-jouissance is related to how people are invested in particular symbolic elements, taking the pathway of creating certain fantasies which support their idealized repetitions while also employing identifications which help them navigate their drive to repeat (Parker, 2005). In accordance with this perspective, affects can be discerned from patterns of social and work life. Even though Lacan states that through the process of negation affective phenomena that must originate in one register fall into other levels, as a passage from one register to another, the properties of language allow us to reconnect these experiences and indicate their function (Lacan, 1997, p. 155). Therefore, the focus is on what affects appear to do in this research context, what they can tell us about the ways in which migrant-riders' bodies come to be disturbed. This investigation of the riders' discourse enables an analysis of their subjectivity and identifications that offers nuanced ways in which their affective-experience occurring at the present moment, in specific situations, can be brought to the fore.

Nevertheless, there have been severe criticisms of Lacan's theory of psychoanalysis in general and Lacan's conceptualisation of affect in particular. For example, Derrida has expressed his disagreement with Lacan's primacy of the signifier, and in his book 'The Post-Card' he claims that Lacan overemphasises the unity of the signifier and critiques this as a form of logocentrism (Derrida, 2020, pp. 412–470). Additionally, Deleuze and Guattari have criticized the negative nature that Lacan attributes to lack and desire and instead claim a more

positive conceptualisation where desire offers a generative force of new meanings and connections (Deleuze et al., 2004, pp. 34–40). Even though these criticisms are very interesting and generate fertile discussions on psychoanalytic theory, I will not expand further on them, rather, I will focus more on the criticisms that relate to affect which are more pertinent to this study. Another criticism against Lacan is voiced by his colleague and former friend André Green. Green has accused Lacan of betraying Freud by turning psychoanalysis into a caricature that appeals to intellectuals, and in particular philosophers and linguists (Green & Benvenuto, 2007). He argues that Lacan took advantage of the impoverished state of psychoanalysis in post war France and transformed Freud's theory into an obsession with language and signifiers. In more detail, Green accuses Lacan of disregarding the notion of affect beyond the symbolic register by reducing the signifier to mere word-representation (Green, 2018, p. 119). According to Green—and perhaps in convergence with the criticisms of Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari— the signifier should instead be conceived as an array of parts such as 'thing-representation, word-representation, affect, corporal states, acts and so forth' (ibid.). Therefore, Green accuses Lacan of forgetting affect beyond the register of the symbolic and the properties of language and as such he fails to account for the affective complexities that pertain to the human experience. As Borch-Jakobsen expands on this note, Lacan retranscribed what Freud had described in terms of affect to pure signifying intention and social expression (Borch-Jacobsen, 1991, p. 76). According to these criticisms, for Lacan, affect experienced beyond language is not important, as what matters is that affect can only be transmitted through language, 'only as exteriorized in intersubjective dialogue' (ibid.). Hence, they argue that Lacan's theory of affect misses out on the rich embodied affective feelings; whereas Freud describes identifications as a repetition of an affective experience, Lacan dismisses this fact and focuses instead only on the specular image as the pivot to identification. But is that truly the case?

In my view, the concept of surplus-jouissance responds to these criticisms by avoiding a substantialised bodily enjoyment as the libidinal glue guaranteeing a coherence in analysing identifications and the temporal pursuit of drive objects. Instead, it delineates an analytic presupposition of affective-economy in the subject's body, where the body is taken to belong to the Real, the register where symbolization is impossible. Hence, the accusation that Lacanian theory utterly lacks any conception of affect and bodily feelings is relatively unjustified because Lacan consistently subjugates the affective body to nonsomatic and nonenergetic factors. This contradiction where the subject's body belongs to the Real outside language but nonetheless suffers from the mental representation of thought, is how Lacan interprets the

physical symptoms of analysands as 'a matter of the body, "suffering from the signifier" —the physical ailment operates as a metaphor for the nonphysical unconscious conflict' (Johnston, 2005, p. 201). In other words, when Lacan discusses a discharge of adrenaline and what its relation to the body is, he says 'It upsets its functions, true. But what is there in it that makes it come from the soul? What it discharges is thought.' (Lacan, 1973, p. 20). Therefore, through surplus-jouissance and its relationship between the subject and two signifiers, Lacan articulates his faithfulness to Freudian negation that considers affects to be displaced and their correspondence to mental representation to be fragmented.

What is effectively accomplished through this theorization of affect in Lacanian theory, is that an affect is never fixed or final. Certain experiences, which are connected to specific affective elements are prone to change and their representation fluctuates from displeasure to enjoyment and anxiety. Thus, a specific limitation of this perspective becomes evident. The way that I investigate affective-experiences through the Lacanian lens of surplus-jouissance fails to conclusively depict the relationship between specific experiences and certain affects. The forthcoming analysis is not able to crystallize the affective-experience of migrant-riders and present a finalized schema of the lived-experience of the riders. As Dashtipour argues the failure of idealized images and of the search for undivided wholeness is guaranteed, but the patterns of jouissance never cease from developing new connections and patterns (Dashtipour, 2014). Hoedemaekers further supports this adaptability of surplus-jouissance and the breaking of the constituted modes of enjoyment, by illustrating the endless play of resignification along the limitations of identification in workers' subjectivity (Cederström & Hoedemaekers, 2010, p. 391). Nevertheless, this limitation also provides an advantage. This perspective on affect allows the analysis—instead of focusing on connecting specific affects to specific actions—to illustrate the function of surplus-jouissance in the configurations of the workers' fantasies, subjectivity and their aims to capture the object of desire in food-delivery work. Furthermore, this conceptualisation offers rich opportunities to account for the role of affect in identifications—for example when delivery-riders identify with idealized images of themselves, which mode of surplus-jouissance becomes accessible through this imaginary investment and towards which object do riders direct their efforts? After this expansion on the conceptualisation of affect and the review of some criticisms and limitations of this perspective, I now move into a summary of the theoretical inputs in the context of this research.

2.5. **Summary of the Theoretical Inputs in the Research Context**

Before concluding this chapter, I will summarise how the theoretical concepts developed in this chapter assist the investigation of the research questions. In the exploration of the first research question, where the focus is on the workers' subjectivity the Lacanian registers of the Symbolic, Imaginary and Real will be the guiding tools of the analysis. I will locate how delivery-riders weave together fantasies and meanings in their discourse to present their own subjectivity as a whole, harmonious entity that facilitates the repetition of work. This will be accomplished by investigating how delivery-riders construct their fantasies at work as stories that encounter their ideal selves as a response to lack and struggle with the Other (Driver, 2009c). Moreover, following Driver's focus on the failure of imaginary constructions of self (Driver, 2009b), I then trace and unravel the identifications that correspond to these fantasies through the symbolic use of repeated signifiers and their fluctuating imaginary meanings in the workers' narratives as a constant resignification that attempts to fill the subject's lack (Hoedemaekers, 2010). Additionally, I circumscribe the hole in their discourse as that which cannot be symbolized, the dimension of the Real, as that which at the same time conceals the lack and presents the object—towards which they direct their efforts—as compelling and desirable. This dimension of lack articulates the ways in which delivery-riders strive to fill this lack by trying to identify what this Other, that stands in for the missing manager in food-delivery gig-work, wants from the workers. As Hoedemaekers argues, it is this dimension of the Other's desire that 'projects the inverse of its own lack of substance onto different surfaces, thereby cultivating a fantasy of making itself a whole and fully satisfied subject' (Hoedemaekers, 2009, p. 196). These dimensions of lack as the different surfaces into which the projected fantasies, meanings and identifications are engaged maps out the relationships that pertain to the subjectivity of delivery-riders and allow the next part of the analysis to connect them with the affective-experience of the workers. Of course, transference during the interviews and the mediation of the Other assists the analysis of the workers' identifications and fantasies. This is accomplished through a close analysis of how the 'I' in the workers' speech designates the 'You' from which recognition is expected but misrecognition is guaranteed (Roberts, 2005), as I elaborate further in the methodology chapter. The role of the gaze is also helpful as the frame that represents the oscillating object around

which their discourse is structured and directs their identifications and the relative fixed meaning they present.

For the second research question—which examines the affective-experience of the workers and the influence of control, consent and resistance in their work— I expand on the previous analysis of identifications and fantasies by supplementing the analysis with surplus-jouissance and the drive. The ways that the social bonds are structured in the workers' discourse enable us to observe how the delivery-rider as a subject is always caught between a signifier that represents the subject for another signifier. This follows Stavrakakis' argumentation that the lack marks, both the subject and the Other, a lack of jouissance, and it is by exploring the symbolic presuppositions of authority in conjunction with the modes of surplus-jouissance that we can understand how and what sustains the credibility of the lacking Other and the inefficacy of the workers' resistance (Stavrakakis, 2008). In other words, I explore how the objectification of the delivery-subject exchanges the loss of jouissance during work for the surplus-jouissance that is experienced every time the object of desire is missed in their everyday work-routine. Moreover, I trace how the object of food-delivery follows a similar fluctuation between the different registers in a corresponding relationship with the identifications of the workers, as it is expressed in the transgressions and resistance that riders employ. This follows the suggestions of Dashtipour et al. (2021) to inquire into the affective dynamics within groups and their role in maintaining or contesting discourses of control and resistance and further connects these affective dynamics with their role in enabling and sustaining the repetition of work. I expand on how this movement enhances the experience of surplus-jouissance, thereby holding in place the drive of the food-delivery riders and facilitating their engagement with the gig-work applications for long periods of time despite the adversities of the job. To put it differently, this combination of affective-experience and the grid of identifications and objects in food-delivery work offers the necessary perspective to understand the workers' compulsion to repeat the displeasure of work as a means of accessing unconscious enjoyment (Arnaud, 2002b). It is by virtue of the metonymic and metaphoric functions of language that such a correspondence between the identifications and the object, allows the experience of loss to be translated as a gain and surplus-jouissance to circulate in the everyday actions of the workers. Hence, I illustrate the intertwined relationship between the ways that through metaphor and metonymy the lack-of-being comes to be sutured by a lack-of-having (Driver, 2014) and articulates the affective-economy that fuels the workers compulsion to repeat (Hoedemaekers, 2008). In this way, I present how the symptom of food-delivery work is constituted in the

experience of this work and what the consequences in terms of symbolic castration and lack-of-being are for the workers.

In the third research question, the focus is on what comes to substitute for traditional forms of management in food-delivery gig-work and what the implications are for the subjectivity and affective-experience of the workers. How have the experiences of the workers and their practices of resistance to the algorithmic control—exerted by the applications—come to designate a new form of management? To explore this question, I connect what has been produced in the previous questions and elaborate what constitutes Human Resource Management in this line of work. For example, I explore the implications of the aforementioned perspectives on the riders' subjectivity and affective-experience to the attributes of freedom and autonomy that food-delivery claims. How do the workers' fantasies and repetitions translate the experience of freedom and autonomy in their daily routines without the presence of a manager but through an algorithmic Other (Dashtipour, 2014)? To do this I investigate the role of the Other in this algorithmic system, how it serves as the third party which recognises the freedom of the workers but at the same time obligates them to follow certain metrics and performance indicators (Roberts, 2005). The psychoanalytic concept of the gaze as separate from the field of vision allows the discussion to illustrate the precise effects of such an algorithmic system and how it governs food-delivery work by setting in place the identifications and affective-experiences that the previous questions investigated. For instance, how is this algorithmic Other embodied in the symbolic command to engage in delivery-work and imagined by the riders as the constant gaze that tracks and monitors their performance? Only by taking into account all these dimensions—lack, jouissance, symbolic command and fantasy, ideal selves and transgressions (Stavrakakis, 2010)—can we start to envisage a comprehensive explanation of what drives delivery-riders' identifications and sustains the algorithmic system of HRM and its gaze.

2.6. **Conclusion of Theory Chapter**

This chapter has presented the main concepts that guide the research analysis of this study. Since psychoanalysis is a practice which unravels the effects of language on the speaking being, it offers us the conceptual tools to produce an in-depth investigation on the discursive reality of migrant food-delivery workers. The three registers of the Symbolic, Imaginary and the Real, provide the framework to locate how different identifications are mediated through

the perspective of the big Other. These identifications correspond to fantasies, images caught under the gaze of what we would like to be—Imaginary identifications—or point towards the very place where we are being observed to appear worthy of love—Symbolic identifications (Žižek, 1989, p. 116). Yet all identifications fail as the Real stands in for the impossibility of language to articulate our full being and thus all identifications are lacking something. Therefore, through the use of metonymies and metaphors, the subject expresses his desire through demands in which an object is presented as the object-cause of desire. The object that will provide the fulfilment that the demand is targeting, but as the concept of the drive illustrates, the aim is precisely to miss this object and to maintain the subject in the trajectory of this repetition that misses the metonymic object of desire. The split subject, caught under the effects of the signifier, remains ensnared in such configurations and with good reason, as the surplus-jouissance is what is received in this vicious circle of hit and miss. The social bonds, as they are represented with the four discourses, precisely illustrate this relation of impossibility within which the divided subject is caught. It fails to transmit the knowledge of its existence to the master signifier that unconsciously subjects him and is hence forced to rotate in these formations where surplus-jouissance is mobilised to be encountered and lost, time after time. It is through this process that the compulsion to repeat becomes so intransigent that the subject's symptom fails to provide enjoyment and pushes the subject to the psychoanalyst's door. It is in this context that the psychoanalytic framework is so pertinent to the investigation of food-delivery migrant-riders.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the precarious and exploitative conditions in which migrant workers often find themselves result in negative consequences for their well-being, mental state, and affective-experience at work. But what about the migrant-workers who seem to be coping quite well with these conditions in the foreign country where they are working? As Lu and Ng (2019) argue, there is the 'Healthy Immigrant Effect' where immigrants apparently excel at adapting to and integrating with their new identities, but after the first five years, they start to suffer physical and mental issues which are often hard to be accounted for in pathological causes (Kirmayer et al., 2004, p. 665). In cases like this, psychoanalysis provides a perspective which can explain how certain symptomatic formations might allow migrant-workers to be functional and healthy for some time. However, at some point in the future, the configurations of surplus-jouissance and imaginary-identifications they had employed do not work as efficiently anymore. In Lacanian terms this would be the return of the repressed, the material that has been unconsciously forgotten, returns to leave its trace in

the speaking body of the migrant workers—What is not remembered is repeated in everyday life. What is not remembered is how the lack has been elided through fantasies and identifications, how through the sliding of the signifying chain riders present an object as the thing that will complete the subject. In other words, in each case there is always a discordance between the register of lack and that of the object which the subject pursues (Safouan, 2004, p. 78). Therefore, a psychoanalytic understanding of how reality is structured in discourse and conjoins the structure of language itself—to supersede the lack for the object, fantasy for reality, demand for desire, dissatisfaction for satisfaction, subjugation for freedom, knowledge for truth—allows one to elucidate the multiple elements and perspectives at play in the plight of migrant food-delivery riders.

Herein lies the implication for this case study. It is paramount to investigate at this intersection of precarious and migrant work where food-delivery gig-work is posited, the exact effects of exploitation and alienation for the workers. How are these effects constituted and are they constitutive for the riders' subjectivity following a Möbius strip topology? What is the role of this parasitic mode of enjoyment that is surplus-jouissance, and what implications does it bring for the goals and the desire of the riders? How is the delivery-subject effectively subjected to the deplorable conditions of this work from the elements of their social bond? Taking these questions into account, through a psychoanalytic perspective I investigate the identifications of the riders, utilizing the registers of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, to detect how fantasy, lack and desire are intertwined for these workers and with what consequences for their subjectivity. How does the use of metaphor and metonymy in their discourse reveal something about their symptom and their desire respectively? How are the lack and being of the riders implicated by the elision and excess of meaning that the metonymy and metaphor enable? Additionally, I employ the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis in the following ways. I examine the role of transference in the interviews and how riders seek recognition of their subjectivity through the mediating role of the Other. This is further expanded in the next chapter as well. What is the role of repetition, in terms of what are the repeated meanings in the riders' actions and experiences? What is enacted as an unconscious reality for them, and by the same token drives the riders to keep themselves engaged with the applications of the platform companies? Is there an underlying mode of enjoyment that sustains and facilitates these repetitions that drive food-delivery work? What is effectively rendered accessible in terms of jouissance in such configurations? The articulation of what comes to occupy the position of the object-cause of desire, *a*, also supplements the analysis in terms of

mapping out the object and the subject of delivery-work along its relations with desire and surplus-jouissance. What is effectively taken, but already lost and denied, before its reappearance can lure the subject to enjoy repetition?

3.Methodology Chapter

3.1.Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to illustrate the configuration of my research design and the methods I have chosen to explore and answer my research questions. This research focuses on immigrant workers in the UK, in the sector of food-delivery gig-work. It examines, in a combinatory fashion, the lived-experience of immigrant and precarious labour, with their subjectivity and practices of resistance, consent, and control. This research project critically interrogates the ways immigrant workers' identities develop in relation to managerial, organisational, and contextual discourses, as well as how managerial practices reproduce such discourses. Additionally, this study looks at how control, consent and resistance are enacted by migrant workers, in relation to these inscriptive processes of organisational level identification, and with what affective-experiences these practices and identifications are related. As elaborated in the theory chapter, these practices and affective-experiences are constructed and described through language. Therefore, the precise ontological and epistemological assumptions that this study adopts in relation to the discursive nature of reality, deserve to be developed further. Therefore, this chapter presents the paradigm that underpins my research, and depicts the reasoning behind the data collection methods and the ensuing methods of analysis. Lastly, I incorporated a discussion of ethics and reflexivity to better explain and evaluate my research design.

3.2.Epistemology and Ontology for Lacan

The methodology of this research belongs on the qualitative spectrum of methods. It is pertinent at this point to elaborate on the ontological and epistemological status of this research. Considering the influence of Lacan, and how this research is theoretically based on psychoanalytic grounds, it is worthwhile to discuss how Lacan treats questions of social ontology, as well as how knowledge is generated and its relationship with truth. Following Freud, Lacan wants to assume a scientific attitude towards the praxis of psychoanalysis. However, one has to accept that it would be impossible to equate the scientific model of mathematics or physics with the investigation of the subjective element, uniquely posited at

the heart of human experience which is the focus of psychoanalysis. Moreover, this brings to light the position of knowledge in psychoanalysis. Lacanians never treat knowledge as something that can be whole, knowledge rests on what is said and what is said can always change (Lacan, 1998, p. 98). Lacan advises precisely how analysts should always maintain a hole in the field of knowledge as something that may be presupposed but never totalised (Lacan, 2017, pp. 33–34). This resonates with how Lacan distinguishes imaginary knowledge from symbolic knowledge as the difference between *connaitre* and *savoir* (Lacan, 1998, p. 87,91). This distinction underlines the relationship of knowledge with jouissance and truth. Imaginary knowledge has no relation to truth and is responsible for the symptomatic formation in which the subject stabilizes meaning and experiences surplus-jouissance as conscious dissatisfaction and unconscious pleasure. On the contrary, in psychoanalytic therapy the focus is on traversing such fantasies and establishing a symbolic knowledge that bears a relation to truth. This is made possible by the deciphering of the unconscious which is a type of knowledge in the real—unsymbolisable and inaccessible. Eventually, this process of deciphering unconscious knowledge redeploys the subject's knowledge from imaginary to symbolic knowledge, reconstituting a truth about his unconscious desire as well as a new mode of jouissance—knowledge about the jouissance of the Other (Lacan, 2007, p. 17). Hence, the proper question that needs to be asked is not whether psychoanalysis is a science, but rather what are the difficulties and the methodological considerations that pertain to psychoanalysis, taking into consideration the specific phenomena it targets to study and explain.

The analytic encounter does not aim at capturing something that belongs beyond any version of misrepresented reality. Instead, it focuses on producing knowledge on the part of the subject as to how this representation came to be dominant and in this way illustrate how it has at its origins the subject itself—for the subject is ex-centric to its consciousness but not external to his or her discourse (Lacan, 1988, p. 112). Therefore, psychoanalysis seeks to investigate the internal, intimate aspect of the subject that effaces its traces from consciousness, and not to produce absolute knowledge or normative solutions that would facilitate life (Lacan, 2008, p. 139). In this way, the opportunity for new meanings and subjective positions is provided. These are positions that may establish a relation between the subject and its unconscious desire and allow for new modes of enjoyment, knowledge and speech to become articulated. Thus, the epistemological status of a psychoanalytic interpretation is not to provide the true or correct way to perceive reality—it is rather meant as a destabilizer of imaginary knowledge that will provide the space and force for the analysand to develop his own symbolic knowledge. Having

elaborated the different perspectives of knowledge in the clinical context, how should the epistemological status of an interpretation be seen, in terms of research that employs psychoanalysis as a methodology? Similarly with the clinical dimension, a researcher's interpretation should be treated as something that does not attempt to represent the whole truth, nor absolute knowledge, but as something which aims at disrupting the dominant imaginary aspect of knowledge in the field and allowing new meanings and trails of thought to be conceived and undertaken in the paths of research.

This view is similar to the one presented by social constructionism, it would however be a mistake to identify psychoanalysis with the ontology of social constructionism. With this in mind, Stavrakakis elaborates that although constructionism reduces everything to a level of discursive construction, it still maintains an essentialist position outside construction (Stavrakakis, 2002, pp. 116–117). He continues by stating the question social constructionism fails to provide an answer for: 'if the level of construction is engulfing the totality of reality, what stimulates the production of new social constructions and the desire to articulate new constructions of reality?'. Following Laclau, he claims that social reality is facing dislocations by a radical exteriority that threatens it, and this creates a lack in the discursive order similar to the inherent lack of the subject that prompts desire, in psychoanalytic terms. This radical exteriority—which is responsible for the dislocations that both threaten identities and serve as the foundations for new ones (Laclau, 1996, p. 39)—does not belong to an external materiality but is an attribute of discourse itself. This corresponds directly to the Lacanian real, the real not as reality or fantasy, but as 'the mystery of the speaking being and the mystery of unconscious' (Lacan, 1999, p. 131). The fundamental role of this unsymbolisable real is to render fantasmatic reality imperfect and dislocate it by illustrating the constant lack therein. Moreover, it highlights the impossibility of every identification to result in a full identity, and although it cannot be symbolized it is encountered in the attempted failures of representation (Žižek, 1997b, p. 216). Hence, psychoanalysis, in contrast to social constructionism, illustrates how the discursive structure with its apparent rigidity, already contains the subversive potential for new social relations and subjectivities, simply by virtue of the very conditions that structure the current form of social reality. These conditions are in a position of internal exteriority and emerge at the intersection of symbolization with whatever exceeds its grasp—the excess of signification guarantees that the skidding of meaning is ceaseless (Lacan, 2018b, p. 235; Stavrakakis, 2002, p. 120).

The defining aspect of this circumscription presents a relative ground of interpretation where socio-cultural and politico-economic discourses intersect and influence the subject in an overdetermined fashion. This poses the epistemological question of how we can verify and uphold such analytical interpretations. It is only by examining and being attentive to the relations between all the elements of the subject's discourse that the interpretation may prove to be valuable and generate surprise as a sign of its effects. Hence, it is not possible to reduce the analytic treatment to specific observations, classification and inductive generalization (Glynos, 2002, p. 39). Glynos argues that any issues of falsification or verification are solely related to the theoretical framework upon which the analyst founds his hypotheses. Therefore, the process of any assessment can only proceed in a legitimate way by systematically comparing and relating the observed phenomena to the emerging analytical assumptions and theoretical grounding that inspired them. This epistemological impasse is what differentiates psychoanalysis from the traditional positivist or interpretivist approaches. An analytic interpretation takes its merit not from being accurate or truthful per se, but rather from the degree to which the effect of the interpretation enables new meanings and relationships with enjoyment to be entertained.

Lacanian ontology is structured around a gap, a structuring gap that cannot be articulated or represented—the Real in Lacanian terms. This void at the kernel of the subject plays a pivotal role for Lacan, especially in its relation with the object *a*. This stands for the form of the indivisible remainder that follows the subject's introduction into language and the symbolic as such (Žižek, 1989, p. 191). As Austin argues, this incompleteness ingrained in the self revolves around the object *a* to fulfil it—setting the ontological primacy not on the system surrounding the gap but on the gap itself—the gap as the paradox that can never be resolved (Austin, 2011). Following this thread, Zizek's ontology is precisely based upon this paradox of irreconcilability, a parallax of ontology where the purpose of the dialectic is not to synthesize the thesis and the antithesis by transforming the two sides into a new term—the truth lies in this gap itself and the contradiction it compounds (Žižek, 2006, p. 36). As Austin theorizes, Zizek's ontology is founded entirely on limits, the limits of knowledge and representation surrounding this primordial void and any attempt at a formal ontology, even one that is based on this gap is doomed to fail because it assumes too much (Austin, 2011). Similarly, Hook investigates extensively whether an ontology based on this ontological gap from the perspective of the death drive would be possible (Hook, 2016). He argues that even though the death drive is just an ontological gap and when magnified it appears to achieve positive content,

this proposition cannot be sustained. The death drive even when explored through the lens of a self-relating negativity—as a force of mediating jouissance—it still results in failure as the basic operation of the drive is to find enjoyment in the very failure of reaching it (Žižek, 2014, p. 205). Nevertheless, this impetus in search of enjoyment acts as a catalyst between the subject and the not-yet-subject. As Fink advances, the drives seek to reinsert the subject into being, to bring it where previously there was no subject (Fink, 2013, p. 62). This is crucial as it relates the death drive, as an ontological gap, with self-relating negativity and the process of subjectivation—the birth of new subject formations. This is in line with Lacan's views on ontology which he viewed in an elliptical fashion over the years. As in Stavrakakis, Lacan's schema of socio-political life is that of a perpetual play 'between possibility and impossibility, between construction and destruction, representation and failure, articulation and dislocation, reality and the real, politics and the political' (Stavrakakis, 2002, p. 159).

To conclude, Lacan's ontology is based precisely on the impossibility of a formal ontology and the paradox revolving around the subject's constitutive gap. Moreover, the epistemological premises also arrive at an impasse as they are intertwined with the ontological paradox leading any attempt of formalization to failure. Be that as it may, the condition of an ontological possibility remains. These ontological and epistemological impasses play a rudimental role, especially under the lens of the rem(a)inder, that bit of the Real that psychoanalysis aims to circumscribe. As Dolar asserts, this elusive little object, beyond discursive strategies and the analysis of signifiers and/or nodal points, leads and brings the subject in his search towards jouissance (Dolar, 1993, p. 92). This opens up the possibility of new identifications, or as Foucault would say new modes of the self, by offering a glimpse of this real as the ever-elusive reward. Finally, to return to the context of this study and how the arguments presented above influence my own ontological and epistemological positions, I use the approach of an elliptical dimension of discourse where the internal, paradoxical gap allows the production of new discursive positions that do not originate from the outside but rest upon the attribute of 'extimacy' in discourse itself. This is ensured and supplemented by the Lacanian perspective on discourse's ontological impasses and paradoxes, that push the subject towards new identifications by successfully conditioning the failure of any identification to result in a full identity. This subjective nature of my approach will enable me to better locate and analyse the embodied experience of the individual migrant worker and in a more immersive manner, than a realist approach would (Corry et al., 2019). Additionally, this approach facilitates the examination of the implications from wider social and political contexts and how they affect

the discursive construction of migrant workers subjectivities in response to resistance and consent. Finally, the interpretivist point of view from a psychoanalytic angle, allows a more in-depth understanding of the research questions, utilising a spherical lens of analysis, thus permitting insightful answers and subversive questions to emerge for further research as the possibilities of subjectivity do not stop being written.

3.3. **Data collection method - Ethnography**

The research questions that were formulated and the qualitative and subjective focus that accompanied them, pointed me towards ethnography in organisations as the most pertinent method to collect data with which to explore them. One could argue that there might be an incompatibility between the epistemological and ontological impossibilities of Lacanian psychoanalysis and ethnography. Yet, as Latour argues, the ontological turn of anthropology and ethnographic fieldwork at the time of the Anthropocene is always uncertain of its scientific status (Latour, 2017). The meaning the ethnographer depicts in the narrativity of the fieldwork is not an additional layer on top of the physical reality, but what the world itself consists of. Latour concludes that there is a 'Möbius strip quality of the anthropocene' that ineluctably affects ethnography as well, especially where the side of restitution leads to reflexivity and where the side of value leads to the side of facts (ibid., p. 139). This blurring of strict borders allows for instructive effects as the focus is not on generating any great unification theory, but in learning to navigate a landscape of complex and controversial data. To this end, there is a confluency between the perspectives of ethnography and psychoanalysis in terms of what can be known and thereby constitute an object and field of knowledge. Lacan's insistence on the impossibility of ontological closure need not negate ethnographic inquiry, provided the data is interpreted as ontic manifestations of discursive constructions—contingent, contested, and always mediated by the symbolic order. Additionally, in the contemporary world, where ever-changing social, economic and technological developments necessitate a continuous rethinking of the research process, the combination of Lacanian and ethnographic approaches may offer fertile research outcomes. This may be accomplished precisely by enabling the research methodologies and the recording of the analysis afterwards to embrace the incompleteness of knowledge and to seek ways to analyse the general, the structural and the processual, while maintaining an acute awareness of the tentativeness of any reflective approach (Biehl, 2013). Nevertheless, there are also some challenges that should be mentioned. First, every productive

ethnographic approach relies on letting the empirical fieldwork unfold in all its ambiguities, repetitions and singularities, as it is the ethnographic present that guides our imagination of what is socially possible and desirable (ibid.). Combining this with psychoanalysis may push the ethnographer's perspective to converge towards a preconceived set of theoretical concepts that, instead of connecting the open-ended social processes and uncertainties of the material, will rather generate a certainty of meaning and interpretation of the data so as to match the adopted theoretical lens. Additionally, as Mimica shrewdly comments, such tendencies may result in reproducing a conceptual framework that quickly 'calcifies into a formulaic application exercise' owing to the researchers own goals rather than to the specificities of the life-world that is under scrutiny (Mimica, 2009, p. 56). Hence, the challenge is not to illustrate the rich conceptual framework of psychoanalysis, but instead to make sure that the application of any of these ideas helps illuminate or enrich the ethnographic material (Hollan, 2016). One way to deal with this challenge is by informing the readers about our own affective entanglements with our topics and subjects of investigation. This would lead the combination of these two approaches to develop a common aim to identify and bring to light the internal dialectical relations and the 'deep, essential logic of a subject's discourse' applied as much to the topic of investigation as well as to the researchers themselves (Devisch, 2006, p. 138). This presents a challenge in itself as it depends to a degree on the researcher's sensitivity to context and intersubjective interactions, as a mode of thinking and inhabiting the world itself. Despite this, as Throop argues one way to safeguard the illuminating effects of these internal dialectical relations is by seeing if they allow the emergence of a new pattern of awareness (Throop, 2012). The unveiling of the internal discursive logic that develops between the ethnographer and the analyst, the research subjects and the researcher, should bring into focus previously unexamined values, assumptions and interpretive frameworks. It is by communicating and reflecting on these in a transparent manner that the combined approach of ethnography and psychoanalysis may produce shifts in awareness that shape our engagement with the world, revealing what had earlier operated unnoticed as the silent scaffolding of perception and action. Having elaborated on the compatibility between an ethnographic and a psychoanalytic methodology, I will now move into how this thesis situates itself in ethnographic and qualitative research.

Ethnography joins culture and fieldwork in an attempt to accurately depict people's narratives on certain experiences and to interpret them (Maanen, 1989, pp. 4–5). This way of gathering data is aligned with the focus of the research questions, in the sense that migrant low-

skilled workers in the UK are a multicultural group of people. Paying attention to their cultural multiplicity, while studying their subjectivity at the workplace, is an optimal way to start. Nevertheless, as Van Maanen clearly states, ethnography is still a means of representation and no transparency theory can ground itself with ethnography (Maanen, 1989, p. 7). This does not constitute an obstacle for the present research as the aim is not to create or verify any transparent theory, or to discover normative solutions, but rather to locate the broader experience of immigrant workers and how it is influenced by practices of consent and resistance in the workplace. As Willis and Trondman comment in their manifesto on ethnography, the aim is to capture the ordinary everyday practices and present them in a way that produces an enlightening effect on the reader (Willis & Trondman, 2002). More specifically, it is the theoretically informed representation of the captured experiences—'a data/theory relation' (Willis & Trondman, 2002, p. 12)—that opens up space for new understandings and possibilities that transcend the dichotomy of public/private and social/individual.

In particular, as social anthropologists argue, the distinctiveness of ethnography is based on 'comparison, contextualization of a life world, and an exposition of the relationships involved' (Gay y Blasco & Wardle, 2019, p. 16). Comparison means to search and interpret difference and similarity, firstly as it emerges in fieldwork and secondly through writing (Gingrich & G.Fox, 2002, p. 19). This opens up the possibility of examining and bringing together different elements, situations and behaviours as they are revealed through statements and responses within an understanding of the context in which these images revealed themselves (Sebeok et al., 1954, p. 387). This implies a kind of holistic approach, that renders the assumption that a detail becomes meaningful when put in context and lets the researcher appreciate the specific instances as they take place within a broader design. In the research context of migrant labour the multiple factors that are at play in workers' subjectivity and the forms of resistance and consent in the workplace, are explored under such a holistic approach. This enables the provision of further contextual meaning to the particular affective-experiences by underlining the flow of social activities, against which, roles and behaviours take their distinctive forms. As Gay y Blasco and Wardle summarise, the ethnographers' aim is to unveil the parts of the social pattern not only as differentiated elements, but also to demonstrate their dynamic interconnection (Gay y Blasco & Wardle, 2019, p. 60). It is precisely these different but interconnected elements pertaining to migrant labour that this research aims to locate, to

show how the capacity of people to act in a social world, correlates with the dynamic structure of the world itself.

To make this exploration and unveiling possible, ethnographers need to enter into new kinds of relationships in the field. Through the progress of these new relationships, an understanding will start to emerge, leading to new insights from local knowledge and thereby new contrasts and comparisons will open up in the field of study. In the field, the researcher faces a sea of facts and only by grasping their central importance and putting them in some order can the sea be charted. As Malinowski aptly states 'field work consists only and exclusively in the interpretation of the chaotic social reality, in subordinating it to general rules' (Malinowski, 1916, pp. 418–419). Therefore, the role of the ethnographer is to sustain the tension between familiarity and foreignness, between people and events and to translate them in a way that makes sense to the reader in a form of mediation between experience, recollection and argument (Gay y Blasco & Wardle, 2019, p. 104). Moreover, as Rita Astuti contends 'We do fieldwork. We write ethnography' (Astuti, 2017, p. 9). This highlights the importance of participatory fieldwork and how it can be enhanced through experimental techniques to increase the richness and complexity of ethnography. No one can deny the importance of fieldwork to ethnography, especially as a participant observer. Alpa Shah argues that participant observation embodies a revolutionary praxis (Shah, 2017). She proceeds to elaborate how participant observation is not merely an anthropological research method, but a form of production of knowledge through being and action. This may make participant observation a praxis in which theory is dialectically established and realized in action. It is something akin to Marx and Gramsci's 'Philosophy of Praxis' (Thomas, 2015) and Mao Zedong's 'On practice' (Zedong, 2008) in the sense that knowledge stems from practice. Additionally, the knowledge generated is not confined under any specific disciplinary thresholds and is not considered a closed whole which completely represents the lived-experience of immigrant delivery-riders. The knowledge that emerges from fieldwork can rather be regarded as a supplementary attempt to represent the structural points that the particularities of the ethnographic experience converge towards and is always in a state of incompleteness and is contingent to change. Having elaborated the general context of the ethnographic literature in relation to the methodological focus of this research, I will now connect the ethnographic framing with past research in organisation studies.

In organisation studies, ethnography has often been employed as a method of acquiring empirical data. For example, Ahrens and Mollona conducted ethnographic research at a

Sheffield steel mill, using participant observations to examine organisational control and its shifting meaning in relation to each different practice observed (Ahrens & Mollona, 2007). Participant observation is a fundamental method of ethnography which implements immersive fieldwork in the community of interest by witnessing and participating in different actions that occur. Thereby, the observer participant captures an insightful perspective on the organisation, investigating the series of meaningful practices that are taking place around him. Moreover, the observer participant is ideal for interdisciplinary contexts where one has to be receptive to what is observed, to see how this is related to the social surroundings of the enacted practice and to imagine the interconnectedness of the data as a way to derive the whole from the parts in an abstract way (Gaggiotti et al., 2017). Thus, the current research—where migrant and precarious work intersects with organisation studies on subjectivity and affective-experience— is a fertile opportunity to collect data for the discursive practices, actors, materialities and agencies of the food-delivery riders through the ethnographic method of observer participant. As Gherardi (2019) elaborates when multiple elements are entangled in complex ways in the research topic, doing fieldwork allows the researcher to relate with his bodily presence how the data in motion affect the researcher and the research participants. Thus, the participant observer resonates with and is in a process of 'becoming-with' the data-collection, which enables a finely-attuned affective embodiment that will then be analysed with a psychoanalytic perspective (Gherardi, 2019, p. 742). In other words, it is about investigating the flow of processes through the placeness and presence of affect as a power for action that enables the observer participant to explore the everyday aspects of the society being studied and experience their affective aspect (Watson, 2012). Furthermore, many researchers have utilized ethnographic methods to conduct research on affect and emotions in the organisational context (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011; Glapka, 2019; Kenny & Fotaki, 2014). For example, Kenny and Gilmore (2014) comment on the affective-experience of ethnography as an inescapably intersubjective and relational process. They highlight how the observer participant should be attentive to the presence of others but also to his own self-as-researcher so as to facilitate a deeper reflection on the research as a movement from the 'unthought known' into the 'thought known' (Kenny & Gilmore, 2014, p. 175). Similarly, scholars have investigated notions of power and resistance in organisations through an ethnographic methodology (Contu, 2014; Lloyd, 2017; Mackenzie et al., 2020; R. Thomas & Davies, 2005). For instance, Contu (2014) in her investigation of power dynamics in the creation of design work, underlines the importance of her ethnographic methodology as the key that enabled her data to capture the complexity of the practice under investigation and the dynamic character of the continuity and

discontinuity of power. Due to her observations and participation in empirical research, she was in an embedded view of knowing-in-practice, and thus she was able to delineate the boundaries of power and reflect on the evident tensions that these constitute. Other researchers have focused on identity work and employee subjectivity through ethnographic means (Brown & Coupland, 2015; Huber & Brown, 2017; Netto et al., 2020; Rajan-Rankin, 2018). For example, Brown and Coupland (2015) adopted an ethnographic approach in their investigation of the work identity of members of a professional rugby league in the UK. They explain that even though the ethnographic self is always caught up, to some degree, in the personal, political and moral values of the researchers, it is precisely by investigating these engagements with power among the researchers and the participants that insightful findings for the continuous construction of the subjectivity of rugby players may emerge. Therefore, the use of ethnography is an appropriate way to gather data for the concepts I seek to explore in this study. However, there are also risks when doing ethnography that deserve to be addressed, as well as certain techniques that may be employed to mitigate these risks. To these risks and techniques, I will now shift my focus.

3.3.1. Ethnography: Risks and Mitigating Techniques

Under this prism—where the research focus acknowledges the intersectionality that pertains to the migrant workers' subjectivity and the holistic approach that participant observation offers—I reached the decision that my empirical research should incorporate participant observation as a data collection method. Hence, for the period from 13.11.2021 to 21.4.2022, I worked as a delivery biker for Deliveroo in Colchester to supplement my income and facilitate my life as a student, almost every Saturday and sometimes an additional weekday. This provided a compelling opportunity which could be utilized as a participatory observation method, since, when waiting in the queue for the orders to be prepared, I was with colleagues and was able to have discussions with the other drivers. Moreover, this enabled the exploration of a genuine setting where the disjuncture between what people say and what they do would be in the spotlight (Shah, 2017). Additionally, this allowed me to examine the subjectivity of the workers, and myself, in the difference between what is said and what is done, as there is the potential to reveal what they do effectively does (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 2014, pp. 186–187). Of course, there are also risks of participant observation as a method. Alpa Shah, highlights four risks regarding participant observation (Shah, 2017). First, the researchers cannot achieve

a complete emotional and physical separation from their own lives while doing fieldwork, which runs the risk of contributing to terms that are eventually preconceived and reduce the originality and richness of the primary data collected. The second risk is almost the opposite of the first where the researcher sinks too deeply into other people's lives. This may result in presenting their constructive imagination as a radical alterity, which risks both political and theoretical limitations in the research findings. Thirdly, the risk of a never ending enquiry exists. It is always a tough call for the researcher to judge what to include and where to stop the fieldwork. The fourth and final risk is that there is always tension between observation and participation, with some researchers focusing more on observing rather than participating, but, as Shah highlights, it is precisely the participation aspect that has the potential to reveal unique new insights (Shah, 2017, p. 55). Therefore, there is a certain balance one must maintain and pay attention to—keeping all the risks in mind—when practicing participant observation.

To address these risks in more detail, in order to maintain a better balance between observation and participation, this ethnographic research was conducted using three modes of fieldwork which are supplementary to each other. The first was the observer-participant fieldwork, when I was working as a delivery-rider, where I focused more on the participatory aspect of the work, how I was experiencing this work and my thoughts and reflections while working. I also documented my thoughts after encounters with certain behaviours, and reflections about myself and how I was relating to others, for example customers and restaurant staff, as well as fellow riders. I documented all of these in my research diary at the end of each workday. The diary contained a mixture of substantive, methodological and analytic accounts (Burgess, 1981) of my lived-experience as thoughts emerged and captivated me before, during, and after the work itself. The second mode of fieldwork consisted of making observational notes when I was not working and focusing on observing other riders come and pick-up orders from two busy restaurants in Colchester. During these sessions, the restaurants were particularly busy with delivery-work because many people were having breakfast/dinner, and I was able to observe riders coming repeatedly to pick-up orders as most riders returned after 15-30 minutes to pick-up and complete more orders. These observations were documented in the same research diary, but under the head-title of observations, where I also had the opportunity to reflect at some distance from the participating aspect. When comparing and contrasting these observations with my own working experience, I discovered underlying aspects that seemed to converge between me and other riders, as well as other things that seemed different. These observational notes were taken from two different sites during

different times of the day, employing both weekend mornings and weekday evenings. The third mode of fieldwork conducted was a mix of observer-participant role in my affiliation with the courier union of Independent Workers Great Britain (IWGB), where I became a member shortly after starting my work as a delivery rider. This third mode of fieldwork consisted of engaging in the monthly general meetings of the union where issues about delivery-work and feedback about areas all around the UK were communicated and discussed by the people living and working in these places. Additionally, I dedicated one day every week, over a period of three months, of physical presence in the street spots where riders gather, and discussed with them the potential of collective resistance and bargaining with the platform companies, sharing my views as a fellow delivery-rider and a member of the IWGB union. Furthermore, this was supplemented with several journeys to different places in London where demonstrations, picketing, strike-actions and other union events were taking place over a period of almost two years.

These three different modes of ethnographic fieldwork were helpful in mitigating the first two risks that Alpa Shah warns about in observer-participant fieldwork (Shah, 2017). As I was shifting between these three modes and since they were happening simultaneously, I was able to juxtapose my subjectivity between the role of the researcher, the worker and the union representative, accordingly, without becoming too invested or remaining fixed in any one of them. Of course, a certain spill over and mutual influence between these roles and my own life was inevitable. However, alternating the modes of fieldwork mitigated the risk of becoming too invested in a specific perspective of my own life and the lives I observed, or neglecting or silencing the pluralism of the voices and experiences I observed and heard. This was a painstaking and laborious process which continued, to a lesser degree in the later phase almost until the finalisation of the data analysis process. In this way, I was able to maintain an iterative process between theory, data and analysis, rethinking my presence in the field of study through visiting multiple research locations, which, as Marcus argues, enabled me to dynamically redefine and rearticulate the object of study and the research problem itself (Marcus, 1995). Moreover, this retroductive process of research allowed me to avoid becoming fixed in authoritative convictions, either of myself or those I encountered in my participants' accounts, about certain practices of this work and to examine them as overdetermined discursive manifestations that are context-dependent of socio-cultural and economic-political configurations (Cameron & Gibson, 2005; Clifford, 2019, p. 13; Glynos & Howarth, 2019). Hence, I attempted to treat all the data gathered with a problematisation regarding the object of

study and suspicion regarding the particular signification with which I perceived the meaning of the data. To this end, the research diary I maintained for the duration of this research was particularly helpful, as all my different modes of fieldwork were documented inside in a kind of bricolage. This bricolage assisted me in resisting any attempt of totalising the accounts into a closed whole, following Rees who argues that insightful ethnography requires a combination of different elements, an assemblage of new conjectures that lead to new and different dynamics and resists homogenisation (Rabinow et al., 2013, p. 79). Thus, my research diary offered more than just a narrative report since there were multiple styles of experiences and perspectives documented which enabled an in-depth reflection and spherical analysis afterwards (Alaszewski, 2011, p. 89; Nadin & Cassell, 2006). This was part of the greater aim during my ethnographic fieldwork as I was contemplating my experience in a constant effort to turn my attention to the role of my own identity in relation to others as the data collection progressed (Karakatsanis, 2012).

So far, I have justified my choice of conducting an ethnographic approach for this study and how I developed my ethnographic fieldwork in three different modes as a way to mitigate some of the potential risks when doing ethnography. The data gathered from these modes of fieldwork were documented in my research diary which provided not just a narrative account but also diverging and converging styles of experience which facilitated the retroductive and reflective process I adopted. Additionally, this ethnography is complemented by interviews, predominantly semi-structured interviews, which will be the next point of discussion.

3.3.2. **Ethnography**: **Qualitative Semi-Structured Interviews**

One of the key methods that supplements fieldwork and participant observations in ethnography are the qualitative interviews and particularly semi-structured interviews (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973, p. 37). In semi-structured interviews, the researcher follows an interview guide with broad questions that mention the general topic of interest, without trying to lead or direct the answer of the interviewee (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 52). The strategy of these interviews is to adopt an open-ended type of questioning where follow-up questions are formulated relative to what the interviewees have already said. The researcher should have an open mind about what they wish to learn, and should not be reluctant to let the conversation stray from the expected order of the themes or questions, as this is what allows new perspectives of knowledge and theory to emerge from the data. To achieve this, it is necessary to pursue and maintain a collaborative and comprehensible dialogue in the interviews with

adequacy, clarity and responsiveness to the emerging material from the interviewee (Irvine et al., 2013). Considering the multilayered elements that I aimed to grasp through my ethnographic approach, it appeared logical to employ the semi-structured type of interviews to investigate the affective-experience of migrant food-delivery riders, as well as to inquire about the practices of their work and the effects on their subjectivity. I will now expand on how I planned and designed the interviews I conducted in terms of the interview guide, the sampling technique and general conditions and challenges I encountered.

In terms of the interview guide, I aimed to keep the wording simple and direct following Tracy's suggestions on wording good questions (Tracy, 2024, p. 144). I avoided jargon and scholarly talk and aimed to word the questions in a clear and straightforward manner. This was fundamental because my participants were all immigrants and English is not their native language. Hence, avoiding complex and conditional questions was basic. Rehearsing the questions and finding alternative forms to ask the same open-ended question in cases where the interviewee was not able to grasp my initial question was also useful. Moreover, in cases where they asked me to provide an example of what I meant, I included contrasting examples and not a series of examples that all pointed in the same direction so as to not influence the participants' answers. It is important to remember that delivery-riders should be considered workers in risky contexts as many riders have encountered life-threatening accidents on the road and have experienced occasions where decisions and actions had to be taken in matters of life and death. These conditions were recognised and acknowledged as internal aspects of the work. I experienced them as well in my fieldwork. To better draw out their affective effects I strived to be empathetic and resilient in giving the space and safety to my participants to share these stories with me. As Hällgren et al. conclude in their article on organisational research on risky workplaces, it is paramount for the researcher to provide the space for alternative understandings to emerge from the diverse forms of responses workers might have in dealing with emergencies and disasters, risk anticipation and safety as logics that shape the subjective identities and experiences of the workers (Hällgren et al., 2018). Moreover, because of the migrant status of the participants and since some of them were working through informal access to this work, it was very difficult to find participants and to conduct the interviews in the beginning. I had to invest considerable amounts of time and effort in building my ethnographic network through working as a food-delivery rider myself to build relationships of trust with key stakeholders in the different places in which I was active. This allowed me to then approach fellow riders as a colleague who had been vouched for by trustworthy members of the

community and enabled me to then conduct the interviews. As Noy (2008) argues in his study of backpacker tourists, this type of snowball sampling enables a well-poised technique to explore organic social networks and marginalised populations. Thus, I employed a snowball sampling through my available contacts in Colchester, London and other cities in England which despite the initial aversion of the participants eventually rendered fruitful results in achieving a satisfactory number of interviews with many instances of the late interviews indicating a saturation of the data. Lastly, thanks to the different locations and contacts I had made through my own work, I was able to engage an adequately diverse sample with many riders from different countries and age groups. This rigorous implementation of my interview design contributed to the trustworthiness of my data and the plausibility of the analytical findings (Kallio et al., 2016).

After elaborating the suitability of the semi-structured interviews, the interview design and the parameters and challenges that pertained to my research context, it is worth noting how the psychoanalytic dimension of my research lens informed the interviews I conducted. Since one of the research questions revolves around the affective-experience of the delivery-riders I abstained from incorporating less psychoanalytic and more psychological directive questioning in the interviews. For example, Oplatka has conducted a study on teachers' emotions in educational organisations through an examination of their emotion management, by asking his participants about the regulation of their internal feelings as opposed to the manifest emotional interactions (Oplatka, 2018). In contrast to this approach I attempted to engage in meaningful silences when I judged it would be fertile in the specific interview context and asked the participants what they were thinking in relation to what they just said as a way to explore their signifying chain in relation to their experience in a free associative fashion. I will now expand more on how the psychoanalytic framework informed the collection of my interview data.

3.3.3. Psychoanalytic Informed Interviews

One of the methods that is utilized in this research, is interviewing, indeed predominantly semi-structured interviews. In this research, I attempt a psychoanalytic informed version of semi-structured interviews with emphasis on letting any associations from the participants develop freely without restraints, so as to allow the interviewees themselves be the vectors of the generated material. The reason behind such a psychoanalytic informed style of interviews is that I am in accordance with the opinion that combining traditional approaches

of social research with psychoanalytic concepts and interpretations can enrich our understanding of social phenomenal (Lapping, 2007). This holds true especially for research that intersects precarious/migrant labour, workers' subjectivity and forms of resistance and control in the workplace. It is at this point of convergence that psychoanalysis can enhance the way we understand the interrelation and interaction of these concepts. Psychoanalysis has helped in producing an understanding of human subjectivity that dismantles the traditional dichotomies between self and society and illustrates how certain psychic aspects of subjectivity contribute to social phenomena. Furthermore, the psychoanalytic approach allows a reconceptualization of resistance as the practices that are fundamental to the maintenance of a coherent subjectivity. Lapping explains how the positioning of resistance between desire and the symbolic order allows the subject to retain knowledge within the existing language of the symbolic by blocking the articulation of an unconscious desire (Lapping, 2007). This has implications for the way we view the relationship between resistance, desire and subjectivity in the symbolic order and underlines that the transgression of these limits carries serious psychic and symbolic risks. Ian Parker argues that Lacan's theory—especially the importance of the function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis (Lacan, 2006, pp. 197–265)—enables the researcher to investigate and address forms of alienation and subjectivity that characterize the neoliberal governance of organisations and work institutions (Parker, 2003, 2016). This illumination of the dialectic between the subject and organized Other, provides a rich tool for collecting data that can account for attachment and obedience to organisational frameworks by exploring the fantasies and enjoyment involved in sustaining them as well as the ways in which they are neutralizing resistance (Stavrakakis, 2008). Parker continues by stating that the analysis we require is one which identifies the relation between fantasy and the prevailing discourses of power and subjectivity. Psychoanalysis does not unlock such discourses, but includes them in its problematisation, which is why a mode of psychoanalytic interviews allows the researcher to read them (Parker, 2016). He goes on to highlight how contradictory responses from interviewees contain mockery, sarcasm, pitying contempt and hopes for revenge as well as redemption in a staging of fantasy. Lacan, according to Parker, goes even further than just a staging of such fantasies and helps us to understand how these processes operate in a structuring discourse where subjects respond to surveillance and control (ibid.). This is particularly interesting in this research, as one of the aims of this research is to unveil how control pairs with resistance and consent in influencing mutually the migrant worker's subjectivity in ways that perhaps are not consciously evident to the riders themselves. Additionally, this corresponds to the gap that was identified in the literature review

as the psychoanalytic informed interviews provide the space where the impact of socio-political and regulatory discourses on the subjectivity of migrant-precarious workers may emerge, and the analysis that follows the interview data connects this impact to the ways workers construct their fantasies and identities as a result of their own lived-experience in such conditions.

With this in mind, it is fundamental to articulate and reflect on the position of the researcher inside the fieldwork and how questions of interpretation and ethics should be elaborated within the practice of research itself. Claudia Lapping comments that the question that the ethical researcher faces now moves beyond the establishment of 'rapport' and if it exploits or recognizes marginalized subjectivities—it revolves around the way in which the researcher and the interviewee employ different meanings in the research relationship and questioning which identifications are concealed behind these meanings as subjectivity is molded in speech (Lapping, 2008). In other words, the interpretations, that the researcher puts forth, set up new chains of signification that have unpredictable and complex ethical, political and emotional consequences (Parker, 2005). In this sense, the conjunction of metonymy and metaphor in the signifying chain, and how this meaning is elaborated by the researcher, may cover up significant exclusions and obscure certain subjective aspects of the research participants. Therefore, it is important to admit that these signifying mechanisms and associations, reveal the interdependency and incompleteness of the embedded research experience and the analytical writing that emerges thereafter, rendering any representation of these embodied experiences in academic writing a case of 'self-congratulatory reflectivity' (Lapping, 2008, p. 81). Nevertheless, as a final reflection Lapping underlines the value of these misrecognitions that are produced—even though they cover up gaps in the discourse, presenting an illusion of wholeness, it is precisely through these that the hegemonic positions (both in the signifying system as a whole and the individual meanings and identities) may be disrupted and the field of social hegemony opens up. Moreover, besides adopting a certain forgetfulness of self (reminiscent of Freud's advice to occupy a position of 'evenly hovering attentiveness' when listening to analysands), Lapping advises the researchers who are analysing their data to focus on the signifiers they encounter as a locus of reflexivity (Lapping, 2016, pp. 719–720). She proceeds to elaborate her argument by highlighting the role that signifiers may play between a researcher and a research participant, through intervening at the level of the signifier, in the materiality of the signifier. The question is which discourse or which fantasmatic network constitutes the subject who is speaking at the moment of enunciation? It is the very obviousness of an interpretation, in the sense of fantasy as a defense

against painful emotions, that may be disrupted by a stricter focus on the words spoken. This also adds to the suitability of a Lacanian methodology as it covers the gap observed in the literature by delineating a space where the elements of negative affective-experiences, experiences of racism and foreignness, are viewed comparatively with the corresponding fantasies which act as a defence—thereby reinforcing certain identifications instead of others. Lapping concludes that even though not all researchers can be as skillful and attuned in the materiality of the signifier as Lacan was, the case is that each researcher has their own 'idiosyncratic sensibilities'. Through these one can relate the responses and interventions with the element of surprise in the interview context and to the materiality of the signifier itself, as a possible space of reflection and interpretive practice in qualitative research (Lapping, 2013, 2016, p. 723). Similarly, Parker adopts the position that research is conceived as the production of different fractions of consciousness that move beyond the limits of the respective individuals, in the sense that each researcher sets their specific point of view and incorporates their own reflexivity into the research equation (Parker, 2009). Thus there is an acceptance of the misrecognition of meaning and instead of trying to bring our interpretations to a level of pure hermeneutical clarity, the Lacanian approach is to acknowledge that misrecognitions occur. Misrecognitions are usually based on imaginary and phantasmatic relations and by trying to 'stick to the text' and grounding the analysis in the symbolic order and the materiality of the signifiers that emerge, one may safeguard one's research analysis. After elaborating the psychoanalytic import on the twenty-two interviews I conducted, I have to admit that the reality of the interviews is always very different from what takes place in the clinic of psychoanalysis. Nevertheless, it is also a fact that whenever two persons are having a discussion, there is always a minimum of transference in which meaning is mediated by an other—a third party is always implicated.

To conclude this section on the psychoanalytic informed interviews the driving force behind this pursuit lies in the question of how can we better understand the affective aspects involved with compliance and resistance in the case of migrant delivery riders? Is there a way to bring together the concepts of affect, desire and fantasy, on the one hand, with precarious and immigrant labour on the other, and to connect them with workers' subjectivity and a particular kind of compliant/resistant subject? These are the kind of relationships that a free-associative interview attempts to connect and helps us explore in an in-depth analysis (Lapping & Glynos, 2019). In order for that to be made possible, there are certain points the researcher must be attentive of and take into consideration. First, the researcher has to trace conflicting

articulations in the interview accounts and identify signifiers that might represent the subject for the Other's desire. Posing the question 'Which Other constitutes the desire of the subject? To which Other do they address their being?' may be helpful in this endeavour (Lapping & Glynos, 2018). Second, the acknowledgement must be made of misrecognitions and fissures of identifications that will allow one possible interpretation not to exclude other interpretations, keeping in mind that the aim is not to fix and limit what is said by the subject but to explore its different meanings. This is accompanied by the researcher adopting a certain ethical position in which one is always reflexively positioned inside the symbolic text, paying attention to the materiality of the emerging signifiers (Lapping, 2007, 2008; Parker, 2009, 2010, 2016). This is why the analysis requires a rewriting of our reading after each encounter with a new text, and with the nuance that we do not discover new things but rather reproduce and transform what is being named in the interview discourse. Hence, this research also employs semi-structured interviews, aimed at surveying the lived-experience of migrant workers in the UK. The data collected consist of twenty-two semi-structured interviews, supplemented by the ethnographic triptych of observation and participation, as well as a document analysis of organisational materials and relevant contextual materials available online in the form of articles, interviews and news reports. This way, I strove to achieve a triangulation of methodological approaches to further enhance the confidence of the ensuing data as they are not based on a single method of collection (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 397; Lewis-Beck et al., 2012).

3.4. Discourse analysis: Different Variations

In order to better understand the lived-experience of the delivery-riders and how to map the discursive construction of subjectivity for migrant workers, an appropriate method of analysis is required. This is one that allows for the discursive investigation of the empirical data that were collected and is compatible with the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of this research. The predominant ways of analysing talk in social sciences are narrative analysis, conversation analysis and discourse analysis with their respective branches and derivatives (Bischoping & Gazso, 2021, p. 17). Conversation analysis and narrative analysis were rejected as they do not focus on unpacking the web of socially constructed meanings or considering implications of these on the topic that is being researched which is an

aim of this research (Bischoping & Gazso, 2021, p. 262). Thus, I was drawn towards discourse analysis which is closely affiliated with those who wish to link language to material effects and to unpack the social construction of reality in order to foster social change (Hammersley, 1997, p. 237). Critical approaches to discourse analysis have drawn from the work of Bourdieu, Derrida, Lyotard, and in particular Foucault, to emphasize the contextual contingency of claims of truth and their relation to circumstances, as a way to open alternatives to current arrangements (Alvesson & Deetz, 2011, pp. 85–87). Foucault was fundamental in establishing the scrutinisation of power/knowledge relations that are embedded in a discourse, and how these relations constitute the subject through a process he called subjectivation (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 2014, pp. 209–215). A recent article by Raffnsøe et al. illustrates the apprehension of Foucauldian discourse analysis in organisations in a coherent way (Raffnsøe et al., 2019). The authors suggest that organisational scholars should be more attentive to the multiplicity of the subjectivising and mediating processes, and to the linking of the daily administering of subjects to broader social and political themes, including in particular neoliberal ideas. This direction of a Foucauldian discourse analysis which not only examines the different Foucauldian concepts in a joint and comparative fashion, but also pays attention to the performativity of what is being said and the multiple agencies behind it, could be a suitable methodological approach of analysis for this study. Be that as it may, this mode of Foucauldian performativity analysis fails to recognize that discourses are shared as an expression for strategies of control by a multitude of actors within a wider historical and institutional context (Grant et al., 2004, pp. 299–316) and also lacks the ability to encapsulate the factor of enjoyment in the performative element.

An alternative to Foucauldian discourse analysis could be a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), that as Ainsworth and Hardy argue, offers a perspective in which discourse is never completely cohesive and there is always space inside the inherent limits and contradictions of a discourse for resistance and self-interested actions (Ainsworth & Hardy, 2004). Additionally, CDA takes into account the plurality of discourses that influence actors and how one can pit one discourse against the other, or draw from multiple discourses, thus producing a unique discursive identity which is susceptible to change and adaptations (Fairclough, 2010, pp. 114–116). In this context, discourse or discourses refer to systems of meaningful practices that form the identity of subjects (Howarth et al., 2000, pp. 3–9). By examining the communication practices and how they construct identities, experiences and modes of knowledge that serve certain interests over others CDA reveals the reproduction of power relations and how

inequality is sustained (Jablin & Putnam, 2011, pp. 612–614; Van Dijk, 1999). Keeping this in mind, CDA could be a suitable counterpart to the ethnographic approach as it would further reinforce the empirical basis of the research through a firm anchoring to the language-grammatical analysis of the data it offers. As Galasiński argues ethnography underpinned by a detailed CDA, enables the research perspective to reach a fuller and more meaningful elaboration of the reality under study by providing a microanalysis of the linguistic form of the observed phenomena, thus offering an independence from the observer (Galasiński, 2011). Moreover, this combination underlines how power positions are reflected in discursive practices and frames the negotiation of power and agency in a constructive fashion (Krzyżanowski, 2011).This perspective of CDA offers a position where the researcher may claim possible ways of social change at the end of his analysis (Bischoping & Gazso, 2021, p. 287). However. such a position directly opposes the epistemological groundings of this thesis as developed in the beginning of section 3.3, since any attempt to suggest possible pathways of change presupposes access to a superior position of knowledge. The epistemological pairing of a psychoanalytic and ethnographic pairing relies on putting the reality of food-delivery gig-work in the spotlight by embracing the emerging contradictions of the data and the incompleteness of knowledge. Thus, even though CDA shares many similarities with the psychoanalytic framework of this research—e.g. attentiveness to language and the linguistic representation of experiences—their respective epistemological foundations clash. Lastly, the way that CDA approaches the affective-experience is by engaging a textual embedding of affect through an investigation of the discursive materiality and the linguistic creation of social bodies (Berg et al., 2019). Such an approach falls short in its ability to offer a structural conceptualisation that traces the role of affects in the broader mental representations of the subject that psychoanalysis gives us.

I examined some important strains of discourse analysis, and found that they are relevant to this research in terms of connecting the performative element of speech with practices on the part of the workers. However, they fall short in the ability to connect this performative element with the affective-experience and its role in the identifications and repetitions of the food-delivery subject. For these reasons, I will now look into how discourse analysis has been employed in organisation studies to find a version of discourse analysis that offers the conceptual tools to include affective-experiences and the subject of the unconscious in the forthcoming analysis.

3.5. Discourse analysis in Organisations: The affective element

There has also been criticism of organisational discourse analysis for attempting a too broad and muscular apprehension of discourses that risks falling into the trap of linguistic reductionism (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2000). Alvesson and Kärreman argue that sometimes there is good reason to resist the temptation to include something beyond the text, to build-up the discursive ladder in organisational research and ascribe to it determining capacities. In a later article they identify three major issues in current organisational discourse analysis (ODA): reductionism; overpacking; and colonization, and they propose analytical strategies to overcome these problems (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2011). To this end, they propose the distinction between paradigm-type discourse studies (PDS), which examine the constructive effects of large social and cultural discourses, and text focused studies (TFS) that investigate talk and text in social practices—at the micro-agential level of discourses. In PDS the ontological assumption, that serves as its basis, is that organisations, and our understanding of them, do not exist independently of our discursively formed understandings (Chia, 2000). Nonetheless, despite having a clearly elaborated theoretical base and a strong body of past empirical studies, PDS has been criticized for reducing agency to a mere effect of discourses that does not go very far into explaining how individuals actively resist or utilize such discourses (Ashcraft et al., 2009; Grant et al., 2004, pp. 205–210).(Ashcraft et al., 2009) Most importantly though, the semio-centric nature of PDS has consistently neglected the affective aspect of discourse and hence fails to pay attention to how the affective economy of discourses may be brought into play. Similarly, TFS also ignores the issue of affect in mobilisation of discourses and most importantly it shares a different ontological position from the ontological impasse of the inconsistent gap that is adopted in this research—making it wholly incompatible.

To address this lack of analytical tools that allow for the affective economy to be grasped and analysed, Cederström and Spicer propose a post-foundational approach, as a discourse analysis of the 'Real' kind (Cederström & Spicer, 2014). In organisational studies, there have been some attempts to introduce post-foundational approaches, and these are mainly reflected in the work of Contu and Willmott. They criticize critical realism and critical discourse analysis arguing that instead of attempting to locate and examine the underlying generative structure of discourses, the 'Real' in organisational studies should be targeting the negativity, absence or lack that discourses possess in their kernel (Contu & Willmott, 2005).

Furthermore, through locating the inherent lack through which discourses are structured, the space is created to call dominant discourses into question and attempt to rearticulate them under a new perspective (Contu & Willmott, 2003, 2006; Willmott, 2005). Such an approach underlines how discourses are structured around a constitutive lack and enables a scrutinisation of the temporary totality observed in discourses, by unpicking the nodal points which hold such a perspective in place. Finally, through the examination of these nodal points, it allows a pathway for an analysis of the affective investment in discourses to emerge (Cederström & Spicer, 2014).

3.6. Post-foundational Discourse: Lacanian Discourse Analysis

In post-foundational discourse, theorists are consciously reluctant to apply a pre-existing theory onto a set of empirical data—rather they seek to articulate their precise theoretical points in each enactment of concrete empirical research (Howarth et al., 2000, pp. 6–8). Moreover, in this context even though discourse is viewed as a horizon of meaningful practices and significant differences, it does not reduce everything to language nor does it adopt a sceptic view of material reality. On the contrary, it argues against such claims by stating that, since we are always internal to a world of signifying practices and meanings, it is illogical to attempt occupying a non-discursive position from where such a reality can be conceptualized (Lacan, 1988, p. 277). Additionally, in response to charges of relativism that are often levelled against a psychoanalytic informed discourse analysis (Geras, 1990, pp. 154–157), it rejects the rigid separation of facts and values and emphasizes the particular historical and political context in which the researcher himself is located and from which one describes, argues and evaluates (Parker, 2005). Ultimately, it falls upon the researcher to provide plausible and convincing explanations for the phenomena under examination in a carefully problematised manner (Howarth et al., 2000, p. 10). This post-foundational perspective however, is not limited to providing insights that objects are given meaning through a series of linguistic rules, instead it moves beyond the constructivist ontology in advancing the claim that there is an inherent impossibility in arriving at a final discursive closure (Cederström & Spicer, 2014). The lack does not merely serve as the final limit of discourse but rather provides the necessary foundation for establishing a discourse and remains forever inside it as there is nothing outside the discourse (Pavón-Cuéllar, 2017). This is a very important methodological assumption because it promotes a post-foundational Lacanian discourse analysis as the pertinent tool to analyse the plight of migrant delivery-riders by enabling a combinatory analysis of the elements

of their foreignness, affective-experiences, racism and exploitation, under the continuous process of developing identifications and the structure of enjoyment that supports them, as the gap identified in the literature indicates.

The theoretical question that arises at this point is how this lack can exist and be identified in a discourse. The answer is that lack can be targeted through the ambiguities, tensions and contradictions that exist within a discourse (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, pp. 148–151). For example, when Jones and Spicer investigate the definition of the entrepreneur they detect certain ambiguities in the literature (the entrepreneur as 'self-reliant' and 'risk-taking'), as well as contradictions when comparing the traits of people who are publicly acknowledged as entrepreneurs (Jones & Spicer, 2005). This means that the entrepreneur does not possess a definite, positive ontology but adheres to what is called a radical or ontological contingency. An ontology of radical contingency opposes an empirical contingency's sense of possibility with the sense of impossibility, 'the *constitutive* failure of any objectivity to attain full identity' (Glynos & Howarth, 2007, pp. 109–110). Thus, the Real, in the entrepreneur is something beyond the discursive content that we ascribe to it at the limit of representation (Jones & Spicer, 2005).

After elaborating on the constitutive lack inherent in discourse, the question is how discourses become an integrated whole and maintain their structure. In response to this, the concepts of nodal points and the affective investment in discourse become pertinent answers. The elements that provide discourses their integrity have been called 'nodal points', or 'master signifiers'. These terms come from what Lacan referred to as 'point de capiton', namely the point 'when the signifier stops the otherwise endless movement of the signification' and arrives at the illusory position of fixed meaning (Lacan, 1997, pp. 268–269). For example, Contu and Willmott when investigating situated learning, recognized that the nodal point of organisational learning concealed and marginalized contradictions originating in political conflicts that effected management's efforts at sharing knowledge (Contu & Willmott, 2003). In the context of this study, it would be interesting to explore how signifiers like free and flexible work came to occupy such prevalent positions in food-delivery gig-work and whether there are any underlying fantasies and identifications that elevate such signifiers to their hegemonic position. As Glynos comments the complexes that we call discursive or hegemonic formations which articulate differential and equivalential logics, would be unintelligible without the affective component (Glynos et al., 2021). This analysis of the affective components of discourse in food-delivery gig-work will enable a better understanding of why certain meanings are more

prevalent than others and how these are sustained over a long period of time. In other words, we will be able to understand how certain fantasies and identifications—on the part of the riders—allow for the experience of jouissance to be repeated and sustained. The concepts that will facilitate this and originate in the work of Lacan are objet petit *a*, jouissance, and fantasy. These three concepts are closely interrelated and usually work together. As Zizek elaborates, before being caught in the symbolic identification, the subject is trapped through a paradoxical object-cause of desire, as a secret jouissance that is hidden by the Other (Žižek, 1989, p. 44). This lost object maintains a specific relationship with the subject who thus constructs fantasy not merely as a means to hallucinate an object but as a complex structure, a kind of scenario that gives reality its consistency and promises enjoyment—fantasy is on the side of reality (Lacan, 2006, pp. 75–83). For instance, when Bloom explores the discourse of 'work-life balance' he locates the longing for 'balance' as the never fully achieved aspiration of the subject. This serves as a pivotal force that structures the subject's identity and develops the fantasy of work-life balance (Bloom, 2016). This fantasy promises enjoyment that will be gained when the perfect balance is achieved but the perfect balance does not exist, and jouissance is gained therefore by the subject remaining permanently 'imbalanced' and disappointed. The professional aspect is a necessary component of this fantasy that maintains the subject's searching for 'balance' and its commitment to 'life' through 'work'.

This is an example of a fantasmatic narrative and in order to identify the role of fantasy in the case of migrant food-delivery riders, I investigated the speech of the riders in-depth to find its connections to jouissance. These interviews were conducted following certain analytic guidelines that supported the exploration. First, every utterance should be analysed as a demand directed to the Other, a demand for recognition. But recognition is doomed to fail and always ends up being a form of misrecognition. By virtue of that, the way in which reality is depicted in speech, entails both a symbolic aspect with its own lack and an imaginary counterpart in which this lack is presented as fulfilled and satisfied. The intertwining of these symbolic and imaginary identifications holds the hegemonic meanings in their place and at the same time holds the structural configurations that allow riders to experience the jouissance of this configuration. For instance, in saying 'I am your husband' the speaker does not just identify himself as the husband of the person to whom he is directing his statement but also subjects them as his wife. This presupposes the field of the Other where husband and wife constitute a union—there the subject of enunciation constitutes a position for himself to function as the locus in which jouissance is captured. There is a certain enjoyment in being husband and wife—

a jouissance that is anticipated, encountered and extracted from the field of the Other by enunciating this statement. In this way, speech already reveals the fundamental incompleteness of what is produced by this third party of the Other, of what by presupposing this field sketches out the pathway of a fundamental lure in which the object *a* revolves (Lacan, 2023, p. 217). It revolves around it because it remains unresolved at this level, no matter what the degree of love and commitment, or the perfect chemistry between the married couple, the union that is accomplished in real life will always be lacking relative to its imagined counterpart in the field of the Other. Nevertheless, each time the statement 'I am your husband' is proffered, a glimpse of the object *a* is rendered accessible through capturing a part of this jouissance from the full weight of the Other. In this way, my analysis aims at locating the different identifications of the riders as they are mediated through the Other in the discussions I had with them. Simultaneously, I explore the lack around which these identifications are structured and preserved as an access to the object *a* and the corresponding extractions of jouissance. This methodological approach is most suitable for the investigation of migrant delivery-riders because not only does it enable elements of foreignness, affective-experiences, exploitation and control to be examined at the same time, but it also provides an understanding of how these are in a constant process of influencing migrant-workers' subjectivity through enabling modes of jouissance to be experienced. It is in the structuring of these modes of jouissance that the current situation may be explained, but there also lies the possibility of subverting the present concatenations and achieving different pathways of enjoyment. Furthermore, I have adopted a retroductive analysis process where a continuous feedback between theory, data and analysis occurs (Glynos & Howarth, 2019). This assures that the critical analysis of the empirical data goes back and forth with the theoretical background and highlights how they communicate and mutually inform the analysis, paying close attention to the embodied experience and how it emerges in theory (M. Barros, 2014; Erkama & Vaara, 2010).

After examining the post-foundational approach to a Lacanian discourse analysis, I believe it provides conceptual tools that enrich the analysis of the data and ensure a better understanding of the migrant worker subjectivity, taking into account the affective aspects of discourse. Consequently, I employ an analysis that draws from Lacanian psychoanalysis to examine the different identifications of the riders through their speech, and to locate the signifiers and nodal points that hegemonize the meaning of these identifications. I also investigate how these are linked through the field of the Other as the place where jouissance is extracted and finally consider the affective dimension of the data by bringing to light the

affective investment in terms of the experience of jouissance and fantasy scenarios that riders develop. This approach scrutinises the object and subject of food-delivery gig-work, to illustrate how the subjectivity of the workers is structured and to which modes of enjoyment it is related, in an effort to better understand the lived-experience of the migrant food-delivery riders.

3.7. <u>Lacanian Discourse Analysis: Final Remarks</u>

In Lacanian discourse analysis the textual data are not treated as mere transcripts which represent the experience of an interviewee or a participant. The focus is rather on indicating through the analysis that the surface material of the text follows a Möbius topology and when we follow it closely, the aim is to see how it constitutes certain objects, subjects and relationships between them which are concealed at the surface (Frosh & Baraitser, 2008). That is the aim of psychosocial research—to investigate the different forms of representation as they are contained in the text, along the mechanisms of defence that produce the very objects that are so important to remain hidden from the conscious individual. These objects are the ones that render the subjective positioning of the workers in the intersection of social and economic conditions. For these reasons, the empirical data are treated as signifiers which get their value from the differential system of language, where positive terms do not exist (Saussure, 2004, p. 120). Under this lens, the different registers of Lacanian theory enable us to trace the role of these signifiers and connect them with the imaginary, as an ideal image or fantasy of the person who speaks, as certain significations are given priority over others. On the other hand, the symbolic register refers to the structural relations that can be observed in the text (Parker, 2010) and relate to the unconscious as the discourse of the Other. One's discourse always says more than what the speaker intended to say (Lacan, 2017, p. 12) and what is absent in the text is what is treated as the unconscious in Lacanian discourse analysis (Parker, 2005). The difference between the manifest content and the latent content of a text is not something that lies in the underside of the manifest content. The researcher needs to dig it out for it to emerge—the latent content is the effect of the signifier as such. This is where metonymy and metaphor come into play as the mechanisms that reduce or create meaning in the relationships of the signifier with substitution or combination. Through this lens one may also connect desire with metonymy and the symptom with metaphor. Through its metonymic nature, desire always elides a signification of meaning that would reveal its impossibility and the ineluctable failure of ever grasping its object. Through its metaphoric attributes, the symptom invests more meaning in

its formation as a way to better conceal the castration that originates in our introduction to language as well as the surplus-jouissance that it generates through the dissatisfaction it causes. Such an exploration of the riders' discursive accounts would allow for an elaboration of where their desire is gravitating, as well as what may constitute the broad symptomatic modality of their enjoyment.

Lacanian discourse analysis may also explore the meanings which direct the riders to their object *a*—what constitutes this elusive object-cause of desire in the food-delivery gig-work with its indefinable and fascinating properties? The use of the real register could be helpful in this regard. The imaginary and symbolic analysis will render something that is escaping their grasp. What cannot be encountered in the symbolic and the imaginary is posited in the dimension of the real. This analytically fruitful object may act as the gravitational field of a certain discourse, and by observing the patterns and repetitions that point towards it one can locate the master signifier that provides the necessary consistency of meaning by articulating the object *a* in the dimension of the real. This extimate positioning of the object *a*, also offers a reply to the classic psychoanalytic argument of the overdetermination of meaning. This argument posits that one interpretation does not exclude or limit other interpretations, nor does it stop the subject from taking up a different meaning (Freud, 1997, p. 149). Lacanian discourse analysis attributes the topology of extimacy to the subject as the symbolic, the unconscious and the object *a* which do not belong outside the discursive horizon or inside the subject. Instead, they are in the internal exteriority of the subject as something that is not reducible to the subject itself or to language as such. Moreover, the researcher is also always reflexively positioned in relation to the text he analyses and his goal is not to find a solution that solves the problem, but rather to obtain radical difference from the dimensions that the analysed discourse offers and to maintain an ethical position (Lacan, 2008, p. 279). With this in mind, the emerging contradictory identifications should be treated as a deadlock of perspectives that deserves to be analysed as something that functions closely to the real of discourse. It is a failure of agreement that should be taken up as a view of academic work that is more partial, incomplete and contingent rather than a harmonious and consistent research project—in this way more constructive applications of qualitative research may be permitted rather than prohibited (Parker, 2004). Lastly, the use of Lacanian discourse analysis is not meant to be a hermeneutic interpretation of the horizon of meaning that is available in a text (Lacan, 2018b, p. 9). The aim is to work on the lines of the symbolic to disrupt the meaning that prevails in it, as a way to clarify the functions the current significations offer (Parker,

2005). As Parker argues, this disorganising of a text also brings forth the possibilities of producing other objects and other structures in new subjective positions for enjoyment and desire. It is in this sense that the researcher does not discover new things through his analysis, but names what was already there in a transformatory reproduction.

3.8. **Ethics and Reflexivity**

To fortify the trustworthiness of any analysis the researcher should apply a reflexivity specifically focused on the ideological, political and ethical stances that he occupies and which influence his analytical perspective (Fairclough, 2010, pp. 596–603). In a similar way, Alvesson and Gabriel comment that reflexivity is necessary to highlight the actual methods in use, underlining the difficulties and ambiguities of empirical data as well as exhibiting a self-critical approach on how the data are produced and used (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2013). Additionally, they argue that reflexivity should not be rendered a tokenistic, tick the box process, but rather that researchers should follow a non-ritualistic reflexivity where an ambitious and unpredictable problematization of the researchers' tradition, work and text will lead to insightful comments and observations. To this end, I compared my own experience, as documented in my research diary, with how my interviewees related to their own, especially where stark differences in our perspectives were identified. This served as a starting point for the analysis that follows. Moreover, I revisited the data both from the interviews and my own diary through-out the research process and developed an iterative process of problematizing the differences between our perspectives and expand on these during the analysis as for instance on the section 5.3 of chapter 5. In their article on a different approach to ethnography, Gilmore and Kenny comment on how the power dynamics, emotions and intersubjectivity influence the process of interviewing (Gilmore & Kenny, 2014). They conclude that the semi-structured interview style, where the interviewee is enabled to expand on their experiences and emotions, mitigates the interviewer's judgements on what the interviewee 'means'. They also argue in favour of a co-constructive process of the resulting research which accounts for the involvement of the participants. This enhances the findings, ensures that people's voices are included and attenuates the ethnographic authority on the part of the researcher. Hence, in the interviews and the talk data produced I reflect on the ubiquity of power revolving in the interview encounters and the way that discourses are used in the interview contexts to perform the researchers' and the interviewees' identities (Alvesson & Deetz, 2011; Bischoping & Gazso, 2021, p. 334; Pessoa et al., 2019). While both myself and the interviewees identified as

immigrants working in a foreign country, I reflected deeply on how bot my participants and I signified the migrant status and which discursive influence and its power relation is responsible for generating the potential difference in our subjective identities. For example, even though I introduced myself as a fellow delivery-rider to my participants, when I informed them of my research and asked them whether they would be willing to have a discussion with me about the food-delivery work, they immediately became suspicious and reluctant to participate. They were very confused as to why someone would be interested in researching this work and did not see any reason for such an investigation. One reason that initially came to my mind as an explanation of their response, was that they were struggling to make ends meet through this work and dedicating an hour of their time for an interview with me was not a good practice for them. Yet, as I further expanded my ethnographic network I found out that many of them employ some type of illicit practice in their work and they were very sceptical about discussing these with a stranger doing research. Additionally, the identity of the researcher and the institutional power of the university were sufficient reasons to discourage them from talking to me. This changed only when my contacts in the field developed sufficiently that I was able to have other people they trust vouch for me. Furthermore, I examine the interview process for its disciplinary power over the respondents and their resistance and analyse how discursively constituted applications of power, from the interviewees' and/or the researcher's part, influence interview outcomes (Yates & Hiles, 2010). Many times my participants were intimidated by the fact that I wanted to record our discussions. This was mainly because they felt at risk of facing the suspensions of their accounts when they communicated practices that transgressed the official rules of the applications or elaborated some tacit know-how of delivery-work. Moreover, the fact that these data would be published through the university or research papers, placed them in a vulnerable position as to evaluating the potential risk and accessibility of their documented work-experience. To mitigate this, I explicitly informed my participants that their data would be anonymised and carefully stored in secure hardware where no one could access them except me. Despite this, there were some participants who requested that I turn off the recording equipment so they could speak about something off the record. I honored their request and paused the recording. In his article on the ethics of interviewing in discourse analysis, Hammersley states that even though there are ethical concerns in discourse analysis that go beyond the requirements for informed consent and research 'with' rather than 'on', discourse analytic interviews do not normally generate severe ethical problems (Hammersley,

2014). [4] This means that when the researcher acts in accordance with high ethical standards and the conditions of informed consent are met, then no serious ethical harm can be attributed to the research. The ethical considerations raised by my research plan are mainly focused on the human subjects that I interviewed and observed. Therefore, the considerations consist in protecting their anonymity and treating them in a straightforward and ethical manner, where all their questions about the use of the data gathered were clarified and clearly stated in advance. Ethical approval was sought and attained following the university procedures, and participants were given clear information and consent forms to safeguard the integrity of the process.

3.9. **Conclusion**

The core of the methodology lies in the principle that identities are structured around the mediating role of signs, symbols and texts and the individual interpretation of these mediating terms (Ricoeur, 1975, pp. 15–17). This means that individual identities intersect those of other people always in the context of specific narratives. Additionally, given that the world is socially constructed and subjective, the researcher is also a part of this social construction and is therefore influenced by the same social constructions which are being researched (Bryman & Bell, 2015, pp. 60–63). Thus, reflexivity on the part of the researcher plays a crucial role. As mentioned by Barros et al. the researcher should ask himself a set of reflexive questions throughout the various stages of the research (A. Barros et al., 2019). Moreover, the researcher should be aware that the narratives produced will be 'true under a given set of circumstances—true assuming the validity of taken-for-granted premises.' (Jost & Olmsted, 2007, p. 161). Being aware of these facts is an exercise in reflexivity, in which the biases of the researcher are acknowledged and admitted. The aim is to decipher these complex sets of interactions (common-sense constructs that are pre-selected and pre-interpreted, mostly unconsciously, and that motivate and determine human actions in the social world) and to produce, through analysis and critique, a fundamental space for inspiring radical change and revision (Raffnsøe et al., 2016).

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[4] Hammersley's point rests on the fact that discourse analysis, which especially focuses on the discursive constitution of social reality and people's identities, cannot reveal to the participants the theoretical use and analysis of their data. 'This is because there is a sharp contrast between the natural attitude within which people are required to operate in research interviews, and in life more generally, and this constructionist perspective.' (Hammersley, 2014, p. 10)

To conclude, this research is based ontologically on the impossibility of a formal ontology—on the paradox revolving around the subject's constitutive gap and the aspect of extimacy that governs discourse. The data collection methods I followed were based on an ethnographic approach of three different modes of observation and/or participation with documentation in my research-diary. This was supplemented with semi-structured, psychoanalytic informed interviews and analysis of organisational and contextual documents. To analyse the data collected in a way that enables me to investigate my research question in the most adequate fashion, I utilize a Lacanian discourse analysis as it provides a more fertile way to target the precise gap that this research targets. I analyse the empirical data I have collected in a way that traces the discursive constitution of delivery-riders' subjectivity through mapping their identifications. Also, I explore the distribution of enjoyment that is propagated by their practices of consent and resistance at the intersection of their immigrant status and the precarious conditions of gig-work. Under these conditions the migrant low-skilled workers' subjectivity is investigated in depth, along with the effects of resistance and consent in the workplace, as well as the various discourses that surround them and interrelate them. This kind of discourse analysis enables me to locate the nodal points and master signifiers that reproduce these discourses, as well as to pay attention to the affective aspect of resistance and consent in migrant low-skilled labour. It also enables me to locate the emotional investment and fantasy scenarios that are being developed in bringing the subject of the unconscious to the forefront. Overall, both individually and combined, these methods are promising in the context of this research and offer an intriguing grid of comparative analysis.

4.Data Analysis Chapter – Part 1

Before I start the presentation and analysis of my collected empirical material, it is worth taking a close look at the research questions that guide my research:

Q1: How do migrant riders make sense of their precarious working conditions and what identifications do they develop—with their unique fantasies and particular objects—to structure their subjectivity and sustain their working-selves?

Q2: What modes of enjoyment underpin their lived-experience and how are these maintained and repeated in the different forms of control, consent and resistance that emerge in their work? How do processes of identification and subjectification enable and mediate these?

Q3: What are the modern practices of control and management in food-delivery work that are instrumental in constituting these identifications and modes of enjoyment, thereby designating the coordinates of a HRM system in this line of work?

My initial interest in exploring these questions was to better understand the reasons that drew so many people to this job, and at the same time, how these people affectively experience working as delivery-riders. Moreover, I was genuinely intrigued to find out how their experience relates to particular forms of resistance and in what way these manifest. Nevertheless, after my initial research phase as a participant-observer, where I was doing deliveries in Colchester, I found myself frustrated and hating this job. The second time I went out to deliver I wrote in my diary: 'How is this fair? Should I feel happy about the 8.20£ for almost 2 hours it took me to get to the restaurant and then to the two customers? How can this be fair for any cycling rider?'. I felt that this work made no sense—that both the conditions and payments for this work were unjust. I was perplexed by the situation and wondered why I seemed to be the only one who felt this way about it and the rest of the people seemed more content than discontent about it. How was it possible that these people did not wish to change this work for their own benefit? What are the reasons that for me the only fantasies that occupied my mind when I was working, were fantasies of subversion, where massive collective-bargaining was accomplished together with the other riders? I imagined scenarios where our requests for better pay and improvements in this work would meet the intransigent companies like an unstoppable force that would convince them to satisfy, if not all our demands, at least most of them. This reflection is important as it would provide my initial

context for this work and how this developed from my continuous participation in the field of food-delivery gig-work. In this way, I compare my view and understanding of the work with other riders, especially in terms of the lived-experience and embodied affect, in a triangulated analysis that highlights the interconnected elements and dimensions of our experiences (Schnegg, 2014). As I continued my research, I became even more concerned with the causes behind such discrepancies and the fact that only a minority of riders were involved with unions and collective organising in this sector. Therefore, the investigation of these research questions illustrates how resistance and control affect each other, while playing a key role in the subjectivity of the workers. It is in this manner that psychoanalysis proves to be most helpful, as it enables an anamorphosis of the given perspectives that clarifies how we approach and give meaning to these concepts and their ramifications. At this point it is worthwhile to state that there has been research which focuses on the positionality of food-delivery riders, particularly through the class, migrant status and gender aspect of gig-work.(Milkman et al., 2021). For example, Centeno Maya et al. have analysed the gender inequality and women's experiences of food-delivery workers in Mexico City (Centeno Maya et al., 2022). Others have focused on the migrant status and its relationships with precarity and contingency in the food-delivery market of Berlin (Altenried, 2024), as well as the relationship between immigration and employment policies and semi-documented riders in London, arguing how their invisibility is reinforced by this relation (Robins, 2023). This strain of research is very important and fundamentally adjacent to this thesis. The reason is that by deciding to investigate the affective-experience through a psychoanalytic lens, one has to develop the structure through which the delivery-riders find access to different modes of enjoyment and relate these with the respective subjectivities as well as the systems of control and practices of resistance that navigate them. Hence, my focus is primarily on extracting the overarching structure from which the majority of individual particularities of migrant workers stem. This is reflected in the way that the findings are presented as well. This chapter's thematic findings—namely account renting, using multiple applications and tax evasion—serve as the base of the structure. Then I expand upon this by examining how riders speak about their positive and negative affective-experiences as well as their goals in this allegedly temporary type of work. The following chapter then starts from this base and, through a psychoanalytic framework, analyses the role of key signifiers and subjective positions that are repeated in it, in order to formulate their function that serves as a basis through which each particular rider develops his subjectivity and affective economy. Thus, the aims of my research focus are supplementary to any analysis of

positionality in terms of gender, class and race, as the findings of this thesis gravitate around the underlying process of affect in the structure of food-delivery gig-work for the migrant rider.

Consequently, I treat these questions, not in isolation, but as parts of a greater whole, the lived-experience of the migrant food-delivery worker. In other words, the way these riders affectively embody forms of resistance, control and consent is explored by how they talk about these experiences, and how they describe the practices that revolve around them. As there are many different readings one can give to what is being said, the psychoanalytic concepts that I use allow for ambivalence and multiplicity of interpretations, in a hope to underline the displacement of meanings (Driver, 2017c). This applies to both the rendering of accounts from the interviews as well as to the reflexive stance on my own personal experience, and it enables the contradictions of the work to be captured in the analysis (Kenny & Gilmore, 2014). Thus, the structure of this chapter is as follows. I begin by providing the fundamental principles of delivery work, and develop it in terms of the grammar and the discursive practices that govern it as one moves from the outset to a deeper position inside it. Then, I expand on the everyday rhythms and actions that migrant delivery riders usually go about in their routine. To put it another way, first I present what is being said about delivery work and secondly, I advance what the workers are doing in their work. These two categories feed each other mutually, not only reinforcing, but also disrupting one another. I conclude this chapter with the points where convergence and subversion are the clearest in the different modes of enjoyment that delivery workers experience. This serves as the starting point for the subsequent chapter, where I discuss and try to make sense of these overlaps and subversions, relying more heavily on a macro level of theoretical analysis.

4.1. The Grammar of Food-Delivery Work

To begin with, it is important to set the general context in which food-delivery workers operate. Companies such as Deliveroo, Just-Eat, and Uber Eats, operate in the sector which is called the 'gig-economy' or 'platform-capitalism'. These companies operate a geographically tethered platform by developing an algorithm which essentially connects restaurants and customers through the intermediate service of delivery workers. This business formulation enables the platform capitalists to argue that they are not bound by business practice and employment regulations such as minimum wages, appropriate licenses and working conditions arrangements. Within the framework of the UK labour market, where more individualized and

flexible forms of employment have progressively been emphasized and accompanied by lesser institutional protection (Waddington, 2016), this justification results in a major avoidance of state regulation. This de facto 'deregulation' does not lead to a complete absence of regulatory practices, but rather enhances the capacity of the food-delivery platforms to regulate themselves and makes it more difficult for the workers to have their voice heard (Mendonça et al., 2023). This can lead to extreme market dominance by the companies, as Barratt et al. (2020) illustrates in the case of the Australian food-delivery sector. There, platforms end up playing a double role in the market transcending mere mediation between restaurants and customers, and rendering themselves job creators who both create and regulate supply and demand in the market.

Each company has its own application on which region-specific restaurants and workers are active and through which customers can order their food to be delivered to their chosen local address. The companies employ an interesting business model where they charge both the restaurants (to appear in their applications) and the customers—they then hire delivery drivers to complete the orders. Each driver is paid only for the specific order he accepts and picks-up from the restaurant. The driver is not considered an employee, but rather an independent worker who offers his services for hire each time he accepts and picks up an order. Moreover, a crucial element of this model is that it allows the riders to use substitute drivers to complete the orders. This is fundamental to maintaining the freelance status of the workers, as was decided in the Supreme court's ruling against the recognition of collective bargaining rights (Independent Workers Union of Great Britain v. Roofods Ltd., 2021). The workers could have their freelancer status revoked if the use of substitute riders was not in place. Furthermore, through the applications, companies also harvest a huge amount of data regarding orders, customer preferences, market trends, times for completion of orders and deliveries. The UK legal framework concerning data protection is not currently adequate to protect the riders against data-mining, in contrast to that of the European Union where the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has enabled digital workers to resist data-mining (Kuriakose & Iyer, 2021). In the UK, there is still a lack of clarity, in terms of how these data can be utilised, and the question remains of how riders can safeguard themselves against data appropriation. Nevertheless, the main attractions in this job are: how easy it is to start working and earning money as a delivery driver; the aspect of freedom and flexibility that this work offers; in addition to the temporary factor that accompanies this work, as it is advertised not as a main source of income or a full time job, but as a supplement to your income.

4.1.1. Start to work as a delivery driver and supplement your income

> **Deliveroo Advertisement:** 'Why ride with Deliveroo? Because you can work your way. Your way isn't 9am-5pm, it's being your own boss. Your way lets you work and coach your kids football team. Your way lets you get people their food on time, at a time that suits you. Your way means you can earn when you want and where you want. Apply now!' (Deliveroo, 2019)

In this advert, the attractions of having a flexible schedule and being independent, as you are 'your own boss', are expounded. Although some riders see the news and advertisements of Deliveroo, most of them find out through word of mouth and then apply for this work. Nonetheless, the key features are transmitted to them exactly as in the advertisement. Many of the answers to my question of how they started working as a delivery rider follow a similar narrative:

> **Participant Alonzo**: 'Yeah, I started to about three and a half. Uh-Huh. When you figure I been I tried to find not a job, but somebody could tell me, do Deliveroo because you, you're going to have nice money, you're going to have for flexible shifts, you're going to be your own boss boss.'.

The predominance of money and autonomy forms a combination that was present in all accounts of the participants and I expand further on this topic in the following part of this chapter. Future riders, attracted by this combination, start to apply to the company of their choice and one can apply to more than one delivery company. In this application process, delivery candidates supply the legal documents that prove their right to work (RTW) in the UK, as well as a copy of their passport for the criminal background check. As soon as these get cleared, the rider is notified that he is eligible to start working in his designated area. Furthermore, there is another factor that influences when your driver account becomes activated—the drivers' saturation level in the specific area you are looking to work in:

> **Participant Hassan**: 'But if you want to open an account, you have to wait, like I have a friend who applied to Deliveroo and he had to wait for two months. Yeah, cause there are too many drivers.'.

Hence, if Deliveroo has ample drivers available around Colchester, at the time you make your application, it is possible that you will have to wait in the queue for quite some time. For this reason, the majority applies to several applications when they want to start, and the most

common case is that they get an active account in one of them much sooner than the others. For example, several of my participants reported waiting for their account on Just Eat to be activated after passing the necessary checks, even for months in some cases. In contrast, their Deliveroo accounts were activated much sooner, and vice versa depending on the region and each case. Another intriguing fact is that the companies depend heavily on the available number of drivers at any given moment in order to fulfil their promised services. This means that there may be times when they are in desperate need of more drivers. This was made clear to me during the Christmas season of 2021, and this is how I documented it in my diary back then:

> **Diary Vignette**: 'My rider account had been turned off, meaning I could no longer deliver. Interestingly enough, I received another email today about having until 4th of January to provide the relevant information for my application and when I tried the Deliveroo riders' app my account was reactivated. I think that due to the Christmas holidays many students who might also be working part-time as Deliveroo riders had left for the holidays thus creating a shortage in the available drivers that forced Deliveroo to reconsider closed accounts and reopening some of them to cover the demand. This makes me think that not only did they close my application because the people at Sterling team (the partner of Deliveroo who takes care of the right to work and background checks) are so thick that they can't understand that an EU national with a pre-settled status is not obliged to have a biometric residence card and that a shared code is sufficient to prove my right to work even though I said that to them in more than 4 emails. When it suits their goals and agenda they activate my account again even though they had deemed it reasonable to close it in the first place, illustrating a major paradox in their arguments and actions.'

My anger and frustration with the company that Deliveroo had commissioned to conduct the right to work checks on their behalf, are highlighted in this reflection. Additionally, I felt even more insulted with the opportunistic attitude of Deliveroo, which was treating me as another random variable in their algorithm. A decline of the riders' number in Colchester had succeeded where my genuine explanations and multiple emails had failed. This illustrates the dependence between these companies and their respective pool of active riders, as well as how their strictness or leniency is contingent on the current number of available riders. The most important element of their business plan is to have a dynamic base of delivery workers available, whose numbers they can alter according to the demand of the customers. This further supports the argument that technology and algorithmic control reconstitute economic and social

relations with negative outcomes (Duggan et al., 2020; Wood, Graham, Lehdonvirta, et al., 2019), and that gig companies actively influence the demand and supply of the market (Veen et al., 2020). Moreover, there is another correlation of this with the renting of accounts, which most companies actively encourage for multiple reasons that I develop in more detail later on in this chapter. Therefore, despite and precisely because of all this, it is indeed very easy for people to start working as delivery riders, especially in big cities where the demand for food-delivery drivers is very high almost all hours of the day.

The ease of starting work as a delivery rider is related to delivery work being seen as supplementary income rather than as a full-time job. The narrative of a part-time job which is easy to start and just work for a few hours to make 'some extra cash' is well advertised and widely accepted by people who are not well-acquainted with the reality of food-delivery. Throughout my research on delivery workers, every full-time delivery driver told me that the vast majority of the orders were completed by the full-time riders and that the casual workers covered a much smaller percentage of the total, working mainly during times of high demand like weekend evenings. It is worthwhile to examine the insistence on promoting delivery work as nothing more than casual work and the reasons behind it. In the beginning, when Deliveroo first started operating in London, it had several ways of rewarding the best full-time riders. For instance, when it first entered its Initial Public Offering (IPO) it rewarded the riders with most completed orders a bonus, and a few exceptional drivers even received a bonus of £10,000 for completing as many as 65,000 orders. Be that is it may, things have changed. Now, there is a plethora of riders available and most of them are willing to work for minimal fees per order. Thus, there is no longer the need to bring more numbers into the riders' ranks by offering rewards or bonuses and furthermore, stating that it is casual work helps the companies to justify this approach. Additionally, the narrative of food-delivery as casual work is consistent with the 'be your own boss' approach. It implies that while working as a casual delivery-rider you will have the opportunity to earn extra money, while leaving you enough time to invest in your personal growth and entrepreneurship. As Participant González, a part-time rider, commented when I asked him if he would prefer to do Deliveroo even if it pays less than a full time job:

> **González:** 'Yes, because when I work in Deliveroo I am free. I can use the money and make intellectual development myself and making my own company or whatever I want going. But I don't want a full-time job when you look at nine to five. I can't do anything else about to come down.'

This quote indicates that the participant viewed himself through a perspective of entrepreneurship. He saw his delivery-work as something that enabled him to open his own

company or pursue his professional development in any way he saw fit, rather than restricting him to a nine to five job under some boss. Such narratives were commonly shared among different interview accounts, suggesting that these workers had completely accepted the discourse of micro-entrepreneurship which aligns their goals, as workers, with capital in market competition. Adopting this mindset of entrepreneurial agency not only heightens the experience of precarity (Barratt et al., 2020), but also renders attempts at formulating collective agency much more difficult (Mendonça & Kougiannou, 2023). Therefore, it is less about whether delivery riders are actually working full-time or part-time, and more about how this discourse of autonomy and flexibility has permeated the whole of food-delivery work, with almost all delivery riders reproducing it in their daily communication.

At the same time, the companies' insistence on the casualisation of delivery work aims to maintain and reinforce the current status of freelancer workers who are not entitled to any rights or benefits from the companies that contract with them. There is a very fine line of argumentation here. The self-employed status is something that all delivery workers abide by, but there is a difference in how it is perceived. On the one hand, some workers, and particularly those who organise themselves collectively—such as in the IWGB union—argue that being self-employed does not mean that you should be unable to make minimum wages or have better health and safety insurance. On the other hand, there are workers who are afraid that such demands may revert their freelancing status to some form of employment and they are totally against any kind of such requests, stating that things were good in the beginning when there were fewer riders around. Considering that delivery-work does not offer any real progress for its workers—as well as the lack of any rewards or incentives to excel in this work in the form of a career—one would expect some difference or divergence between part-time and full-time delivery riders. The workers who just rely on delivering as a secondary income stream that helps them get closer to realising their dreams, and the delivery riders who work full-time in this job, all state that freedom and flexibility are the main attractions of this work. Despite the temporary aspect being more emphasised in the case of part-time, it would be a mistake to think that in the case of the full-time delivery-riders the temporary element, which is constructed at the core of this job, does not play its role. Someone who adopts the temporary and flexible nature of this work as a part-time rider, while at the same time studying to complete his degree, or develop his skills and expand his business, has a clear picture of how his future will look like when he stops working as a delivery-rider and finally occupies himself in the sector/profession he is working towards. In a similar way, the full-time rider who provides for

himself and his family, even though he might not have a parallel path that will lead him to something specific, is still able to imagine a whole variety of different future developments for himself as there is nothing that binds him to his current situation beyond making a living. He can imagine stopping anytime, when a good opportunity arises, and being able to make the most out of it and thus envisions a much better future for himself and his family. Consequently, the one thing that both part-time and full-time riders share is their common efforts to find meaning in the precarious and exploitative conditions they experience (Sambajee & Scholarios, 2023). In other words, by the same token that this job does not have any real progress and career possibilities, it enables its workers to imagine all kinds of different outcomes for both the short- and long-term future. This striving for meaning, especially in terms of career aspirations and ambitions, is developed thoroughly in the second part of the data analysis, where a psychoanalytic lens enables a breakdown of these fantasies and their ramifications. The one thing that all riders, both part and full-time cannot imagine at all, is being retired delivery-riders.

4.1.2.Freedom and flexibility in delivery work

Arguably the most compelling fact for food-delivery workers is that there is absolute flexibility and freedom surrounding your working schedule or 'free login' as they call it. Free login or free-access login, means you can log in as active in your rider application anytime and log off anytime without facing any issues. This is a great advantage for all delivery riders, both full-time and part-time, as it enables them to shift their work-schedules to accommodate their needs such as attending classes, doing delivery-work on the side outside their normal job schedule, or even to better coordinate with their families' or partners' obligations. This flexibility, accompanied by the lack of any manager or boss telling you how to do your job is, for the vast majority of delivery-workers the only reason they are still doing full-time delivery-work. Despite the increase of living costs and the payments of deliveries remaining the same, delivery-workers prefer to work harder and longer to make a living than finding a 'normal job'. Interestingly, when I asked my participants if they found the alleged aspect of total freedom in their work contradictory to the seventy hours or more they worked each week on average, almost everyone answered me that for them there was no contradiction as it was still their choice and thus they felt very free while doing it.

Vignette 1 – Michael: 'Interviewer: So you said that the food-delivery is flexible, and I think the companies themselves advertise that there is like freedom while working.'

Michael: 'You have freedom because the most important thing you have freedom. You can, you have a flexible timeline. I don't have to work in the morning. I want to stay in bed another couple of hours. I know exactly how much money I would earn in that day so us thinking. In the morning, I said, OK, you know, I cover my expenses today, so I'm happy. Doing Deliveroo, that's one of advantage, because you know exactly how much money you make in the morning, how much money you lose in the morning if you're not going. So how much money you can make in the afternoon. Plus, if you if you stay over time on Deliveroo in most of them, then that will be shut down so you can be as me, last night I was the only one Deliveroo drivers in Colchester last night because I get orders from everywhere I couldn't manage anyway. It was funny.'

Interviewer: 'And do you agree that what I want to ask, like from the one side, I agree with you it is flexible. You can start whenever you want, you can stop whenever you want all these things. On the other hand, because you have exactly the expenses which are high your petrol, your insurance and so on and so on, and the delivery payments are not very high for each order, then doesn't it come down, having to work many hours one way or another to make a good weekly salary or whatever? So what kind of freedom are we talking about if you have more than 12 hours work per day every day?'

Michael: 'You, you are right with that, but I enjoy my job. I like to driving like that. Yeah, that's one of the things I like to drive. I like to do the driving all day long. I don't want to drive. I can drive 18 hours a day. So for me, even if I'm at home and I don't have a job, I'm still driving and I listen to music and I enjoy, you know, driving.'

One of the most interesting parts in this vignette is the opportunity cost the rider described in terms of choosing to work or not to work. If he decided to stay home for a few hours, he immediately calculated the expected earnings he would lose and located another timeframe when he would be able to make up for the loss. The perception of calculating the working time in term of earnings and how one can subtract or add working hours to reach the same goals could be related to gamification (Sun, 2019). This meticulous calculation would be aligned to what Woodcock and Johnson (2018) refer to as gamification-from-above, as it involves a rationalising of work in terms of time and money. The difference is that instead of management setting up the parameters and motivating the workers, the platform sets the conditions and the

workers motivate themselves to participate. In this case, each hour of the day is not equal to another—for example, the rider in the vignette illustrated how the morning hours (which are considered busy, and thus profitable) could be equated with the same amount in the afternoon which is expected to be equally busy. Then, he added that working extra late at night could be an extra bonus, if you failed to cover the loss, as fewer riders were available and thus, he received more orders. This kind of gamification does not involve rewards when specific targets are reached, it is rather more focused on efficiency and control of time. Intriguingly, this commodification of workers by the platform companies, successfully increases control and efficiency, while maintaining the illusion of empowerment and autonomy to the workers (Franke & Pulignano, 2021). Lastly, at the end of this vignette, the rider refers to the enjoyment of driving. Both gamification and love for driving can be viewed as masculine traits and indeed as Hunt and Samman argue, the gig economy on the whole represents a continuation of long standing structural and gendered inequalities (Hunt & Samman, 2019). In all of my data, there were only 3 woman riders. Despite this their narratives were strikingly similar to those of the male riders, exposing an aspect of the gendered subjectivities and character of this sector. Although it is important to further investigate the gendered and class dimensions of this work, I focus instead on the examination of the affective-experience of these migrant workers. I use the term affective not as another attribute of their positionality but affective in the psychoanalytic conceptualisation of where the structure of language interacts with the libido of the speaking body. The difference is that positionality investigates and analyses the researcher's and the participants' location within existing hierarchies of power and the ways these multiply and intersect across antagonistic discourses of gender, class and migrant status enabling a complex division of identities that enable a strategic movement between marginality and privilege (Mayorga-Gallo & Hordge-Freeman, 2017). This allows for a representation of these identity traits and their role in contesting, reaffirming and navigating power hierarchies and relations (Lokot, 2022). Instead the psychoanalytic lens—with which affective-experience is viewed in this thesis—moves beyond articulating a representation of subjective traits that construct identity and its relation to power. It sees human subjects as overdetermined by language wherever they also find the necessity of work and elaborate their work-experience in terms of affect. It thereby extracts the topographical configuration that depicts its role alongside identifications, fantasies and lack. This topographical depiction of the overdetermination of language is not a superstructure, rather it is a substructure that undergirds intention, articulates the lack of being in subjects and conditions their life of passion and sacrifice (Lacan, 2013, pp. 28–29). In this sense, representation in positionality is not the same as representation in

psychoanalysis, insofar as in the latter the emphasis is placed on the representative in the unconscious material, the signifier that is repressed and outside conscious access. Therefore, the way the affective-experience is represented in this thesis focuses on the signifiers whose constitution implies their relation to what is hidden and is radical in structure as such, the crux of permutation that allows all the different particularities of subjective identity and puts one thing in the place of another owing solely to the ability of the signifier to represent the other missing thing in this way. In other words, this topographical substructure serves the affective-experience as an exposure of life's brutal forces—desire, suffering, enjoyment—that highlights the inconsistencies of the present significations and sheds lights on the sameness of different repetitions and affects. The affective aspect aids us in locating its precise structural function and understanding how it contours subjectivity and practices of control and resistance in this work. In line with this scenario, driving as a process that is enjoyed must be thought of in relation to getting closer to the destination. Driving on a treadmill or a track, would not be enjoyable in the same way that the rider described here. Here driving should be considered an integral element of the gamification process described previously. It is the means by which he accomplished his work control and autonomy—the necessary component to participate in this flexible pursuit of earnings. At the end of each destination there was a very precise and quantified amount of money to reward him. He was aware of this amount in advance and without it the experience would not be the same. This is also evident from the strict process of order rejection that each driver follows. If the distance to the destination and the money offered do not leave a sufficient profit margin for the rider, then the rider would reject the order. As Michael told me: 'You can't choose three pounds for two miles. Yeah, they have orders with two miles and £3. If I accept that order for me will be minus, I would be on minus'. Therefore, the enjoyment described was intertwined with the reward that was to be received at the end of the journey.

Flexibility lies at the heart of the gig economy and is presented as its biggest advantage. Be that as it may, there is the argument that it is precisely through this very flexibility that the system of delivery work is able to sustain itself. The following participant elaborates his views on why this is the case:

> **Dania**: 'The system of free login exists because it's logistically the best way of operating this kind of service, because you have very time dependent forms of orders. Like they have to be delivered, while they're hot, this is not even like Amazon where they can deliver in the next day, but they package it all up but that's a day; this is within

10, 15, 20 minutes you know 20, 30, 30 minutes after the order being made, it has to be delivered.'

Logistically, from the moment that demand fluctuates so unexpectedly it is necessary for the companies to accommodate these vacillations with an equally dynamic workforce (Woodcock, 2016). The free login provides just that, a dynamic workforce which is able to log in and log-off at any moment during the day. The companies also have another way to manipulate this, for example when it is raining the demand for food deliveries usually increases and some of the delivery-riders, especially the ones with bikes or mopeds, stop working. It is in times like this that the applications nudge the workers with a notification saying that they offer a booster to their earnings for the following two to three hours and then workers who want to earn more are compelled to log in and start delivering for the duration of the booster as they are being paid more money per order than usual. Many migrant riders are willing to deliver under these conditions, because for them the rough weather conditions are something they embrace together with the precarious conditions of this work as they have their eyes fixed on the prize. They are aware of the equally if not more harsh conditions and precarity that awaits them back home and they see this as a unique opportunity to improve their future lives. When combined with this the fact that most of them are sending money back home to their families it is an easy decision for most migrant riders to deliver in rain or snow if the payments are better. This element is directly tied to the processes of gamification discussed earlier as it provides the gaming mechanism of the bonus as an additional incentive to work in that particular timeframe. Furthermore, many riders discussed how the frequency of such boosters has declined and how they would like more incentives like this.

> **González**: 'And also, it would be good for you to know that you know that you're making your time target and things like this and I think will be good for them. I know they have, I don't, I don't know the system. I need to give me incentives. If get those things like this to some incentive to be able to work towards the goal, then such things would not happen at all (long delivery times) because people are going to target driving that money. So if you do, I think using the time and money like goals then people will be rewarded...'

The connection of time and money was repeated in this interview snippet, and the self-tendency of workers to become even better 'algorithmic labourers' is illustrated (Rosenblat & Stark, 2016). Having their work practices and performances controlled by the application was not a

problem as long as there were greater and more frequent rewards waiting for them at the end. Another aspect that deserves to be highlighted is that flexible work should not be equated with casual work. Although delivery workers appreciate the flexibility that their work offers most of the full-time riders work upwards of seventy hours per week and they complete thousands if not tens of thousands of orders each year. In this respect, the depiction of delivery work just as something to supplement your income and a casual side-job is a misrepresentation, since the majority of orders are completed by full-time delivery workers. Hence, even though the workers value this flexibility, it shouldn't be portrayed as just another perk offered to the workers, as it plays a fundamental role in the kernel of the business model for this gig-work.

Another significant point to be made in regard to the freedom of this work is the fact that there is no manager or supervisor above the worker. This is a crucial point for two reasons, firstly because every delivery rider feels that he is working for himself and every penny he makes is entirely because of his own efforts and skills. Secondly, this is because it makes a strong contrast to other jobs where you usually have a manager or a supervisor above you in the workplace hierarchy, to line-manage you. The first point is more closely related to the feeling of experienced self-worth and almost all delivery workers take some pride in their earnings, specifically when they overcome certain restrictions of the system or find ways to exploit it so as to further increase their profits. I expand further on this point and how this pride is experienced and mediated, in the next part of my analysis. The second point is related to the status of immigrant labour in the UK, particularly after Brexit. All the migrant delivery riders I encountered were aware that after Brexit, the requirements to work in the UK were much stiffer and they conveyed a reality to me about migrant low-skilled labour in the UK of which I was unaware.

> **Vignette 2 – Anabella**: 'OK, so another solution they will be go to India and Pakistan where there are a lot of people. What do you wish in your life? To go the United Kingdom or oversea. I say, OK, I'm going to take you to the United Kingdom? However, you will pay me 10k. Why would I pay you 10k? Because I'm going to make for your sponsors on my company and the sponsored visa. I'll pay the expenses over the five years and Take it to the government. So you pay me 10k up front and I make for you sponsored visa. You will come here. We have a contract of and this is actually what's happening in (F&B Business). You have a contract of 40 hours per week. This 40 hours per week, you'll be paid for it £1200 After-Tax. What £1200 is too low? Stay in your shitty country. But however, you're not going to work only the 40 hours you

would work 60 hours without asking for overtime. OK, well, you've got the current true working overtime. You got mad and you decided that there is worker's rights? Perfect, good for you, stay like that? second day you're fired. You got a one month notice. Your sponsored visa is cancelled you go back to your home country. You wasted your money, Done.'

Vignette 3 – Rhys: 'Oh, I know literal people like who pay like, if you convert it like 1 million in rupees is like £10,000 something like that. They sell their lands, pay that just to come to the UK. And here they just get like £300-400 quids, a place to live, eat. They work 12 hours a day. They get like £300-400 quid a month that they sent to back home, and that 300-400 quid is a significantly high amount of income back home. And I've seen this like with a lot of people. Turkish people working in Barbour shops are seeing this. I know people like this who live like this. I 've seen people like Brazil people like renting Uber Eats account, Deliveroo account. I'll have it from a friend, but like people rent it out for like 40, 50 quid a week, so that is another cost as well like this is people's business who have the right to. Okay. I just give out accounts for 40, 50 quid a week, and they have literally nothing to do, and just get the money because the immigrant is working on that and like. Yes, this happens to countries like Canada at the most, like America and in the UK.'

The situation described in these vignettes illustrates the harsh reality of migrant-labour in the hospitality sector in the UK, especially in the back-of-house operations. Many business owners or managers find people from countries like India, Brazil, Pakistan, Bangladesh and promise them to sponsor their Visas to come and work in the UK. These people who are dreaming of finding a better future in a rich Western country pay a sum of money upfront in order to ensure a Visa from their future employer and quickly come to the UK to work. When they arrive, they are usually taken to the bar, hotel, or restaurant where they will work and sleep. The working hours range from ten to fourteen hours per day and the monthly pay is a few hundred pounds, as their food and accommodation is provided by the employer. There they will be working under these conditions of exploitation for the next five years, until their can apply for indefinite leave to remain, and during this time they are at the complete mercy of their employer. This means that if the employer refuses to continue sponsoring them or cancels their visa they will be deported. This is to be avoided at all costs as even this exploitative labour allows them to send money to their families back home and most importantly promises them a better future when the five years have passed and they will be eligible to get indefinite leave to

remain in the UK. This information is considered common knowledge amongst most immigrant workers as it is spread broadly through informal networks of communication. In this context, the choice to do food-delivery work, where flexibility and freedom are the advertised advantages, seems much more appealing than the other options available. Many people take advantage of these conditions to generate profits. In the third vignette the rider described how the process of renting food-delivery accounts to migrant workers could be a profitable activity, since many immigrants were looking to get into food-delivery work. This practice of renting accounts and its implications is expanded in the subsequent part that looks into the transgressions in food-delivery work.

4.1.3.Transgressions in Food-Delivery Work

In every job there are some kind of transgressions that take place on the part of the workers. The main types of transgressions in food-delivery work can be summarised under three main branches: renting accounts; multi-apping; and miscellaneous illegal practices.

4.1.3.1. Account Renting – Undocumented Migrant Delivery Workers

Renting accounts is an ambiguous practice since companies like Deliveroo and Just Eat actively encourage their riders to share their accounts with another person—a rider substitute as it is called. This is predominantly done in cases of riders who are working part-time, so if they have a friend or a family member who would like to work as a delivery-rider, they could be appointed as a substitute-rider by the account holder and thus increase the flexible base of drivers available for these companies. Intriguingly, the companies pass all the responsibilities for making sure the substitute rider is eligible to work, to the account holder himself. They do not take any action themselves to cross-check if the substitute fulfils the work criteria for delivery-riders, like the right-to-work and criminal record checks. In this way, the riders see a very good opportunity to increase their profits. Since the sharing of accounts was permitted and since, especially a few years ago, companies like Deliveroo and Just Eats did not have any system in place to check for duplicate accounts, the riders who were eligible started multiplying their accounts and renting them for a weekly fee.

> **Vignette 4 - Amber**: 'I will tell you a story, I got a friend. He's like he opened 17 accounts with the same details, with just 17 and he rents them 50 pounds per week. Can you imagine how much money he has? This is one story I know from my friend. Yeah,

but after a while they caught him and they closed them all and they banned him. Yes, he had it for one year, one year!'

Interviewer: 'Do you think because of that there is a discrepancy between the official numbers and how many drivers are actually doing this work?'

Amber: 'Yeah , I don't think it's the real number because like you said before , people open three, four accounts, they just change one. Some people, they got many, many IDs , you know, change your one of your, for example, your name is Mohamed or a or James. Just take one letter and open another account. That's all. You can open 3 or 4. So this is not it's not a real number. Yeah. So they have to check. They have to make a good check. They don't check properly.'

In this way, people were able to make huge amounts of profits by renting multiple accounts for delivery riders with a weekly rent between fifty and one hundred pounds. Naturally, this heaven for delivery account wholesalers did not last long. Companies were quick to catch on to these practices and put systems in place to check if the identity of the user matched the account holder. Then they closed several accounts that were operating on multiple devices simultaneously. Having said that, there are still ways of creating and renting delivery accounts. As Participant 6 explained, one could change a letter in his name and generate three or four more accounts for himself and others. This is why making multiple accounts is one of the most widespread practices in this country. Additionally, because of the multiple accounts that are available and active, the official statistics regarding the number of delivery riders do not represent the actual number of riders out on the streets. This also enables the companies to overplay or underplay the situation depending on the circumstances and the marketing strategy and goals they want to accomplish. This increase in the supply of available accounts has created an equal increase in the demand for both formal and informal workers (Cioce et al., 2022). The informal demand refers here to workers without the right to work in the UK who took advantage of this surge in the supply of accounts to work informally in the UK as the following vignette highlights.

Vignette 5 – Yaritza: 'Interviewer: regarding the payments that have reduced more than 50%. How do you explain this, like why this happened and how can this change?'

Yaritza: 'This change because before they don't have drivers now arriving from country let's say, 300 people arrive every day for work in this job, 300 people every day. Next year's maybe next year they're going to pay £1 for delivery 100%, if it

continue like that. A lot of people come, you know, because you don't need nothing to do this job you don't need a visa you don't need nothin you don't pay tax... What you needed to do this job nothing, you just have motorbike, have account and the next day you start to send money to Brazil. Like for me no because I have arrived long, I have a right to work, I pay tax, I pay everything. I am talking about this new people coming out they don't need nothing just come and start to work, that's why there is a lot of people right now. It that's why they put the price down now... My phone, they sent in 10 minutes ago, some people, send a message for me, you have account to rent, you know some accounts to rent? I'm arriving today, I arrived 3 days ago, my friends, come, this is the way, I need 3 accounts, I need 5. I say no, no, I don't know I don't know anything about this.'

Food-delivery often attracts migrant workers because of their specific set of conditions and limitations. Immigrants often find themselves in a disadvantageous position where language barriers, visa restrictions and poor financial situations, offer them very few options for work in the labour market (Goods et al., 2019). Hence, migrant workers view food-delivery platform work as a favourable choice that allows income without documents, since the companies in this sector put little effort into verifying accounts and the right-to-work. Correspondingly, the platform companies take advantage of the migrant labour available, as their need for money allows them to overlook poor working conditions and low payments (Mendonça et al., 2023). As participant 5 stated, they would be willing to work and deliver even for a one pound fee, driving the average payment per order down—well below minimum wage thresholds. As a result, food-delivery is a sector where a large segment of the workers are undocumented immigrant workers. According to the majority of my participants, immigrants come into this country with tourist visas. They are in communication with some of their compatriots who are already in the UK, they establish connections and gather useful information. They then quickly find access to one or more food-delivery accounts, get hold of a bicycle or moped and start working in a matter of days after entering the country. In parallel, they effortlessly open online bank accounts which don't require proof of residency documents, like Monzo for example, so they can get their earnings and be able to transfer money back to their families. In addition, they avoid paying insurance and taxes as they aim to maximise their earnings, knowing full well that access to delivery-work can be retracted anytime. In some cases, the same people who offer accounts for rent, may exploit the migrants' need for money even by asking them to transport illicit substances to certain locations for an additional income on the side of food-

delivery work. Authorities have now been made aware of this and it is not rare to see police officers patrolling with K9 detector dogs in the places where delivery-workers usually park while waiting for their orders to pop-up in their applications.

> **Vignette 6 - Yaritza**: Interviewer: 'And also I've heard that people who rent accounts also give to the people who are renting their accounts from drugs and deliver drugs, at the same time with delivery.'
>
> **Yaritza**: 'Yeah. They do this.'
>
> Interviewer: 'You've heard about it as well?'
>
> **Yaritza**: 'Yeah, yeah, yeah.'
>
> Interviewer: 'And also police now start to realize they stop riders and do checks?'
>
> **Yaritza**: 'Yeah, they do this today, I see today three different place.'

This practice was further reported by the **Participants Michael** and **Alonzo**, as well as myself. One evening when I was doing observation notes at Colchester, High Street, I noted in my diary: 'I went outside for a cigarette and I saw around 10 drivers parked in their spot and discussing with each other in groups. Then I saw the police, there were 2 policemen and one with a K9 who arrested one driver or just did a search on him cause the dog might have sniffed something, after that they started roaming around the drivers and their bikes with the dog sniffing around, without doing anymore searches or arrests.'

This practice of renting accounts illustrates how the companies have certain tactics in place to make sure that their basis of available drivers remains in a highly dynamic state, ready to cover any potential surge of demand. On the one hand, sharing an account is allowed, as it is a necessary element of the freelancing status of the workers, and on the other no company has installed a draconian system to prevent all non-eligible people from working in their platforms. And this is for a reason. It contributes to increasing their pool of workers who are willing to complete any order for even the minimum payment as it is still much more than they could earn in their home countries. This is not only the case because they depend on this money to survive, but also their families back home rely on the income that they send them to survive. Hence, some of the transgressions support the companies' profits as they are shoring up the freelance status of the riders and also subsidise low-wages as in the case of drug-traffickers. This may also be linked to Fleming and Spicer's argument that resistance in organisations—in

their case cynicism—may advance instead of hindering the corporate objectives (Fleming & Spicer, 2003, 2007). Lastly, the multiplication and renting of accounts facilitates the second main transgression in food-delivery work, multiple applications.

4.1.3.2. Multiple Applications

Multiple applications or 'multi-app' as it is being called, is the practice where a delivery rider will utilise more than one application to find and accept an order. The conditions to increase earnings as a delivery-rider are analogous to the number of orders one can complete.

> **Vignette 7 – Raul**: 'Well, people that I know, in our workplace they get from other people's account they get 3 or 4 accounts and they got 4 phones on their thing and every time when Deliveroo order comes in the accept this, deliver this accept that deliver there then come back do this do that, they work multiple account. I know one guy every week he make £1000 plus. Really, he make 1000 plus. Nearly makes 1800 pounds every week. But every day he works 12 hours.'
>
> Interviewer: 'Oh, my God.'
>
> **Raul**: 'He puts the time in and he makes the money.'

To this extent, riders were always trying to find ways to maximise their orders, particularly in recent years that the number of available riders has increased drastically resulting in less available orders per rider. Given this, the riders understand that if they have more than one application active they would increase the influx of orders and be able to earn more, especially during times with low demand. For example, **Participant Amber** admitted he was using two applications as a countermeasure for when it was not busy: 'Basically, if I use it, if I start to work in Just Eat, I turn off Deliveroo. If I have been in Deliveroo then I turn off Just Eat, so I choose, which is good. Most of the time I use Just Eat because they give good money. I start with Just Eat, but if Just Eat is not busy, I use Deliveroo and it works like this for me.' This is something that is allowed and the only rule that each rider needed to respect is that they should only undertake one delivery on every single trip. Taking into consideration this restriction and the fact that most people order during the lunch and dinner times, this makes the weekend afternoons and early evenings the busiest times for this work. Therefore, the delivery riders who were trying to find ways to complete as many orders as possible during these busy time

periods, quickly realise that the biggest obstacle to this goal was the fact that each time they were on the road they were completing one order at a time. What if one could find a way to complete several orders with one trip? In this way they would be able to multiply their earnings while saving time and energy. But how could this be accomplished, especially since the companies track the drivers with geolocation? If the algorithm detects a rider who has collected one order taking longer than the expected time to complete it, or going towards the opposite direction, they give him a warning and could potentially terminate his account if they catch him again. The delivery riders have found several ways to overcome such hurdles. First of all they found ways to hide their geolocation when they engaged on the practice of multi-apping. As **Participant Sierra** said 'For example, If you compare me and another fake worker, for example, during one day I can I can delivery around probably 50 orders, if you want another worker using one GPS fake should be 100, 112, 150 maybe'. Being able to deliver multiple orders with a 'GPS fake' significantly increased the number of competed orders, but what is a 'GPS fake'? A 'GPS fake' may be just setting the phone on airplane mode which interrupts the connection to the internet, to installing software add-ons on the phones which disable or mask the geolocation activity. This led to a game of catch-up on the part of the companies who tried to find the different ways riders were employing to conceal their multi-apping, as well as the riders finding new inconspicuous ways to continue multi-apping.

> **Vignette 8 – Dax**: 'I saw them, some of them by my own eyes. When I look inside the car, I swear they hang in like four phones on the car. I've seen that as well. Yeah, and they work. And most of them, they do, like working with many account to get more orders, and even they're using different company like Uber Eats, Just Eat. Yeah, yeah, that's kind of.. So he got his and he used another one for, like his brother or his cousin or his daughter, or even some of them. They are retired and they are even retired from their previous job and they still doing delivery.'

> Interviewer: 'I know I've heard about. And supposedly that is like many ways.. So the applications don't let you do that in the sense that if you take multiple orders and you are not going straight to the customer of each order, yeah, they will block your account. They will suspend your account.'

> **Dax**: 'Yeah, but some, some driver they go to experience, they know all the direction and they know what you do. They take in only they choose which order. They are close to it the same way and they take it. They have experience so they know what to do.'

Interviewer: 'And this, you say, increases their earnings?'

Dax: 'Yeah, yeah. Significantly, because yeah, they earn like extra. Because I got one application Rodeo? They showed me the highest they can produce, So I saw only once I saw like one guy, he make 250. Yeah, I don't know how they made that. How they make it 250 a day… Yeah, I saw it in Rodeo.'

The most experienced and daring riders concluded that the best way to multi-app was during the busiest times of the day. During this time, the rider screened the orders that come through to his application. He waited for an order going towards an area where from his experience he knnew that more orders were likely to go in that direction. He then accepted that first order going to the preferred area. He went to the restaurant, but did not collect the order from the restaurant immediately. Instead, he waited, checking his other applications for suitable orders to pop-up that were going to approximately the same place as the first one. Considering that most fast-food restaurants are to be found in the same high street, when the second appropriate order arrives, he accepted it and went to collect it, then immediately after that, collected the first one and went to deliver both of them to more or less the same place. This can be done even with three orders if you are lucky and perhaps two of them are from the same restaurant. Of course this requires a high inflow of orders so you can reject and accept accordingly, but for those full-time riders this is almost an auto-pilot process since they have such a good understanding of the different areas, the customers and the restaurants that are high in demand and know how to position themselves efficiently. Another version of multi-apping is when two or three people co-operate with each other to increase their earnings. As **Participant 16** mentioned, they all went in one car and having multiple accounts and apps operating at the same time, they waited outside restaurants that have huge demand, like KFC and McDonalds, and filled the car with orders. They then went on to deliver all the orders with one person doing the driving and the others going to deliver to the customers. Usually for this practice they switched to airplane mode or activated the disabling GPS software they had on their phones. The risk to get your account suspended was always a possibility, but one worth taking since they were able to make more money like this and there had been no shortage of accounts for rent at that time. Hence, despite the risks, there were many delivery-riders who were multi-apping, when the conditions were favourable, but not everyone managed to accumulate the extreme earnings mentioned. Such earnings were only reached by a few and may well have

ranged from four to six thousand pounds per month[5], yet almost everyone was still working very long hours (seventy hours on average) every week.

4.1.3.2. Miscellaneous Transgressions

There are a few other transgressions that are practised by delivery riders, again with the aim to increase their income. Riders can go along with just one of them or combine them with the ones mentioned above; it depends on the risks each rider is willing to take and the intricacies of their situation. One of the most frequent transgressive practices revolves around taxation. It is the most common practice because companies like Deliveroo, Just Eat and Uber Eats do not deduct any amount for tax from the payments they give to riders and each rider is personally responsible for paying his own taxes.

> **Vignette 9 – Yaritza**: Interviewer: 'Yeah, but then this £1000 I don't pay any tax?'
>
> **Yaritza**: 'They don't, nobody pays tax, nobody. Who will pay for this APP? Nobody pay tax.'
>
> Interviewer: 'They don't have a way to find out if I'm paying tax or not?'
>
> **Yaritza:** 'No, no, they send the money, they put to receive the money in online account. And don't need to pay tax, nobody pay tax in this job. That's why is a lot of people come to work with this job, if they start to pay tax, you never gonna see people in this job, it is going to miss people working. You understand?'

Classifying the riders as freelancers enables the platform companies to shift labour expenses to the workers (Ivanova et al., 2018). This includes equipment costs, energy and insurance costs as well as the taxable part of their income. Thus, each delivery rider, who earns more than the tax-free limit, should consult an accountant and submit an income statement where expenses will be deducted, from his total annual earnings, and the remaining sum will be taxable at a 20 percent rate. In the case of motor vehicles, the cost of fuel is deducted. For bicycles and e-bikes there is a formula where you input the total mileage you have covered in the year and it calculates the taxable part of your earnings. Especially when operating under a rented account, some delivery-riders do not pay tax as they think it would be very hard for HMRC to catch them. As **Participant Anabella** stated: 'the HMRC won't run after every rider in the country,

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[5] Some relevant data of such high earnings can be found in the Appendix of the present thesis.

checking their earnings and all of that'. There was therefore a good chance of not getting caught while tax evading as a delivery-rider. Another reason that further validated this approach, was that the companies themselves did not provide to HMRC the account details and receipts of the riders so that HMRC could more easily initiate a check on their accounts. On top of that, the choice of online bank accounts like Monzo and the transferring of the money to other accounts usually overseas, further obscured the financial situation and made it harder for them to be monitored and confronted. Notwithstanding, there were incidents where riders who did not pay taxes for many years, were issued fines. One case was communicated to me by **Participant Amber**, where the fine reached the amount of seventy thousand pounds to be paid to HMRC for tax evasion.

Another practice commonly used by riders is to not pay for food-delivery insurance. Each account, except for the bicycle and e-bike type, requires food-delivery insurance to be paid in order to conduct deliveries lawfully. There are several companies which provide all types of insurance contracts. Some riders pay each week, some monthly, and there are even hourly insurance contracts.

> **Participant Hassan**: 'With Deliveroo or Uber you can't do that. They don't let you work if you don't have insurance, but if you pay the beginning for one month, let's say, and you start working and then you don't renew, with the Deliveroo and Uber, you can do that. With Just Eat, you know, it's not going to let you. You have to apply each month for the insurance.'

Applications for delivery insurance are necessary to be able to activate your account for the first time. Many riders opted not to renew their insurance after that, with the main goal to save money and increase their profits. There were cases where the police conducted insurance checks on delivery-riders on the streets. However, they said that because of this they had WhatsApp groups, where they communicated with each other if they saw police checks and their location, so others could avoid them. Moreover, riders had found some crafty ways to hustle the police by keeping their expired hourly insurance contracts and changing a number in the date or time to match the current time and be on their way without issues. The effectiveness of these counter-measures may be up for debate, but at the same time the risks taken to increase their daily earnings, were definitely something that a lot of riders were willing to accept. Moreover, some riders shared the perspective that paying themselves for gas, insurance and taxes would not leave them with enough money to sustain themselves and their

families. **Participant Anabella** commented on this: 'the insurance costs £160, the petrol to do all that costs around £300-£400 per month, so this way, also the tax 20%, let's say £200 on top of that, and what else, what else, do you want me to cost £1000 each month to make deliveries legally? No, of course, are you crazy?'

Hence, according to this estimate, with which many riders would agree, if one earned £1000 from food-deliveries per month, one should be paying between £600-£800 in order to abide fully by the legal procedures. As **Participant Anabella** illustrated in the previous quote, it felt like the system itself relied on such transgressive dodging of costs to sustain the low-wages made. The riders were expected to dodge the indirect overhead costs in order to make a living with such low payments per order. Be that as it may, the whole range of transgressions practised by delivery riders is correlated on the one hand with the risks that drivers are willing to take and on the other with the maximisation of income that they aim to accomplish in this way. The data analysis has illustrated the way that the algorithmic control and platformed surveillance systems (Goods et al., 2019; Woodcock, 2020), influence these transgressive practices by inducing individualization and forms of resistance that create a gamification around the work (Duggan et al., 2020; Sun, 2019; Vasudevan & Chan, 2022; Veen et al., 2020). This is a gamification which maintains the illusion of freedom and autonomy (Barratt et al., 2020; Ivanova et al., 2018), and at the same time intensifies the precarious and exploitative conditions (Franke & Pulignano, 2021; Peticca-Harris et al., 2020). In this context, immigrant riders tend to consent to their exploitation more readily due to their heightened vulnerability and limitations (Sambajee & Scholarios, 2023; van Doorn & Vijay, 2021), particularly non-documented riders who find through food-delivery an informal access to work that otherwise would not be available (Mendonça et al., 2023). This heightened vulnerability is due not only to the precarious conditions of food-delivery which include a sudden suspension of accounts, high overhead costs and the fluctuations in daily income, but it is also due to the vulnerable and precarious conditions that the rest of their family faces back home. The data are aligned with the contemporary research and the three thematic transgressions I have elaborated set out the foundations for the analysis of their lived-experience. The aim is to illustrate the precise role of affective-experiences in this work that is intertwined with a complex navigation of transgressive practices amidst vulnerable and precarious conditions. That is to say, we hope to better understand how these migrant riders subjectivise and enable themselves to repeat their daily routines under such conditions and for long periods of time even though the work is allegedly temporary and flexible. Moreover, the investigation of the affective-experience is not

enacted through the lens of positionality. The way I treat affect is as the effect of language on the speaking body, with its corresponding structural implications for identification, enjoyment and the ability to repeat certain actions even though they might be uncomfortable or painful. The relationship between affect and positionality is therefore supplementary and the analysis does not consider affect as just another aspect of the positionality of the workers. I now examine the lived-experience of the migrant delivery-riders as they described it in their daily lives with attention to the affective economy of the riders.

4.2. Daily routine - Experience

In this section I expand on how the delivery riders described their daily routine and what their mindset was when they were working. I also connect this with the affective aspects that relate to their work in the sense of how positive and negative experiences were expressed. In this section, the prevailing themes that emerge from the data, about the daily rhythms of delivery work, revolve around money and efficiency at work. These themes were intertwined with a quantification of work as the technological means of the applications enabled them to witness, at any moment, their earnings on a daily and monthly basis and this seemed to guide their actions at all points. Furthermore, money and efficiency bore a close relationship with the goals they had set for the future, as well as the obstacles they encountered in their day that hindered them. There is also the implication of their reactions to these obstacles, and how that made them feel while doing the work itself.

4.2.1. Efficiency - Knowledge and Experience

All delivery workers start their days with a semi-structured plan, regarding the time they log in to their applications and the main location in which they wait to receive orders. All the variables regarding where they position themselves, when they be active, and the pattern they follow in their day, depend solely on how they can maximise their earnings and efficiency while working.

Vignette 10 – Michael: Interviewer: 'How do you start your day? How do you set up your mind?'

Michael: 'Yes. So first, first up, I need to make sure I have a good rest in the meantime. The second I, I choose a plan, for example, where do I start today? So basically, I'm

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going straight in the McDonald's car park because I know is a breakfast people who they work in the, you know? Business office, for example, they order, they order breakfast, so usually it will be between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. It will be a quite busy. And you can earn good money in the morning time. What else do you want to know?'

Interviewer: 'Then after the morning time, how do you proceed How are you going?'

Michael: 'I tried to locate to the best place for me because the traffic in this town is a nightmare. So same as I prefer to wait in McDonald's car park rather than waiting to spend time there because all the time I got orders, all the time I got orders. Even if it's low money now is different because the diesel is expensive, the insurance guy's expensive. Everything is expensive, so since from 2017 until now the price on delivery is the same, so basically affect us as delivery drivers now. Mm-Hmm. So that's why in the past. I driving. I was like. How I can explain your soul? I didn't have a proper plan. I just drive all the time because Deliveroo has shops everywhere in every corner and even outside from Colchester now, you can get order so you don't have to stay in one place. Now why choose to stay one place? Because diesel is expensive and I know how busy is the traffic in the high street. So I rather to be a little bit out from Colchester. I try to save money to the economy, not to save money. you can't save money now. Yes, you have to do economy. Look after you.'

It is through experience and word of mouth that the riders gained the information necessary to make the most profitable plan possible, while at the same time minimising their expenses. During these times, when prices for petrol and cost of living had increased dramatically, all the delivery-riders attempted to reduce their petrol consumption and unnecessary mileage, while at the same time getting as many orders as they deemed profitable. To this end, rejecting orders that would take them out of their preferred delivery area was a classic practice. Furthermore, even if an order was close by, in terms of mileage, but the delivery fee was rather small that even some minor traffic along the way would greatly reduce the riders' profit margin they would most likely reject the order. The significance of getting more experience was already mentioned, but since it effects even more aspects of the daily lives of delivery workers it deserves to be expanded further.

Participant Niko: 'The more you get into the job, like, the more experience as you got, to start delivering orders if you see a better way to earn more money with orders, to reject which orders to take the better knowledge of the map of the city and how to reach

the customer it really affects my business. When I start Deliveroo I was searching for addresses very long time, but now I know most of the customers' name, address, face. We don't even need the map. Yeah, I don't need the map.'

Knowledge of the area and city you deliver in, played a big role in understanding the available routes you could take. Even more importantly, experienced riders knew how and when they could deviate from the suggested route by utilizing short-cuts and alternative routes that save them time. Although it constantly monitored the location of the rider, the applications' GPS would only send an automated message in the case the driver remained immobile for several minutes and would not object if they took an alternative route, as long as the delivery time was equal or less than the expected time. Interestingly, even if you abided completely with the predestined route, but ended up completing the delivery later than expected, the algorithm would blame the rider and if this was repeated it would start sending emails/notifications that you were slower than expected and could potentially suspend your account. Riders also had to be cautious of where they parked their vehicles for pick-up orders. As **Participant Amber** commented '…we haven't got enough places to park and to wait. He gives you five minutes. Sometimes you wait for the order more than five minutes and you get tickets. This is one of the issues we face every day'. Many riders got parking tickets, even multiple fines every week, which added up to their already numerous expenses. Additionally, getting to know the customers addresses and how to locate them fast was fundamental to completing the orders efficiently. This was particularly so for part-time riders, who experienced frustration as they arrived in the postcode area of the customer's address and then faced difficulties in locating it. The usual approach in this case was to phone the customer to come out to pick up their food, which wasted some time in the process. It is apparent that with the knowledge that comes from experience in this work, riders were able to overcome obstacles that increased their delivery times and potential expenses, thereby driving up their efficiency. After developing how riders pursued the highest efficiency in food-delivery work, I now present their comments about negative and positive experiences during their work.

4.2.2. Negative experiences in delivery work

I have to admit that during my work experience, the majority of my experiences in this job were rather negative. In one of my last times out, I wrote the following paragraph in my diary:

'To mitigate the pain, I was trying to sit as less as possible and remail in standing positions while cycling, but this results in my legs getting fatigued a lot easier than just sitting and cycling. There were times I would return home from 2-3 hours of delivering and I wouldn't be able to sit properly from the pain. I think this feeling of pain, coupled with the discomfort of delivering in cold/rainy conditions in an unknown for me region where I was getting lost more often than not, the GPS on my phone sending me towards the wrong directions at times, the exhaustion from cycling long distances after 10 years of not using a bicycle at all, the unsatisfied customers because the app was more often than not giving me 2 different orders at the same time to deliver in distances over 15km, the calls from the rider's centre asking where I am and that the customer is calling for his food. AND ALL THIS FOR 17 POUNDS IN 3 HOURS marked a threshold in myself that crystallised in a most radical aversion not only of delivering but of cycling in general. This job drives me mad!'.

My frustration, physical and mental discomfort were highlighted in this paragraph and these aspects of my experience rendered working totally unbearable for me. I was very interested to see how other riders would express their views on this and if they would share a tantrum like mine about this job. In stark contrast to my expectations, I found that almost all my participants replied in a very sober and contained way when I asked them to remember a sad or angry moment while at work. **Participant Hassan** answered without showing any emotion: 'Yes, the traffic, and sometimes it's paying too low for one order..' Many answers mimicked **Hassan's** response, stating that they got angry at things that made them lose time and efficiency in their work—long waiting times in restaurants, traffic in the streets, a time they received a parking ticket etc. I also noticed that the participants who replied like this were quite detached in their recollection of such incidents and their expressions did not betray any degree of anger or even moderate frustration—they seemed very stoic while answering. **Participant 2** shared his insight on how he did not let negative experiences at this work influence him in the following vignette.

Vignette 11 – González: 'Yes, sometimes people don't value the simple reason why you do this and why you do it like. Dear friends, I know my family because my family at home and friends like I used to be a bank, and now you have to take orders to the customers, but at the end of the day it's just a job. You do it for the money, You can't get promoted. You know what I mean? People judge me you know that's general

because people are uneducated, but they can say whatever they don't give me money to eat. It is human nature. People criticize everyone.'

Interviewer: 'Do you think people are discriminating against delivery riders, specifically immigrants?'

González: I don't know, it depends on the person. So I would say, yes.. I don't pay attention to these things, My job is to get an order from this point to this point. And I always described how the day like this, I work with a smile, I always greet people I am polite now for the rest I don't give any attention.

Interviewer: 'How do you do this, like kind of shutting off the external stimuli from affecting you. Like for me, like when I was doing the job I was getting affected like if people were slurring me or like "What are you doing all this time? I want my food" I went like, I was affected by it, did you get this by experience?'

González: 'Experience didn't get my experience stuck on. When to be honest with them, they sent me two different directions. There's a link to them. It didn't affect me just because end of the day, you can't you can't change anything. It depends on each person but for me I don't worry about things I can't control.'

González mentioned his family here, and the need to be able to sustain himself and his family. It is through this work that he was able to earn money and do that—he chose to not pay attention to such behaviours because in the end he could not change anything, so it was better to not think about them at all. Although Participant **González'** way of dealing with such rude or racist behaviours was totally different to my own, I find two points very interesting in his approach. First, how he commented on doing the job for the money and then that the people who criticised him are not the ones paying him, so he did not pay any attention to them. There was a link between work and money, highlighted in this wordplay between not paying attention to the one who did not pay you. Even riders who testified to me of experiencing very rude, racist and even aggressive behaviours against them from either customers or restaurant staff, seemed able to quickly distance themselves from such negative experiences and continued working like nothing happened. For example, **Participant Amber** said he just reported the incident to customer support and cancelled the order, avoiding in the future the specific addresses:

Amber: 'It happens to me many times, especially with the customers. Sometimes when you ask them, I lost, I cannot find the address. They shout at you, they swear at you,

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you know, telling you bad words. Yeah, some of them. Yeah. That's the bad thing sometimes I don't like.'

Interviewer: 'And what's your way of reacting to this kind of insults?'

Amber: 'I would just I would just call the call the support from the application and tell them, report everything. So I don't take the order. I wouldn't take the order there yeah, I didn't deliver. No, no, no. So I would tell them, I'm not happy. If I go there, I will fight with them or I would punch him, or he would punch me. So I'm not going.'

Amber was more affected by such behaviours than **González**, but in parallel with **González** he was able to find a way to keep working without worrying about these incidents. He never accepted any orders from places he had had such experiences in the past and focused on completing the rest of his orders. Similarly, **Participant Rhys** after experiencing racist behaviour from the manager in one restaurant, never accepted any orders from that restaurant again because he did not want this experience to be repeated.

To summarise, many riders related negative experiences at work with anything that might hinder their efficiency and reduce their earnings. Additionally, many riders experienced rude or racist behaviour from either customers or restaurant staff and reacted by avoiding the places where such incidents took place. This was of course, particularly true in the case of migrant riders who, because of their accents, could easily be perceived as immigrants and they encountered racism. Most notably, the majority of the experienced delivery riders found coping strategies that did not let such negative experiences overwhelm them, and which allowed them to maintain some distance from these bitter examples. The common elements of such coping strategies involved the money payments that were secured from this job after the completion of each order and the role this job played in the survival of themselves and their family. To better explore these elements and their affective role, the positive moments of this work is now investigated.

4.2.3. Positive experiences in delivery work

In this section, the moments that participants shared as happy or proud experiences during their work are elaborated. One would expect that after illustrating such a modest attitude towards negative experiences, riders would perhaps have a fair share of positive ones to contrast them to. On the contrary, the riders exhibited an equally detached attitude, lacking in

enthusiasm, towards exploring positive experiences in their work. The majority of my participants followed the approach exemplified by **Participant Anabella**:

> Interviewer: 'Do you have a specific memory or example from delivery working that made you feel particularly proud or happy?'

> **Anabella**: 'Proud or happy? No. No, to be honest no! When I just deliver the order and I put the money in the app, that's the happiness.'

Again, the main motivator and element of satisfaction in this job seemed to be money, the direct correlate of completing an order. **Participant Quincy** also located a direct relationship between earning more money and feeling gratification: 'So I choose to work on Just Eat and Uber Eats just the two, but it was OK. I want more. I download Deliveroo. Then I was very happy. I could uh, uh, looks two apps. I mean, if I'd been choose for an order from High Street to Greenstead, I could take another order from Deliveroo in the same destination area. Exactly. Pick up, and drop off the same one. And then my money was double, doubling my amount, and I was happy.' Although many riders shared this perspective, there were cases where the riders described a different kind of positive experience during their work. In contrast to the cases mentioned directly above, these affective moments came more spontaneously and more often in other parts of the interview rather than as answers to the specific question. These moments entailed a positive affective-experience which was generated from the random human interaction. Even **Quincy** who had described his happy moment when he was able to double his earnings, then shared a totally different experience.

> **Quincy**: 'Yeah, yeah, I have many of them. One of them is close to Christmas, December time. It was that old woman, old Lady. She give me kitty cat chocolate? As a tips as a tip. And I was so grateful. I remember in that time my grandmother and she gave me sweets every time. Yeah, I was very happy, very proud about that. The best tips of mine was about 10 pounds from one customer, wasn't compared to the feeling with that old lady, which gave me, That's it. Yeah, that's the moment when I feel happy.'

Even though the predominant source of satisfaction and positive experience was found in the generation of income, there were other occasions, albeit rarer, that human interactions brought about a proximity between riders and customers that generated very warm affective experiences. Another example came from **Participant Alonzo: '**Yeah, yeah, sometimes I like I said, I meet twenty five percent to all the customer I meet in the street, I meet Mr. Stone on delivered last day we have, they great. They say, yeah, where are you?'. Short and unexpected

encounters like these generated a different kind of warm gratification, than can be found in the repetitive aspects of this work. Such encounters provided riders with a sense of community and a tacit knowledge that they possessed about their customers. It therefore presented them with a different kind of self-worth that lay in the simplest interactions such as a brief greeting and smiling encounters on the streets.

> **Vignette 12 – González**: 'Yeah I like having people in my life, I think it's it it's good to have a community as part of that community. You know, having a community in any way. Even like delivering food because I'm I've known about drunk people in your neighbourhood. Sometimes I never thought somebody would like and again, like I was to go to a mom or dad to bring them their food, so things like this make me happy. Yeah, I'm happy that I didn't know this was maybe some time ago, and I think he, when he smiles after receiving his food and then now had been going on for years sometimes. I know the customer before I have this address, I already know because I spoke to the they typically like a little, you know, and that when you have to work smarter like this, and if the indicator and the indicator map tells you, you are going to take you on one or two of the last two miles I can walk. And when the customer is surprised by how fast I am sometimes it's very rewarding.'

One thing that deserves to be highlighted is that the experienced riders with in-depth knowledge of the streets, customers and restaurants took a good amount of pride in this knowledge they had acquired. Some might consider it mundane, and thus never mentioned it when I asked them to tell me something they felt proud of in this work. However, when they told me that they could tell exactly how to deliver an order just by seeing the postcode or recognising customers' faces in the streets and greeting them, this was accompanied by a big smile on their faces as well as feelings of accomplishment. This was one of the very few times I had the opportunity to encounter such expressions and experiences among the delivery riders I have met. One could perhaps argue that this is a form of guilty pleasure the riders experience, by being in a position to know personal information about people in a city that otherwise they wouldn't be able to possess, like **González** having knowledge about who is usually drunk in the neighbourhood. This kind of insider's knowledge facilitates their position in the community, being an immigrant and finding yourself in a completely new environment sets you out on a quest for embeddedness and inclusion. To this end, the thorough knowledge of the streets and the information about locals provides a sense of belonging and a feeling of inclusion in their local neighbourhoods. Intriguingly, despite the complex knowledge that they gained through their

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experience with preferred restaurants and waiting times, favourable locations, avoiding high-traffic streets, parking positions and tickets risk, the majority of riders did not consider this kind of knowledge a particular achievement that they should be proud of. Even the most successful multi-apping riders reserved their pride for their high earnings, and not so much the complexity of the thought process through which they had achieved these. Seeing a person in the street and greeting them while knowing that you delivered his dinner the day before, produced a very positive affective moment which I rarely encountered during my research and contrasts dramatically to the money aspect. This is something that I revisit and expand on in the affective analysis. After elaborating on the positive experiences that the riders described in their work, I now inquire into the goals that riders have and how this connects with the temporary factor.

4.2.4. Goals and Temporality

The riders' goals had a strict relation with time, as it was through the temporary dimension of food-delivery work that they enabled future goals that would be accomplished as soon as they finished with this brief and temporary work.

> **Vignette 13 – González**: Interviewer: 'Where do you see yourself in the future? What will you change compared to now?'
>
> **González**: 'Well, I just say that, but I'm going to ram my mindset. Going to become more successful entrepreneur. Again, everybody's on out, me on my own know, I got, I don't have my own restaurant, a restaurant yet. So I want to have a Mediterranean fine dining restaurant with wine. I love wine. I got a wine lover of wine. And for me people are asking and also I want to. Me, I want to have a different income stream. I can't rely on one stream of income. So I have to really deliver where I have my own job. I also trade myself. I try to trading stocks for new trade stuff.'
>
> Interviewer: 'Ah trading stocks in the stock market you mean?'
>
> **González**: 'Yes, trading like Unqualified financial adviser.'

In this vignette the theme of micro-entrepreneurship is highlighted again. Part-time and full-time riders alike, envisioned a short temporal horizon in this work and then imagined their own individual plan of success. **Participant Agustin,** a full-time rider, stated 'I think for one to

three years I will keep this job, I am not sure but at that time I want to do something else, I want to buy properties and open one business and move in Dubai'. In a similar fashion, **Participant Quincy,** a full-time rider and a college business student at the same time, dreamed of getting British citizenship, staying in the UK for the rest of his life and 'opening a couple of restaurants and carwash' enterprises. These participants had honest faith in their plans to succeed and worked their hardest to accomplish them. Nevertheless, other riders who had been working full-time for several years, admitted to me that for the last couple of years they had been saying it could be their last but still kept working as food-delivery riders. **Participant Yaritza**, a rider for seven years, commented 'Now, passing to my head I stop this job very soon. I don't want to continue this job anymore. Maybe this year is going to be the last one'. In his case, despite wanting to stop this work he realistically admitted that it was very hard to find an alternative job with equal earnings. A more reasonable approach was proffered by **Participant Amber**, who said that many of his delivery friends found work as taxi drivers, a less precarious and more stable occupation. But even more importantly it 'is the only benefits you can get from Deliveroo. You know the city and you can jump to the taxi'. **Participant Michael** also added that he was searching for different full-time jobs and had attended some interviews, wanting to use Deliveroo only as a part-time job: 'I want it's like back in time. But can you remember what I said in the start of the interview? Yeah, that was my part-time job. Yeah, I will go back to part-time. So after five years when I'm back in 2017, so I'll keep Deliveroo like my second job.'

Clearly the freedom that this job promised was not limited to choosing your working hours, but it also enabled a flexibility around the identity and current status of the riders. It allowed for an interplay between their current, past and future work-selves—they could switch from full-time riders to part-time riders and find a stable job according to their preferences and in this way maintained their plans to succeed. This theme of boundaryless career opportunities is a theme that platform companies attempt to reinforce. Despite their efforts, it is obvious that not all food-delivery riders will be successful future entrepreneurs. Moreover, recent research indicates how the algorithmic management functions of these companies prevent the workers from developing knowing competencies that could be useful in these entrepreneurial endeavours they envisage (Duggan et al., 2022). An example where the lack of transparency in the algorithmic control and action prevented one very committed delivery rider from developing his knowledge competences and further progressing is described in Vignette 14 when I asked him how he felt about getting his account randomly suspended by an algorithm.

Vignette 14 – Michael: 'I said to them, who's this guys who play with your life? How can someone who doesn't know you change your life is in a bad way in few seconds? Just press enter or something like that? How is it possible in 21 century? Someone doesn't matter, someone who worked for them and you? I had 5000 deliveries in my account, none of them complain. How is it possible to just shut me twice now? I remember. As I said to you, after six months, the second was the second account, would they shut me down again? So I learn from my mistakes to not upset them, to not make any mistakes on Deliveroo side. That's why I consider it was a bloody unfair for me to shut down again my account.'

Interviewer: 'Do you think this happens automatically or do you think they pass from a human?'

Michael: That's the that's the problem with them. That's why in that time I was going to go drive for the London and go straight to Deliveroo company and talk with them, with someone who is in charge with issues like that. Tell them, to prove them they make a mistake. She closed my account, closing my account but you can't defend. They told me, you can't talk with anyone. Even if you come, you came, if you come here, you can't talk to anyone. No one, they will listen about your own issue, which as far as I as I said to you, I was really angry'

The rider was very upset with the lack of an explanation of why they suspended his account. He could not fathom why they closed an account with five thousand completed orders without giving him any explanation or allowing him to appeal. Furthermore, after the first time his account got closed and he experienced what he felt was senseless and groundless punishment, he adopted a stance so as to never allow this to happen again. He described this stance as avoiding upsetting them and learning from his mistakes, 'to not make any mistakes on Deliveroo side'. The interesting point that relates to all riders is that they cannot be certain what were their mistakes in the first place and the way they try to make sense of what their mistake was is a totally different, subjective understanding of the algorithmic panopticon that rules their fates (Woodcock, 2020). Even among the software developers at Deliveroo there is no single person who knows and understands the algorithm in its entirety. This is what the CEO of Deliveroo, Will Shu, stated at the Annual General Meeting of Deliveroo in 2022 in London. It was for this reason, he stated, that a human team is now in place which would review account terminations for Deliveroo. Be that as it may, cases like Michael's are still taking place and

the way each rider makes sense out of them is very convoluted as it is still hard to find anyone who can provide clear answers. Therefore, even committed and ambitious riders experience disappointment and frustration as their efforts are left unrecognised by the algorithm. Even doing everything by the book and trying their best to satisfy all the criteria they imagine the algorithm demands from them, success is not guaranteed. Additionally, the fluidity of the platform organisations is propagating a flexibility that in theory allows the development of boundaryless careers. However, it is this very same flexibility that restrains the gig workers from pursuing any horizontal or vertical career transitions in the sector and thus prevents them from achieving the proclaimed professional progression (Kost et al., 2020).

For these reasons, the segment of the rider population that adopts a more 'gaming the system' attitude and employs transgressions in their work is still dominant in the sector. Combining this with the strong temporary element with which riders transpose between their current and future self, the rider who accumulates the highest earnings regardless of the means, is considered the most successful and as having the best chances to actualise the entrepreneurial success they dream of. This success is usually very compatible with the neoliberal capitalist dream of acquiring enough funds to start your own profitable business and living comfortably afterwards. The majority of the migrant riders are reluctant to adopt the identity of a food-delivery rider and instead they formulate a unique individual fantasy of what their post-delivery work-self will look like—what kind of business they will have or in which country they will be living and how their life will look. This aligns nicely with the temporary factor of this job and the temporality with which they experience their everyday routine. This was also evident with the way that many riders were able to distance themselves from the negative and even positive emotions during their work. There is something compelling about this combination of freedom and money that keeps the workers coming back to it. One could also argue that the aspect of otherness plays a vital role in this. The classic racist narrative of immigrants coming to our countries and stealing our jobs, can be reappropriated on the part of the migrant delivery riders this time: 'The British don't want this job cause they don't know how to make money out of it, but we make money'. They are elaborating their own individual myth as the experienced riders who, by putting their tacit knowledge to good use, are able to get paid very well. The job that does not pay well, will pay well, 'You', the migrant-worker who is willing to work long hours every week, to endure the harsh conditions and at the same time finds ways to earn good money from it. On the other hand, this also explains the frequent racist behaviours that many riders have encountered in their daily routines both while on the roads as well as

from restaurants where they pick up their orders. It seems as if the perks of flexibility and freedom that this job entails are perceived negatively by native workers who are working the usual full-time jobs and they direct their scorn and aggression to these people who are enjoying such conditions. Indeed, racist perceptions of otherness are often grounded on the basis of another group having access to a forbidden enjoyment and are thus considered as thieves of enjoyment who deserve to be discriminated against. This is a point of view that obviously neglects the oppressive, alienated and even illegal position in which many migrant riders often find themselves.

4.3. Segue – End of the Beginning

So far I have presented the grammar of food-delivery work in terms of the freedom and flexibility that surrounds working as a delivery rider. I illustrated how money and efficiency at work are the main focuses of riders, who therefore were willing to accept the risks and employed transgressive practices that increased their income such as multi-apping and tax evasion. The practice of account renting has also been discussed and how it relates to an underground work-force where migrant workers without the right-to-work find informal access and start working as food-delivery riders. The data analysis then developed the lived-experience of the riders and how they described their embodied affect. The main points of this section illustrated a discrepancy between the way I was affected and the way I documented my experience and the way most other riders described their own lived experiences. I was severely affected and frustrated by this work, with constant thoughts of stopping and taking actions to improve it. However, most of the other riders exhibited the ability to distance themselves from the affective experiences of their job and were able to keep doing this work without difficulties and second thoughts. This held true mainly for the negative affective moments but was also evident in the positive moments. There, in some cases, riders had difficulty expressing these directly in response to the relevant question, but did so more readily and spontaneously during other parts of the interview. Lastly, the goals and aspirations of riders were discussed and how the freedom and money governed, and at the same time limited, these ambitions. The temporary factor also played a key role in this configuration by enabling the juxtaposition of the past and future working-selves, and how these contrasted to the present situation. The individual fantasy of each rider and how they conceived their future self was highly subjective and although it converged in terms of the capitalist success story, it differed greatly from my own fantasy when

I was working as a delivery rider. Moreover, it is still not clear why the majority of delivery riders were compelled to keep working under the pretence of 'make money while working freely' and how they accomplished this distancing from the experience of affect during their work. In order to make better sense of these shifts of meaning and to investigate the affective economy of riders in-depth, a psychoanalytic framework is employed in the following part of data analysis. The psychoanalytic concepts allow us to connect the quantification of this work with its affective-experience and the different modes of enjoyment that are available to riders, helping us to understand their subjectivity.

5.Data Analysis Chapter - Part 2

In this chapter, the focus lies is on employing a Lacanian lens to further analyse the different meanings and identifications of the migrant riders as they navigate their affective-experience so as to delineate the structure of the subject and object of food-delivery work. To this end, I begin with the contrast in perspectives with which the previous chapter concluded and from this, I investigate the difference in which freedom and flexibility are experienced in this work and what significations are facilitating which roles in moulding the subjectivity of the riders. I then move on to examine the different meanings that money adopts in the discourse of the riders and the role of quantification in dealing with certain experiences at work. This sets the coordinates necessary to elaborate on the specific contributions of the analysis to the extant Lacanian literature, particularly in explaining the role of fantasy in relation to how the riders present their subjectivity (Driver, 2014) and how they sustain these idealised narratives to keep doing the work they do under these harsh conditions (Driver, 2009a, 2017a; Hoedemaekers, 2008, 2010). In other words, I extend the Lacanian conceptualisations of fantasy and identification in organisation studies through an analysis of my data in the following ways. First, what is the precise way in which the riders' fantasies influence their subjectivity? Second, how does this influence on their subjectivity support the riders distribution of enjoyment? Thirdly, how does this experience of enjoyment shape the object of their work in its different nuances so as to mitigate their negative experiences and allow them to keep doing their work in the long-term? The last part of this chapter expands on the dissymmetry and vacillation of the delivery-subject between their different identifications and the corresponding constitution of the object of food-delivery work via money and quantifications. This then allows for the formulation of the symptomatic mode of experience that is dominant for migrant riders in the food-delivery sector and how it affects the repetitions of the daily-routine and the management of the affective-experience for the riders.

In the previous part of the data analysis, the foundations of food-delivery work were developed especially in terms of freedom and flexibility as the main attributes that this job allegedly offers and promotes for its workers. Nevertheless, the data illustrated the very long working schedules most full-time workers adopted to make a living. It is in this way, that the platforms rely upon the riders' resourcefulness, with which riders find ways to transgress the rules of the applications, in order to sustain the low wages they offer for each order. On the one hand, the riders tried to dodge extra costs that burden them (insurance, taxes), and on the other

hand they found ingenious ways to earn more money from the low order-fees that the platforms were paying (multi-apping, renting accounts, informal access to work and illicit drug-trafficking). Such practices have come to be considered the norm for any rider who wants to increase their earnings and crystallises resistance under these main transgressions. This is in alignment with Flemming and Spicer's argument that forms of organisational resistance, particularly cynicism in this case, actually further the corporate interests (Contu, 2008; Fleming & Spicer, 2003, 2007). In this case, the platforms' objectives included maintaining the freelancing status of the workers, inflating the available pools of riders and preserving the low payments per order. Intriguingly, these transgressive measures supported the riders' narratives of entrepreneurship and self-control, both being strong neo-liberal identifications. This is closely tied with quantification and money, as the motivating forces which also develop and strengthen these self-narratives and identifications.

Money is taken here as a signifier, not only in its buying use, but in the different meanings with which money is used in the discourse of food-delivery work. Quantification stands for the use of algorithmic control systems by the platforms to monitor and manage the workers—this is accomplished by measuring performance through customer ratings, on-time deliveries and behavioural nudges like price surging (Griesbach et al., 2019; Huang, 2023). Interestingly, workers adopt this perspective for themselves and in this way they willingly consent to their further commodification amidst hyper-precarious conditions by adopting a gamified perspective on their work (Huang, 2022; Vasudevan & Chan, 2022). Gamification is understood here as embracing a game system of competition and rewards, through a quantification of behaviours and actions, in a non-game domain like food-delivery work (Woodcock & Johnson, 2018). My aim in this chapter is to investigate and analyse how the element of quantification is related to the workers' lived-experience, both in terms of an affective dimension as well as its role in retaining the majority of the full time workers in the active pool of riders for a long period. In this way I pave the way for the main contributions of this thesis which are targeted towards how riders experience the precarious nature and the function of the algorithmic system of control in this work, and what ramifications these offer in the domain of organisational studies and human resource management. These contributions are elaborated in the next chapter. In the present chapter, my focus is to reveal the structuring mechanisms both in terms of riders identifications and the nuances of meaning in key signifiers—like money and freedom—which accompany them, to show why these contributions are important and justifiable.

To begin this investigation on the role of quantification in the food-delivery work, I start from where the previous chapter concluded, with the deadlock of perspectives between my own experience and those of the other riders. As Parker argues, it is in these disagreements that the researcher should focus his analysis; the space that is generated through these discrepancies allows the emergence of constructive and more permissive criteria for a qualitative research (Parker, 2005). As was shown above, there is a conundrum I encountered on two levels: the diversity of the riders' goals, and my own inability to find some kind of fantasy or affective moment that would make this work bearable for me. Firstly, each rider was able to have their own fantasies, their own individual goals as long as they bore a minimum relation to accumulation and quantification. Secondly, when I was doing this work in Colchester, I could not find any imaginary identification to invest in my identity as a delivery rider. I hated every moment of it and perhaps this was because for me, quantification represents something I wished to negate, something that creates inequalities and exploitation, things I firmly opposed. It is important to note that these different perspectives are not treated in the sense of finding out which one is true and which is false—the investigation aims at revealing the underlying reasons for which this difference in perspectives occurred rather than designating the right way to view reality. Additionally, the influence of the researcher on the participants and vice versa is also something worthy of exploration as even the most passive observer produces effects that should be questioned in the research analysis (Burawoy, 1998). With this in mind, I commented on my dissatisfaction and experience with Deliveroo in the following excerpt from my diary:

> **Diary Note 1 -** 9.3.2022: 'Hmmm how many stars should I give Deliveroo for its rider experience? This made me think that the same way they treat my departure from the active riders, that is a numerical/statistical trace left to sign my evaluation of the whole experience, the same way I felt I was treated while working, another number in the sum of drivers that work and make money for a company that exploits us. This dehumanising feeling that renders your whole self as just another gear in the machine, that whatever happens to it there is nothing to worry about since we have a bunch of other identical gears ready to take its place so the well-oiled machine can keep working without disruptions.'

In my testimony, there was a dominant perception through which I represented my work-self as just another gear in a machine while being very skeptical about Deliveroo's statement of providing the best possible experience for their riders. Additionally, the way I viewed the

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advertised freedom and flexibility in this work was that it presented a structural element of the business model like a favour and a concession to the workers. What really surprised me was that most riders did not see this the same way.

> **Vignette 1 – Alonzo**: Interviewer: 'So on the one hand you have, the freedom and flexibility. But on the other hand, you need to work a lot of hours and my question is, is the freedom and flexibility as advertised in this work?'
>
> **Alonzo**: 'You know, you, what's the word, doesn't matter if you give it to you. Small price, you must or you must do it because this is your job. This is your job if you don't do it, if you don't do it today. If you don't do it tomorrow, if you don't do it all week. What you gonna do? What you're going to eat?'

Alonzo viewed his job as his duty to produce something for his family. The way he presented this duty uncovered an identification, not with the role of a delivery-rider per se, but rather he identified as the one who had to do the work, the worker who brought food to the family table. This removed the focus from the work itself and prioritised the generation of income—the means of production were not important, the working subject was in the spotlight here. Participant Tomas added a similar reply when I asked him about his thoughts when he went to deliver:

> **Tomas**: 'Nothing feeling. There's no money. When I feel there's no money in my pocket. Yeah. So I have to go to work today just like the prices, you know, and the news about the energy bills increase, and so on.'

Again, there was a similar approach that both these participants shared: the value-creating subject which answered the call of lack only in the production of a surplus. In this alienating structure of their statements, what was not questioned or even mentioned was the underlying assumption that in the food-delivery universe, riders reinforced the capitalist effort to equate the subjective lack with objective surplus. However, there is no symmetry between the subjective lack and the objective surplus, if these two were equal then the human being would not speak. It is by virtue of speaking that every enunciation turns into a demand in an attempt to satisfy a desire owing solely to the alienating nature of language as it originates in the field of the Other. Also, in their answers there was an omission of any kind of pleasure or enjoyment, where you just did the job because you had to. It is precisely because this was considered a duty that any relations with positive or negative experiences were not included. The participants illustrated this by saying 'it doesn't matter if small price' and 'feeling nothing,

there's no money', so while they might have stated that they did not feel anything, they certainly felt the lack which was the motivating force behind the duty of going for another delivery. Nevertheless, none of the riders told us who designated this duty, the question of choice was turned back on them. They were free to choose when to work but it was their duty to work, which is an apparent contradiction. In Lacanian terms, one could argue that riders adopt the capitalist master's discourse that puts everyone to work and thereby renunciate their jouissance while on the work and they celebrate only their generated surplus-value in a form of surplus-jouissance as elaborated on Chapter 3. Intriguingly, the thing no rider mentioned is that this generated surplus-value was at the same time producing a subjective lack, a lack which initiated a negative spiral from which no produced surplus would ever be able to counter-balance (Tomšic, 2015, p. 67). No matter the generation of surplus there will always be a signification pertaining to the surplus which the riders are after, that will escape them. It is in this sense that I investigate how it crystallised for these people to orient their work experience towards generating a surplus.

While the material lack of money was felt deeply, and expressed in their replies, there is no mention of anything relating to a lack-of-being, only a lack-of-having. This sets the context of an ontological problematization that traverses any critique of materialism. As Lacan argues, the critical contribution of Marx and Freud does not lie in the link between labour and the renunciation of jouissance, but on the structural imposition of the capitalist discourse on the workers through social relations of domination (Lacan, 2023, p. 26). In other words, the crux of the matter is not why people work and renounce jouissance while doing so, but what the parameters of this discourse are that dominates us in this way of thinking, and from where it draws its dominance and 'naturality'. Thus, the delivery-riders were effectively dominated by this neoliberal discourse which proclaimed work and accumulation as the modern masters of our era. Foucault's statement that 'people know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does' resonates with this situation (Foucault, 1982, cited in Dreyfus & Rabinow, 2014, p. 187). The food-delivery riders were knowingly entering the vicious circle of delivery-work, again and again, motivated by their lack-of-having and identifying with the producing subject, motivated by the profit-loss calculus as was shown in the previous Chapter. What was perhaps not acknowledged or articulated in the riders' discourse was how these identifications were blocking out the negativity of the human subject. These presented the illusion that all that was required to feel fulfilled could be found on the road of generating income. The psychoanalytic claim here is

that the feelingless riders are actually capable of feeling quite a lot and one should not take at face value this job apparently devoid of affective-experiences. The inquiry should firstly set the right context under which the motivational force—that allows riders to repeat their delivery-work, again and again, in the pursuit of money—can be understood, as well as clarify the topic of choice and the mode of enjoyment in this platform-work. This raises the question of how the riders were effectively identifying themselves with this personification of capital, not in terms of use-values but rather in the acquisition and augmentation of exchange-values, while at the same time concealing from their view that this valorisation of value would never be able to fulfill the lack of their human subjectivity. How was their self-representation, through quantification and money, preventing them from articulating any similar view with my own reflection and perception of being nothing more than a cog in this platform machine? Simultaneously, what was the factor, in my own embodied-experience of this job, that never allowed me to glimpse this view that the majority of full-time riders articulated?

5.1. Food-Delivery Drivers and their Vicissitudes

The contradictions of choice should be closely analysed as they are central to understanding the self-representation of the participants. Participant Hassan shared a similar view with the other participants when I asked him how he felt about the freedom in this job:

> **Hassan**: 'I just don't have the boss which is telling you what to do, and you can stop. You have something today to do. You just go there like, I come here after I go off and have some deliveries. But it's also that there is a nice job because you can take off when you want.'

Hassan added to his answer the importance he attributes to being able to stop working when you want. We can understand such utterances as directed to the Other, and before going any further in the analysis it would be valuable to depict who is this intersubjective Other they address. Their strong defence of the freedom they experienced at work was perhaps directed to the Other as the mirror image of their own selves. One could surmise that the riders were defending the flexibility and freedom at work so consistently in an attempt to not let their own selves down when they decided to start this job. In this case, this ideal image of themselves is superimposed on my part as the researcher asking the questions. When the riders were asked

what they thought about being free at their work, they seemed compelled to defend this freedom and flexibility at all costs. Perhaps, because it was under this premise that they decided to start working as food-delivery riders. In this way, they provided the devotion necessary to their subjectivity, past and present, so that they were able to continue working as delivery riders. In a sense, this illustrates the effects of time in terms of meaning—meaning is always signified retroactively and thus cannot be fixed. In other words, **Hassan's** comments that his actions at that time were solely focused on a future self, as the 'before' that would make possible the 'after', an 'after' that was essentially held in abeyance so that the 'before' could rightfully occupy its position first. The riders were offered an opportunity to affirm their identity as free, autonomous workers during the interview process and they made good use of it, by confirming the free and flexible status of this work. Furthermore, the fact that I was challenging this perception and playing the 'devil's advocate' added more to their own conviction and persistence on how free and flexible this work really was.

> **Vignette 2 – González**: Interviewer: 'So food deliveries means freedom at work, but you've got free login whenever you want to go off line whenever you want the flexibility in these things. How do you perceive this freedom at work? Do you agree? Do you think it's exactly as it's being advertised because it seems there are some discrepancies?'
>
> **González**: 'No, it's more than advertised. I think it shows that the target now has totally changed.'
>
> Interviewer: 'But I will play the devil's advocate now, and we say, OK, I think if you're doing it full time. Full time without any tricks like multi-apping its very hard to make a living, because in order to make living wage you need to work at least 10h a day. So you end up working 70 hours a week.'
>
> **– González**: 'But as I said in the start it is like if you work on weekends, it seems balanced. So Thursday, Friday, Friday, he said Friday, Saturday, Sunday. You can make better money. So if you do it full time, you have to look after it.'

It would not be too much of a stretch to think that a similar series of such back and forthing had already taken place before, perhaps in conversations between the riders or even in an internal monologue of the rider with himself. **González's** initial reply started with a negation and continued to say that it was even better than advertised. A psychoanalyst would be very suspicious of a similar sentence uttered in the clinic. It brings to mind the famous negation 'No, it's certainly not my mother' that alerts the analyst that a relation with the mother is concealed.

In a similar fashion, I am suspicious of such definite claims, hurrying to convince the interlocutor that the freedom and flexibility is not only as advertised, but it is even better than initially thought. This resonates with my own opinion when I attended the workers' demonstration in London last June. The following excerpt depicts my thoughts during the march:

> **Diary Note 2** – 18.6.2022: 'Around 14.00pm I saw them coming and there were 4 people holding the IWGB panel and 2-3 people with bicycles behind it with a big flag. I was surprised to see that most of the people were British and no immigrant workers had joined the march and that the number of the people were so few in a more than 20k people march overall. Also, I was greatly disappointed that from more than half a million of migrant riders almost no one came to the demonstration, and me as a researcher and a part-time delivery-rider was there to also hold the flag. How can all these people not feel the need to demonstrate for the exploitative conditions on their work? From the several hundred thousands of migrant riders, am I the only one who feels like this?'

The way in which I was hurrying to convince and reinforce my conviction that this job was highly exploitative and that it deserved better working conditions for which we needed to demonstrate and thereby illustrate our complaints in large numbers, is similar with the way the delivery-riders wanted to reinforce their own freedom and control over their work. Each side identified with the mirror image of itself, and transposed this identification to an external Other, from which recognition was expected. In my case, it was recognition of the exploitation and the immanent need for change, and in the case of the migrant riders, recognition of their freedom and flexibility at work through which they had autonomy and control over their earnings and lives. Perhaps a middle ground could have been maintained between these two positions, but that would require a traversing of the fantasy as both these positions captured ideal-images that oriented the perception of reality in a specific, imaginary way. The problem I locate in this configuration is that the side sharing my perspectives is infinitesimally smaller than the other. It seems as if my views represented the absolute minority of food-delivery workers and this set a strong requirement for problematisation on why the majority held the view it did. Many scholars have written on the topic of the illusion of freedom and control in food-delivery work (Griesbach et al., 2019; Umer, 2021; Woodcock, 2020), but the precise grounding of the illusory nature of such choice is offered by the psychoanalytic concept of the forced choice. When the riders argued that the job was free and flexible despite working 70 or

more hours every week, they expected the interviewer's recognition, standing in the place of the Other, in order to further conceal the forced choice of subjectivity. It was the same forced choice that I, as the researcher and ethnographer, had unknowingly taken to view this job as one of the most exploitative, that required radical change. The lack of a real option is more than the lack of choice itself—here the perception of a choice being presented, while also being forfeited, is what shapes one's sense of individual agency. This meaningless act that presents an illusion of free will is what defines one's internal experience of making independent decisions. As Dolar comments, it is through this hollow display that subjectivity is demonstrated and not through any genuine ability to freely select an authentic alternative path—it is the empty gesture that matters for subjectivity (Dolar, 1993). This is fundamental to understanding the subjectivity of gig-workers as the companies have successfully managed to present the choice to work always on the side of the riders. Through this manipulation of choice, platform-companies, like skilled prestidigitators, announce that nobody and nothing will demand that the workers work and yet the majority of riders worked more than seventy hours every week just to make ends meet. In a society where the imperative to work is universal, platform-companies have reversed this picture allowing each delivery-rider to work whenever they want and experience this choice as originating within themselves, despite the material conditions that force them to work. One could argue that the companies are well aware of the precarious positions that many of their riders find themselves in and know that if the riders want to survive they have to be active and accept orders in their applications for long periods of time. Yet, despite all these challenges, the riders experienced their choice to work as free and entirely their own, and were willing to defend this freedom with conviction. It is this reversal, purely for the appearance of where the choice lies, that is achieved through forced choice and convinces riders that they are their own bosses and working independently whenever they want. This elaboration of forced choice and its significance for the riders' subjectivity contributes towards a better understanding of how migrant-riders manoeuvre insecurity and precarity and the tension between self-representation and subjectivity in the context of freedom at work (Dashtipour, 2014). More specifically it contributes to past research on freelancing workers (Hoedemaekers, 2021) which illustrated how workers maintain the tension between a disidentification from the precarious label and a focus on the autonomy and freedom by adding the significance of the forced choice in the role of subjectivity as the unconscious navigates how this tension functions in the experience of food-delivery. It is precisely through the effects of this forced choice to the subjectivity of the riders that they are able to mitigate the negative affective-experiences of this work and the corresponding

acceptance of such experiences as an affirmation of their agency as I expand upon in the following pages.

5.1.1. Quantification and Subjectivity

Having established the notion of the forced choice of food-delivery workers and its significance for identification through the medium of the Other, I now turn to how things progress after the forced choice is made, and how this negation of already having taken the choice, allows the continuation of working despite the adversities encountered. Participant Anabella provided the following answer when I asked her about how she felt about the flexibility of this job.

> **Anabella**: 'I just use it to make more money, because like today for example I was off from the bank and what am I going to do in the morning? Stay the whole morning going around? It's not worthy it but if I go out to deliver in the rush hour it is worthy it.'

She did not mention the aspect of flexibility and freedom in her reply, and instead focuses on the surplus-value that this job gave her. Her mindset was targeted towards an imperative of growth, a drive for enrichment by expanding her value. The conditions or the obstacles in the job, even her own affective-experience were not mentioned and did not matter, the only thing that mattered was the 'more'. The ability to calculate, to quantify this surplus was the key to her argument, with the capitalist mode of enjoyment entirely relying on counting itself. As Tomšic argues, following Lacan, it is the number that becomes the treasure (Tomšic, 2015, p. 69). Anabella then goes on to comment on her Christmas plans after I commented that she had work related plans so close to New Year's Eve:

> **Vignette 3 – Anabella** : Interviewer: ' Wow, 28th of December. Yeah, like just before the New Year's Eve, you're going to be giving exams..'

> **Anabella**: 'No, I don't give a shit about New Year's Christmas. Anything, any celebration. I have a future to obtain. I'm just my future. What am I going to do with the new year? If what's on my CV though, you know, in this country, I'm an immigrant. If I like it, if I'm a person of value, I'll stay in this country. If not, then I have spent almost £80000 in the university from my own pocket, and then will go back to my beautiful country, stay there in the inflation, and that's it, I will die from heart attack after leaving the UK. So it's like for me, there is no choice. And for anyone who came

here as a student, there is no choice; either to be a person of a value, or either you'll go back to a home country.'

Anabella's statement intrigued me for multiple reasons; first for the way she connects her future to becoming a 'person of value' and secondly, for the way she perceived value in strictly monetary terms. Furthermore, the entanglement of money with value was not an innocent connection, in the sense that for value to have any meaning for her it needed to be quantified. She considered the possibility of having a future in the UK, inseparably connected to her becoming a valuable person and this needed to translate into a quantifiable measurement. The connotations for her in this case include becoming an accredited mortgage adviser and getting a prestigious and well-paid position in a bank. Her part-time work as a delivery-rider enabled her to earn money while on the path to accomplish her goal, in addition to her part-time job as a junior banker. Be that as it may, the whole future projection of herself was oriented towards calculability. The signification of value can only have meaning if it can be measured—it gravitates towards a question of how much. Moreover, the signifier 'value' may take signification on multiple levels, for example the content of a Curriculum Vitae may be of value, if it increases your employability or differentiates you from the competition as a more valuable worker. Staying in the UK is correlative to illustrating your value as an immigrant in this country, this takes on an extra significance for every immigrant in a foreign country who feels that in order to earn their keep they must illustrate the added value they bring into the country. This offers a first direction towards a crystallisation of meaning with which riders embrace the freedom and flexibility of this work simultaneously with their own sense of exploitation as a necessary stage to reach the desired future. This contributes towards a better understanding of the agency of migrant workers (Rydzik & Anitha, 2020) and allows us to investigate how the functional ambivalence, that Shepherd et al. (2022) elaborated on the case of Mumbai rag pickers, corresponds to the case of migrant delivery-riders. This will be accomplished by tracing how the riders constructed their own ambivalent meanings and corresponding identifications in this work. Intriguingly though, significations beyond value for money seem to be excluded from this narrative—adding value to the commons or the societal aspects of the foreign country was no longer considered a true value. I noticed this more evidently when I asked Anabella about her views on the riders' strikes.

> **Vignette 4 – Anabella:** Interviewer: 'What do you think about the riders' strike
> actions? Have you ever personally joined any of the strike demonstrations?'

Anabella: 'No, no. And I don't believe in the strikes and I don't believe that I will leave my work for any circumstances because basically look, from my point of view, the whole life, either I change my life, go to the path I want or twist my whole life trying to change the world, which is impossible. So what I have? I have a target in my life. For me, the Deliveroo is just a stage where I am having some extra income on the side so I can pay for whatever, whatever, whatever. In one year from now, will I be doing deliveries? Nope. So it just like that. And basically, in any work I do, I want to be the best one who works, not the person who search for the workers right and blah blah blah blah blah blah, because I don't believe this type of stuff. I believe today, I have a target of being 1,2,3 in my life. I just focus on this target to change myself. And then the world can change itself, there is enough people to die for the world.'

Anabella offered some key points of identifying with what under the predominant neoliberal discourse could be seen as a good worker. This is the worker who is the best at what she does, who does not stop working by joining strikes and collective actions and who only occupies her time by progressing her personal development and achievements. This is the truth that is being articulated in her discourse: she can only change her own life and herself and should not waste time trying to change other things. In short, there is no alternative for the state of the world, just accept the situation you are in and work towards improving your own position. This argument, which is the bread and butter of any liberal-neoliberal discourse, directly ignores the possibility that one of the reasons someone finds himself in a particular situation, is precisely because of the way the world is. Additionally, the self-improvement and self-control that is presented in these arguments ignores any collective mobilisation that has historically resulted in social change, and shifts in what is considered normal. The delivery riders renounced jouissance in adopting this master discourse as I elaborated on Chapter 2, not only by transposing the lost jouissance to the generated surplus-value, but also by oscillating themselves towards the object-cause of desire as perceived between quantification and money, in the fantasy of future affluence that each rider imagined (Lacan, 2023, p. 9). The social status and accomplishment of landing a prestigious job was not conceived separately from the financial gains that such a position would entail. Social success was only retroactively signified after the increase in numerical value was assured, as the result of arriving in a position where earnings would only be able to increase exponentially. This summarised the migrant workers' goal in relation to success, a success that would give meaning to the financial investment in their education, as well as the rest of the expenses and potential sacrifices that they and their

families back home took on in anticipation of a better future. This investment in the calculable aspect of value is directly related to the quantification of work that is expressed and maintained through the interface of the applications by constantly displaying on the riders' phones the sum of their daily earnings as well as the total sum in the top left corner of the screen. This constant representation of value in numerical digits is further intensified when the demand for riders increases and algorithmic nudges are sent to all the available riders in an area. Moreover, the surges in demand that might occur are communicated in advance with multiple nudges and notifications to make sure riders 'do not miss out' on the prospect of increasing their earnings. Having elaborated the illusion of freedom and choice through the concealment of a forced choice, as well as having illustrated the importance of retroactive signification in terms of the different meanings of success in this line of work, we can now better understand their influence in the formulation of riders' subjectivity. This subjectivity, which gravitates towards the pleasure of counting the available surplus generated through work, is further reinforced by the representations available in the applications. Their use is to enhance this quantification and maintain the pursuit of the surplus in the sense of 'More'. I now look at how this quantification, through representations of the platforms' regime, as well as from the riders themselves, facilitates and enables the riders to continue working for the long hours they do and maintaining the pursuit of the surplus in the sense of 'More'.

5.2. The Drive of Food-Delivery Riders

The theme of surplus-value was most evident in the participants accounts, and in my own, when there was an active surge on the applications that resulted in increasing the fees per order. In my first delivery with Deliveroo, there was a surge active for new riders who completed three orders on their first work-day, and I remember how this motivated me to go out and deliver:

> **Diary Note - 13.11.2021**: 'The weather was nice, and I thought it would be a good opportunity for doing some deliveries on Saturday evening, taking advantage of the surged rewards! I geared up and was ready by the time that the surge was activated. I got out of the house, and onto my bicycle and started cycling waiting for the first order to appear on my phone screen.'

The thrill that the surge offers is directly related to the augmentation of the value generated. Nevertheless, the surplus-value targeted that will render the rider a person of value, requires an-other to be recognised by the riders and at the same time this other will recognise the added value in the face of the rider. To clarify things, we need to illustrate how the riders designated the field of the Other from which recognition was expected and demanded. The field of the Other not only totalizes the merits and values in terms of meanings that dominate their discourse, but also assures the organisation of choices and preferences of its participants by recognizing their value (Lacan, 2023, p. 9). It is in this way that the jouissance to deliver is sacrificed in the market of the Other. As the riders went to deliver, especially while a surge was active, they wagered on this Other dimension that the surplus-value that they generated would produce an equivalent surplus-jouissance that was guaranteed and valued by the Other. This was the effect of the food-delivery discourse on the riders and it can be traced from the small-talk which took place between the riders while they were waiting for their orders, and even in the interviews when I discussed the booster that applications sometimes enable to attract more active riders at busy times. In the following interview excerpt one can detect the affirmation of mutual recognition when the booster and the increased earnings were communicated.

> **Vignette 5 – Anabella:** Interviewer: 'So that looked like something that happened when I was delivering on Friday. We made from six 5:30 to eight with a booster, £65! £40 the normal plus £25 with a booster!'
>
> Anabella: 'Hehehe me too! On Friday I started working around 4:30. I finish that's like 9:30. I did £80 and people were giving tips. Yeah, because I was saying England will win and then just go and tip. Yes, it was perfect.'

In this dialogue, how did the interviewee as a subject of meaning relate to the interviewer? The effect of the interview rapport was not restricted to a simple two body relationship; in order to be herself, Anabella, needed to recognise another person who in turn would recognise her (Miller, 1996, p. 13). Thus, she recognised me, the interviewer as a fellow rider, who recognised her by acknowledging the surged earnings we both had on that day. In this process, the subject that emerged was already not identical to itself a moment before, the subject disappeared the moment it emerged in our speech. This is because the subject cannot reunite with its signifying representation. The delivery-rider as a subject is emerging and disappearing every time it is produced as the subject of value, as represented by a signifier, 'quantification',

for another signifier, 'money'. It is in this gap, between the appearance and disappearance of a rider who is no longer identical to itself, that the subject no longer enjoys and can only locate pleasure on the reflection of the lost object *a*, between quantification and money. Only 'quantification' knows 'money' and their relationship can only be fantasised by the subject as that which propels it towards the 'More'. 'More' is the mainspring of this creation between 'quantification' and 'money', which can be articulated as the 'surplus'. This is what brings the equivalent of surplus-value, known in Lacanian theory as surplus-jouissance and translates every happy moment of food-delivery work with a direct quantifiable correlative. This is most accurately represented in the dimension of the following joke that I noted in my diary:

Diary Note – 27.07.2022

> 'I was interviewing a Romanian rider and after we finished he brought one of his friends to do an interview too. While this was taking place they both saw another friend and told him I was doing interviews and if he wants to participate he will take £20. He said he will come back after delivering the order he had collected and indeed he came back after 15 minutes and when his friend told him that the interview will take around 1 hour he replied "1 hour? That's too much. I am already off for the next delivery." And then his friends said to me "well he is already after the next delivery, nothing can stop him now". And they all started laughing.'

According to psychoanalysis, for a joke to generate laughter, the people who share and listen to the joke must have some element in common. They must for example belong to the same church that falls under the big Other, as the signifying order as such. A joke is only a joke, Lacan says, insofar as it is confirmed, ratified, and authenticated by the Other (Lacan, 2017, p. 84). That is to say, in order to be effective, the joke presupposes that the people telling the joke are referring to the same field of the Other from which the joke draws its validity and the power of laughter. In this case, the sentence that built up the joke was that the rider, who declined the offer for an interview, was 'already after the next delivery'. What occupied his mind was not the current delivery he had to make, but the future deliveries he had not yet picked-up and delivered, the potential next earnings that awaited him if he did not waste time doing an interview with me. The punchline of the joke is that 'nothing can stop him now', in this constituted field of the Other where the joke was shared, the focus and importance of the 'next' order, the pursuit of 'More' orders was interminable, there was nothing that could put an end to it. Under these conditions, the joke that blatantly stated the truth that is expressed in this field of the Other, generated laughter among the riders who acknowledged this field of the

Other as the market which governed their work. This constituted field of the Other was shared by the migrant-riders as they were working inside it. There they willingly sacrificed their enjoyment by pursuing the next delivery-orders while they unwittingly idealised the 'more' and its correlative quantifiable value to represent what they structured in their fantasies as their ideal future-self. This ideal-image is further facilitated and reinforced by the screenshots of riders with immense earnings that often circulate among riders' WhatsApp groups and show their consolidated earnings for the period of one month[6]. Similarly, Anabella articulates this in what is for her a happy moment in food-delivery work.

> **Anabella**: 'When I just deliver the order and I put the money in the app, that's the happiness.'

She emphasised the earnings that come after delivering as the thing that allowed happiness to be experienced. The journey and the experience until each order is completed was not just of lesser importance—it was latently missing from her account—while all that mattered was receiving the money in her application and through this the rider may experience happiness. Be that as it may, my argument is that when this surplus of money is generated, at the end of each delivery, a loss is incurred at the same time. It is a loss that corresponds to the idealised value of the next order when you subtract the actualised earnings that were acquired in your account. This loss functions as the necessary stepping-stone for the repetition of the 'More' each time another food-delivery order is accepted. This is how the capitalist surplus stands for the drive of a global economy and in this case the drive for food-delivery riders as well. Every time the food-delivery subject is confronted with its inherent lack, the one that is latently missing from all the Participants' accounts, it finds refuge from acknowledging this lack in the imaginary idealisation of the 'More'. It is in this context that the food-delivery riders are able to repetitively enter again and again, even for multiple years, this temporary 'make cash on the side' job and present themselves as whole, without having to recognise and deal with their lack. This contributes to the existing Lacanian literature in Organisation Studies, particularly those who investigate how the imaginary constructions of selfhood keep failing (Driver, 2009c, 2009a) and how as soon as they fail they reconstruct themselves into new fantasies that identify anew the lack in the Other thus enabling the workers to repeat their attempts at recapturing the elusive object that would satiate the lack of the subject (Driver, 2017b; Kenny et al., 2020). Therefore, the dynamics of desire that enable this process of repetition are embedded and

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[6] For some examples of such screenshots, I have attached two which came into my hands in the Appendix.

encoded in the interface of the application each platform has devised. From the nudges that notify the riders when a booster or surge is active, to notifications about increased demand in a certain area and the surplus-orders that the riders queue to pick-up and complete. This gamification that the platforms attempt and that the workers would like to have even more of, falls under a certain configuration that allows the riders to enter the vicious drive of food-delivery work again and again, striving to gain the surplus that is always found to be less ideal in reality than its fantasmatic counterpart. The importance of this understanding is that it lays down the structural reasons with which a food-delivery rider identifies himself as the outcome of a certain master discourse of production and surplus, dominant in all senses in western societies. Additionally, it illustrates the non-closure of any subjective identity and how this is concealed and counteracted by the endless pursuit of a very vigorous focus upon surplus-value and the accumulation of the evanescent 'More'. It is only through acknowledging and recognising the fundamental gap of the delivery subject, never identical to itself at any two given moments, that the path towards a different kind of human resource management, that refers to the lack-of-being, can be perceived as opposed to the organisational subject treated only in terms of lack-of-having.

Before going any further it would be worthwhile to recapitulate the arguments so far. The object that most riders gravitated their demands and desires around was money and each rider offered their own articulation of the specific entrepreneurial fantasy to accompany their future goals and identity-selves. I elaborated on these extensively in the previous chapter, yet what becomes clearer now is how the logic of the subject of value, that the riders expressed so strongly in their accounts, follows an elaborate imaginary logic itself. The way that riders objectified themselves as fulfilling the desire of the Other, in the constitutive value market traversed needs, and desired a surplus which would escape any demand for one more delivery. It is in this pursuit of the surplus that the 'More' takes its full signification—the surplus splits quality and matter and concludes the direction of 'More' towards the surplus itself. No surplus is the surplus that would fulfil the delivery rider and satisfy their desire—riders focus on the surpluses of value and not on value as a mere surplus. Moreover, each surplus is depicted with fantasmatic properties that conceal and reinforce the alienation in the production of capitalist subjectivity. With this in mind, I now explore how this double use of fantasy facilitates the mitigation of the lived affective-experience for delivery riders as I suspect that one may locate there the root cause of the different perspectives observed between myself and other riders. I

begin this exploration by referring to some interview vignettes where riders commented on how others treated them while at work.

> **Vignette 6 – Participant González**: Interviewer: 'How do you think others view your work?'
>
> **González**:   'But I am on a mission. I know not the people, I not going to delivering neighbours.'
>
> Interviewer: 'I mean people in the street that they see you deliver, how they treat you?'
>
> **González**:   'They are… I mean, I would say whatever you like. Yeah, respectively, I think that if you look at the same time, I know they didn't pay my rent.'

In this vignette **González**avoided the potentially emotional aspect of his answer and said two things that I find crucial. Firstly, he stated that he was 'on a mission' which indicates not only the fact that he was taking an order from point A to deliver it to point B, but also that this trajectory was part of something bigger for him. It was something that paid his rent in contrast to people who did not pay his rent and thus their remarks were meaningless for him, but also a trajectory towards the realization of his goals and aim. Similarly, **Participant Dax** gave a similar answer to the same question:

> **Dax:** 'So to be honest, I do my job and I and I don't give any attention to anybody. I don't know. Even I don't.. I don't mind what they say about me. I'm just working. Yeah, I just do my job. I don't. Yeah, yeah. I mean, I don't know about the others, for me. I just do my work and I don't give a damn to anyone. What is his idea about what I'm doing? Mm-Hmm (I don't care). Yeah.'

Dax adopted a similar stance to González that negated the external aggressive or humiliating experiences. To provide a bit of context for those uninitiated to food-delivery work, all the riders that I interviewed had experienced aggressive or dangerous behaviour during their work which they narrated to me. For example, Participant Niko mentioned people shouting at him from a car, and when I asked what were they saying, he answered with the following.

> **Niko**: 'Same like the man who hits me. You shouldn't be here, go away, kill yourself. So but once it sometimes not happen to me, but it happened on one of our friends, the

car came, he who was with the motorcycle when he was riding, the car, came next to him, open the door and kicked him and tried to steal his motorcycle'.

This was similar to **González** saying *'I don't remember it. But I got attacked and food got stolen'*. **Participant Yaritza** also related that his loved ones were worried about him:

> **Yaritza:** 'because it's very dangerous, you know. Because I have a hard three accidents in seven years, and that is very dangerous, and, because someplace when you go to deliver they try to stole your bike as well to kill you as well' … 'this year, seventy drivers are killed from my country, the last one is the last week from Brazil, because they drive very dangerous they don't care for us'.

Participant Dania stated '*it is dangerous job for a lot of couriers, then I think we're the ones most in danger'* and even in my own experience when I was only working part-time and for a few months I experienced several similar situations. In an excerpt from my diary, describing my return from a riders demonstration in London, I had written the following:

> **Diary Note - 18/6/2022**: 'On my way to the underground I walked through some questionable alleys and there a guy met me and started spitting on me for unknown reasons. This is not the first time I attract attention from people while I have my Deliveroo jacket on, another time in Colchester I passed next to a man and I apologized, as I was on the pavement with my bicycle, and he turned startled to me and when he saw I was a delivery rider he shouted "Yes you better be sorry or I will kill you", it seems that the status of food-delivery riders is treated as the lowest in the society and anyone may lash out on us without consequences'

The riders who narrated such unpleasant experiences did so with the same emotional investment as reading a fashion magazine while waiting in the queue to see the doctor. In my testimony I can remember being so angry that I could not reply to the person cursing me. So, how do riders who are working full-time and long hours, streamline such experiences in order to not be affected by them and to continue this work? They must have found a way where the repetition of their daily routines would be able to sustain itself despite the unpleasant experiences. Perhaps the answer to this is related to what is ignored in their testimonies and experiences. Riders omit the concept of loss, the opposite of surplus from their narratives. One would expect that at least one rider would state his frustration or experience of humiliation after being treated like that, but no. Outside any symbolic reference to the affects of deprivation, the concept of castration as the fundamental loss is completely negated by the food-delivery

riders. It is in this trajectory that the perversive nature of capitalism is highlighted. What riders described in their experience was, strictly speaking, the commodification of themselves as the object-source of value in the platform-market, while at the same time disavowing that no surplus will ever bring closure to the feeling of lack (Tomšic, 2015, p. 151). This is highlighted by the rotation of affirmation and negation in Participant Dax's quote: ' I do my job and I and I don't give any attention to anybody. I don't know. Even I don't.. I don't mind what they say about me. I'm just working.' He affirms that he is doing his work and then negates anything else that is not related to the direct outcome of his work, that is money.

We have here a different constellation of meanings than the functional ambivalence that Shepherd et al. (2022) identified in the case of Mumbai ragpickers. The authors locate an interaction between positive and negative meanings through which workers establish their functionality as rag-pickers, ambivalence as acceptance *and* agency. Whereas here, the analysis points out that migrant-riders reinforced the positive significations of quantification and money as the happy moments of their work and treated instances of derogatory and dangerous experiences as necessary obstacles that they just had to accept. Hence, in the case of migrant delivery-riders the ambiguity of recognition and of the embodied-elements of their experience direct us towards an important empirical link between the socio-economic precarity of food-delivery work and the affective and subjective experience of these precarious conditions where acceptance acts *as* agency. Thus, for the riders the apparent stoic acceptance with which they coped with the dangerous and harassing experiences of this work could be viewed as an example of affirming their agency. It is precisely to the degree that they chose this flexible work freely and they managed themselves that the acceptance and perseverance in the face of any negative experiences they encountered serves as an illustration of their agency. Furthermore, the riders targeted their pursuit of 'more', through further exploitation, towards an imagined Other who enjoyed their sacrifice of jouissance, by rejecting both their own negativity and the Other's inexistence (Lacan, 2017, p. 90). The fact that the imagined Other was enjoying their sacrifice was validated by their need to negate what this Other felt or thought, they attempted to distance themselves from this sacrifice of their enjoyment and denied it. For example, Dax states 'I don't know about the others, for me. I just do my work and I don't give a damn to anyone', and similarly González says 'I know not the people' referring to the people who harassed him in the street. This configuration of negation illustrates how the imaginary identifications of the riders reinforce the structural alienation as constitutive of labour, by negating their subjective working experience and choosing to focus solely on

their future ideal-self as the only thing they can control. My claim is that human relations and perceptions are already distorted by the structural rules of language. However the case of such imaginary identifications with objects-of-value, as well as a complete rejection of castration and loss, indicate problematic consequences which might develop into symptomatic modalities so as to treat the subjective gap that is left unrecognized. I experienced one such instance when in an interview the participant began to articulate an extreme argument:

> **Vignette 7 – Participant Agustin**: Interviewer 'How do you think other people think about you and your work in your personal life like friends or family? When you tell them about your work?'
>
> Agustin: 'I don't tell anyone what I do, I think nobody that's because I don't have a friend. It's like it's nice to not have friends in this life.'
>
> Interviewer: 'Oh, this is very interesting argument, why you think that?'
>
> Agustin: 'Every friend its now to enjoy with you when you have the money, something like this, when you give to them they are happy, when you have a problem they don't help, I realise it, it's good to not have a friend, if you have a problem they don't help you anytime. I give you an example I had a problem with my motorcycle far from town and I call a friend and I tell him I have a problem with my bike, if you can help me? And he tell me I have order I don't have time I have to go, I say no problem my friend I know what I can do now and every time; and that's why I tell you it's best to not have friends, because they are there for only money.'

What I find intriguing about this comment on why it is best to live life without any friends, is the signification that friends are there only for money, when the delivery-rider himself is only doing this job for the money. In this apparent contradiction, one may surmise the bi-partition of money as the object of the drive of delivery-work. This splitting of the object is not between the object and satisfaction but rather that money as an object is never identical to itself (Copjec, 2002, p. 43). To put it differently, the object of money cannot ever be fully signified, there will always be a meaning which is not attributed to it and by virtue of that it responds and lures the riders to repeat the drive's trajectory with the hope of encountering the missing signification that fulfils their demand. Agustin did not notice that in his explanation of why life would be better without friends that he was also spelling out the structural reasons that allowed him to repeat the process of food-delivery. He maintained his radical subjective oscillation between a fetishistic commodification as a subject of value ('Every friend its now to enjoy with you when

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you have the money') that rejects castration ('I say no problem my friend I know what I can do now and every time') and advances a further alienation due to a fantasmatic identification with the Other that generates surplus-value at the expense of jouissance ('I think nobody that's because I don't have a friend. It's like it's nice to not have friends in this life.'). The money as payment at the end of the delivery is not the same object as the money conceived in a fantasy of affluence, in a similar way that the money he earned from the deliveries were not the same as the money his friends allegedly asked for. He said yes to delivery work, and no to friends who asked for money. The payments serve their aim of masking the void at the point upon which the drive closes, so it can begin its circle again without opposition. However, the friends that asked for money or did not help him in a time of need, revealed his lack and castration, which he wanted to negate as a self-sufficient person in control of his destiny. Since no object will ever satisfy the drive, and since money as object *a* of the fantasy is not the same as the reward for each delivery, there is a leap of faith made here to circumvent the eternally lacking object and motivate the repetition of the drive. As Zupančič elaborates, the genesis of the subject involves an indispensable leap, and repetition at its most foundational aspect is about repeating this jump, oscillating between the margins of this leap (Zupančič, 2007, p. 169). This foundational leap of faith may explain the different significations that money may take in the discourse of food-delivery riders and also hints at the idealisation with which the object of money is endowed with its different symbolic and imaginary identifications.

5.3. Subjectivity and the Object of Food-Delivery Riders

Scholars in organisational studies using Lacanian psychoanalysis have already developed the multi-layered consequences of different identifications and desire in workers' subjectivity (Dashtipour, 2009; Fotaki et al., 2010; Hoedemaekers, 2009; Kenny, 2008). This data analysis further illustrates the interplay between imaginary and symbolic identifications in the case food-delivery riders and how the object of their desire also fluctuates among these different registers with subtle modifications in the particular meaning with which it is invested each time. The different facets under which money is represented and perceived are nicely elaborated in the following comments of Participant Agustin about the situation of food-delivery work in the UK:

Vignette 8 – Agustin: 'it's good, what I not accept in this life is 100 years ago the government says tax the rich people, there is now more taxes to the poor, people need be more poor and the rich are richer. Because the poor people who are poor people, give them £1000 what are they going to do? what they do, the 1k they spend, they've been on the phone, on the food, clothes, everything OK. And they finish £1000 and what they do now? They come back to work. If you give £1000 to rich people what they do? They going to invest the money and they normally make more money. But they can lose, you know, but not lose everything. They may lose the money, but they get experience. Oh, I lost my money. I paid for it. But I'm now looking for investing better next time. So he took a lesson, poor people don't get nothing. When I want to be with my money, And I, like if you look on Elon Musk, Bill Gates. They have so many people and they get more money from these people. If I want to do it myself, I work for myself, very nice But how much am I making because I am only one person? One more person and one by one, in my space, they will start making more money. They can make everything for me.'

This very rich quote illustrates the movement between different identifications the participant passes through and how under each identification the object of money was conceived and treated differently. He began by identifying with the poor Other who despite state promises of taxing the rich, became poorer and saw the rich becoming richer. Agustin then articulated the different mentality between rich and poor where the poor would just spend a large sum of money to buy commodities, whereas the rich would invest it. Even if his investment failed he would be better equipped to invest in a better way in the future. And then he mentioned Musk and Gates and how they made money from having other people working for them and his identification started to shift and he began identifying himself with the future entrepreneurial figure which would be the mirror image of great businessmen like Gates and Musk. He elaborated his future fantasy where he would start employing people to work for him and start making money like his ideal entrepreneurs.

This movement underlines the internalization of the dominant capitalist idea that revolves around the circle of money to commodities, to money plus surplus. The surplus comes into full deployment in his narrative when he alluded to the future fulfilment that would be experienced when the 'Money' was returned to him plus interest, through having others working for him. His utterance of having others making everything for him is the crystallization of his articulated desire. Nevertheless, the dialectics of desire pass through the fact that desire

is never replied to directly, desire is the non-representative of representation, and it is precisely in the gap between two signifiers that the subject's desire emerges as mapped out through their experience of the Other's discourse (Lacan, 2018b, p. 218). There is a lack engendered from a previous occasion that replies to the lack raised by the following occasion, and indicates that beyond the riders' pleasure another reality intervenes that brings forth the subject with its structure and diversification.

This part of the analysis directly contributes to past research on how the three Lacanian registers assist in locating the Real lack in the Symbolic and the Imaginary constructions of identification and fantasies (Driver, 2009b; Hoedemaekers, 2010). It illustrates the precise function with which riders map out the field of the Other, thereby facilitating their symbolic and imaginary identifications, locating the lack that renders repetition possible and the pursuit of the surplus desirable and compelling. To simplify things one could say that in the case of delivery-riders the fantasy of their future work-self is superimposed in the place of working just to make ends meet, articulating the desire of the Other as a demand for more money. This then allows the repetitive trajectory of delivery-work, despite the frequent negative experiences encountered along the way.

The dialectical movement of desire follows a similar path to the one Agustin passed through when he talked about money as use-value and then as exchange-value, yet the conclusion of his statement rendered money as exchange-value plus something extra. This 'everything' conceals the opacity of 'Money' in the Real dimension as the phallic signifier that will enable total satisfaction. This thing is essential if one wants to establish the appropriate framework to not only discuss the affective-experience of riders, but also to be in a position to articulate an interpretation to their symptom. Additionally, to defend against any criticisms of producing generalisations from the particular and the limited empirical material of this thesis, I have to state that the conclusions I draw from the data resist these criticisms as they are topographical subtractions of structural relationships in language. In other words, the general claims I make about the discourse of food-delivery are deductive configurations based on how the migrant-riders spoke about their work-experience on the basis of a structure in which the subject turns out to be irreducibly alienated somewhere. Thus, there is an infinite number of possible ways that each particular rider could elaborate their own unique relationship with the pursuit of more and how they personally enabled their daily repetition of deliveries. Nevertheless, the role I depict for quantification and the pursuit of surplus in the construction of fantasies, identifications and rendering of the corresponding object, is what I extracted from

the data as a structural relation of the discourse that determines the subject of food-delivery gig-work and as such it was ubiquitous for the vast majority of the riders I encountered during my fieldwork. I have to accept that another researcher could opt for a different reading of the data and that my conclusions are based on the chosen theoretical framework, which focuses on the symbolic structure of discourse and therefore does not allow for wider generalisations.

So far I have expanded on the different nuances that surplus-value passes through in the riders' discourse and through which it acted as the drive of delivery-work. Moreover, this was connected and elaborated through the constitution of what represented money through quantification for each delivery-rider and their identifications with an Other, the Other which demanded 'More'. The lack that was concealed and elided from the participants' affirmations and negations, demonstrates that the recognition of loss and castration is something that endangers the psychological homeostasis of the subject who prefers to alienate himself in his exploitation and commodification rather than acknowledge this inherent negativity of the speaking being. This is accomplished through the development of a symptomatic formation that allows food-delivery riders to view reality through fantasy and evade any encounter with their lack. It is in this way, that they elevate 'money' through idealization to the degree of a mythic object which encapsulates the dimension of 'More' and promises total fulfillment. I now turn to elaborating further how this symptomatic modality of viewing reality is knotted with jouissance along its structural causes.

5.4. The Symptom of Food-Delivery Riders

In order to better understand the structuration of money in its multiple representations with fantasy and the quantification of more, I investigate some excerpts from the interviews with the participants where they discussed the quantifiable representations of their delivery-work performance. In the following quote, Participant Allen gave his opinion about rejecting orders in Uber Eats.

> **Vignette 9 – Allen:** Interviewer: 'Yes, and do you think that if you keep rejecting, for example, coffee there will be a negative impact on your riding?'
>
> Allen: 'I think I think so, for example in their Uber Eats I have rating a 99%.'

Interviewer: 'Wow, almost perfect.'

Allen: 'Yes, I have more than 2000 orders delivered in the last year and I have a 99% but I had in the moment I have a four negative rates exclusively a case from coffee is spilled on the back.'

In this excerpt, Allen commented on the risk of rejecting too many orders as this could have a negative impact on his ratings in the application. He then provided the statistics of his successful deliveries and the total number of orders he had completed in the previous year, rather remarkable feats in both cases. However, he then went on to say that he had four negative ratings because of coffee/drinks spilled during deliveries. This is something that many riders have mentioned as not being their responsibility since they were not allowed to open the bag and it was restaurant employee who had to ensure that all the drink lids were tightly closed. One could argue that the relative dissatisfaction of not achieving a 100% success rate and receiving some negative ratings stands in the position of another lack, which is disguised by superimposing the lack of perfect ratings on it. Some affective investment which has played its part in the repetition of 2000 deliveries in the previous year, is displaced and misidentified as the apparent dissatisfaction of not achieving the perfect rates. Never being identical to himself, the delivery-rider repeats delivery after delivery in an attempt to encounter again what is forever missed by the subject.

The failure to make perfect delivery-rates was the persistent failure of each repeated order to reach the very object that fascinated the rider and fuelled the repetition as the only possible path onto which it could be encountered again: 'More Money' as the object-cause of desire in its Real dimension (Zupančič, 2007, p. 172). The Real of the object *a* is only retroactively realised for the subject through the imaginarisation of the object *a*, because the object *a* exists extimately on the symbolic. The object *a* is a real hole in the Other, where at the hole is the presence of a residual Real, a leftover jouissance in the Symbolic, and at the same time the hole as the absence of the Real, the inaccessible jouissance (Chiesa, 2007, p. 143). By way of explanation, in fantasy, the real aspect of the object *a* as absence of jouissance is related to the unconscious desire of the subject, and simultaneously the real dimension of the object *a* as the presence of jouissance is directed towards the subject of the drive.

Applying this to my case study, it can be argued that money as object-*a*, adopts this double role via quantification and fantasy. After each completed order, every small payment received allows a glimpse of money in its fantasmatic dimension, concealing the lack in the

Symbolic to the register of the Real where the lack appears fulfilled. The quantification of payments on the riders' phones, provides a small gratification which fades instantly the moment it is received. This is also why the delivery-subject is never identical to itself. Riders continuously directed themselves to pursue what was missed in the previous delivery insofar as it appeared within their grasp in the next one, compelling them to keep delivering. It is therefore motivating the repetition by a cry of 'That's not it' that then reinserts the riders into the drive's trajectory in the pursuit of an expected ultimate enjoyment that never arrives. This is most evidently highlighted in the following story from one of the first riders in London when he received a great bonus from Deliveroo, something that only happened in the early days of Deliveroo's expansion.

Vignette 10 – Participant Yaritza: Yaritza: 'Some people jealous.'

Interviewer: 'Some people jealous, why?'

Yaritza: 'Because I have a video, I have a video know? when the when the company a bonus they pay £10,000 for me.'

Interviewer: 'Really?'

Yaritza: 'BONUS yeah, Deliveroo they pay 10000 pounds for me.'

Interviewer: 'Why?'

Yaritza: 'Bonus! because when they when they put their company to IPO, I remember, I feel when they put their company to IPO, three months ago they pay bonus for everyone, some people take £500 and other people take £1000 and some people take £10000. I take 10,000 I am make video with Will (CEO). The boss from Deliveroo they make video of me and 1 Brazilian girl and then another 2 Bangladesh, 4 people, win £10000.'

Interviewer: 'Why they gave you £10000?'

Yaritza: 'Because I completed 65,000 deliveries.'

Interviewer: '65,000 DELIVERIES?'

Yaritza: '65,000 DELIVERIES HEHEHEHEHE. I think I think they supposed to pay me £1 for every delivery, this is gonna be better for me £65,000 they supposed to pay me.'

What is illustrated in this quote is the closest manifestation that the 'More' may take in the food-delivery context. The 'Bonus' took a material form in this experience and we see how it brought a certain satisfaction with it. At the same time however, another satisfaction was missed, the bonus could always be bigger. After developing how the food-delivery subject is not identical to itself at any two moments, as it is caught up in imaginary and symbolic identifications which alter the signification of its identity, and elaborating on the equivalent processes which render the object that drives delivery-work equally susceptible to the same shifts in its meaning, now these two parallels are brought together under the spotlight. The result of this analysis is that these gaps between both the subject and the object are inextinguishable and also correspond to equal gaps in the experience of jouissance and enjoyment. Furthermore, these gaps which are symmetrical in the constitution of the subject, its object and its enjoyment, are required to motivate the riders' seamless continuation of the delivery-work in the different significations that these gaps may acquire. Any greater value in the bonus would be preferred but Yaritza unknowingly transposed the full satisfaction to a greater bonus that would always be missed. This is the difference between jouissance expected and jouissance obtained that Lacan articulated (Lacan, 1998, pp. 111–112). This is why money in the Real, the Thing as the ostensible goal of the drive that drives riders, only appears desirable when shrouded by the Symbolic and Imaginary threads. Only so long as it remains obscure and unattainable can it maintain its cunning appeal. Any attempts to lift its veil and get closer to it will only result in disappointment. What is hiding beneath the veil is not the anticipated transcendental object, but a totally unappealing even repulsive thing (Žižek, 1997a, p. 23). Thus, the riders' drive is acting in conjunction with its prohibition, placing the subject vis a vis jouissance at an impasse between the Scylla of expected jouissance in accepting an order and the Charybdis of obtained jouissance in completing an order that threatens to drown the rider's desire in realizing it (Johnston, 2005). An intrinsic antagonism reigns between jouissance conceived and jouissance experienced, and this gap is what separates reality from the Real.

A minimum of idealisation, as in the case of each riders' relation to their ideal fantasy for the future, is required in order to keep the terrifying Real at bay and to be able to confront reality. Thus, I conceive money and quantification as adopting this extimate position—on the brink of the Real, and between Symbolic and Imaginary—providing the necessary idealisation to the object of money. A repetition that continuously misses the object of money in the Real register, aims at the sublime affective-experience that will resolve the vacillation of the rider

between these positive and negative affects that they are exposed to in their work. It is the next order which will break and brake the vicious circle of the death drive, by encountering this affect that is not to be found anywhere—either between the positive and negative moments of their work, or in their imaginary scenarios of their post-delivery work fantasy. This configuration is the most accurate depiction for the symptom of the delivery riders at large. As psychoanalysis states, it is not that people perceive reality as it is and then find refuge in a pathological symptomatic formation. Rather, in order to confront reality, you are already inside the unique view of fantasy which allows you to encounter reality as such. The symptom holds an ontic, factual existence as an ordinary object, yet also paradoxically serves as an unknown element that provides reality with its consistency and when it is removed the constructed sense of reality disintegrates (Žižek, 1989, pp. 16–18). This is why at its most radical point, the symptom cannot be interpreted as it furnishes the very basis of interpretation.

The responses I received from my participants further converged and validated this, as for example the statement from **González** 'I don't worry about things I can't control'. This statement presupposed that the only thing one could control was one's own body and self. Although psychoanalysis would provide strong counter-arguments against this view, it nonetheless reflects the fantasy that through controlling and disciplining your self, you have a chance at success. The hard work that the riders put in, provided a modicum of enjoyment as they progressed and enlarged their commodification and exploitation. Even though the riders might not have openly admitted this, it was no accident that every time I asked them how many hours they were working they looked me in the eye, and stated their immense number of working hours, as if they were waiting for my reaction. Sure enough I was almost always surprised by the numbers they reported to me and I expressed my awe and admiration for the sheer volume of work they were doing. Perhaps, I was also occupying the position of the big Other for them. They lacked a manager or a boss to show interest in their work and how they went about it. Recognition and validation from this big Other was crucial and a source of enjoyment they rarely encountered in their everyday life. Additionally, the phrases 'You know?' and 'You understand?' that riders often placed after their sentences, were repeated more than 125 times on average in every interview. The maximum number was 254 in the interview with **Participant Dania**. This is also an indication of the search for validation and recognition from the Other, and these phrases usually followed moments when the riders were describing the work details and routines, the ways with which they were managing themselves, controlling their schedule and even going about their transgressions.

One could also argue that this may also be considered an objectification on the part of the riders, where the subject perceives its position caught in the gaze of the Other, under which it objectifies itself for the Other's enjoyment. An important note in this elaboration is that I do not conflate this objectification of the subject with any perversive mode of sadistic or masochistic desire. I would rather relate it to being closer to the neurotic structure, as in the case of obsessionals where they perceive themselves as objects of desire under the gaze of the Other (Svolos, 2020, p. 137). Lacan frequently stresses how the obsessional subject is one which is not only attracted, but also cannot detach themselves from the gaze (Laurent, 2016). This offers them some sort of satisfaction, but more importantly, an opportunity and a way to avoid encountering their desire by the precise imagination of their reality, placing themselves as objects that answer the lack in the Other. Moreover, when I asked them about a memory from their work when they felt happy or proud, and after their initial derision they would come up with something in connection with their earnings. In the inverse question of a memory where they felt sad or angry, they would relate something that constituted an obstacle to their earnings. Behind this immediate connection of positive moments in terms of higher earnings and negative moments when their earnings were hindered, there were moments that arose in different parts of the interview like the instance of meeting a customer in the street, that would put a smile on their faces. On the other hand, some racist, rude or abusive incidents were not communicated under the corresponding question, but also emerged at different parts of the interview where riders elaborated on their negative experiences. It is in this sense, that psychoanalysis can reveal how speaking beings perceive the world as an immersive realm in which they are deeply embedded, meaning that they make use of their fantasy to make sense of what we call reality (Lacan, 2018a, p. 122,152). Therefore, the riders as subjects who are subjected to the discourse of production, reveal in their speech, through the use of signifiers, that even though they articulate their image as productive, self-managed and self-controlled workers, as individuals operating on the logics of the numbers and quantification, something emerges in their speech that is contradictory to this logic of production. Something of the Real is revealed owing to this symbolic impossibility and suddenly the aforementioned examples of pleasant and negative experiences emerged without bearing this immediate connection to money and quantification.

This precisely illustrates the metonymic and metaphoric attributes of language, under which money via quantification stands for both the metonymic object of desire and the metaphor of their symptom. In a simplified way one could say that the emerging signifier

'Money' stands for both the problem and the solution, but in order to better grasp this, a recourse to the structure of metaphor and metonymy is required. Lacan took the processes of condensation and displacement as they were found in Freud, and with the input of structural linguistics, from Saussure and Jakobson, rendered his own take on metaphor and metonymy with their respective effects on the unconscious (Lacan, 2006, p. 425). The mechanism of metonymy is the connection of one signifier to another signifier, while in metaphor the formula is the substitution of one signifier for another. The formulas of metonymy and metaphor are similar, but not identical as they have one very important difference—in the case of metonymy the signification remains congruent with the maintenance of the bar between signifier and signified, which means that the produced signification is lacking in meaning. On the contrary, in the metaphoric structure, the effect of signification crosses the bar of signifier and signified which results in a surplus of meaning, a little added meaning. The ways that the previous analysis connected the differences in meanings for both subject, object and desire in delivery-work, are what can now constitute the symptom of delivery-work.

This combined perspective which recognises how meaning shifts for the riders, along with their identity, their desire and their jouissance, comes to configure what may be called the symptom of food-delivery work. It is the overall set of dominant significations that these three elements gravitate towards, in order to create the apparent balance and consistency of this work-experience. In this way, beyond just illustrating the point that 'Money' is using the signification's referral value to invest it with the desire aimed at the lack that supports it, riders connect the metaphor of their symptom through what money represents for quantification and the metonymy of their desire through what quantification represents for money. The mechanism of metaphor, along with the extra meaning it carries, fixes the symptom in a surplus of signification that is inaccessible to the conscious mind, and the metonymic function with its lack of meaning, relates to the lack of being for the rider, concealing the fact that no object of desire, no payment for any order, will ever fully satisfy us (ibid., p. 428). Thus, the function of the subject becomes the crux of the problem at hand, for both the symptom and desire. The additional complication of Money occupying both the positions, of metaphor and metonymy, is what is responsible for both the problem and the potential solution. Strictly speaking, each person constructs the way in which the metaphor of his symptom and the metonymy of his desire come to be represented. In the case of food-delivery riders, the different significations of money and its relations with desire and enjoyment, come to represent Money as an objective surplus that provides fulfilment for an equivalent objective lack. The subjective negativity

responsible for the inherent lack of each subject comes to be excluded from the picture. The logical fallacy which is rendered unnoticeable is that there is no way for money to be the solution since at the same time it generates the problem. The objective lack cannot be fulfilled, not because of the lack of money, but because it derives from a question of subjective lack relating to the subjects' being and not to the subjects' possessions. Lack of being is related to desire as the want-to-be of the subject, because the enigma of desire is ensnared in the metonymic rails of language, always extending towards a desire for something else. Nevertheless, this want-to-be for the subject of delivery-work is facing a radical change in contemporary society where the prevalence of objects has emerged.

Under capitalism and the dominance of science, a plethora of objects has overwhelmed the subject. The continuous production of more and more desirable objects generates one demand after another, resulting in an insatiable desire for consumption. This has altered the nature of desire itself, transmuting the lack of being and want-to-be to a lack of having and a want-to-have (Soler, 1992). The consequence is that the subject only ever gains satisfaction at the level of having and for this reason, the symptom of want-to-be cannot manifest itself in the same way, when the subject is forcefully preoccupied with the want-to-have. That is what is involved in saying that 'Money' occupies the position of both the metonymic object of their desire and the metaphor of their symptom. This formulation of the symptom of food-delivery gig-work contributes to the prior literature of Lacanian scholars in organisation studies. In a comparative grid of analysis, it connects how riders construct fantasies for their future work-self in a state of affluence, how the failure of these fantasies comes after receiving the payment for each order and at the same time they reconstruct their fantasies through identifying what was missed in the completed delivery with what makes the next delivery desireful (Driver, 2017b). Along with this restructuring of the fantasy, riders renew their own subjectivity by an avowal of enjoyment that what they are searching for is just one more delivery away. In this way, riders enable an affective economy that propels them to keep on doing deliveries, insofar as the promise of enjoyment is always greater than the actual enjoyment they obtain after each payment they receive (Dashtipour et al., 2021). Finally, by illustrating how this process conceals the lack-of-being by concentrating on a lack-of-having in the way migrant-riders speak about their work and their motivation, it becomes evident that this substitution further supports the reconstruction of their fantasies, not only in terms of what propels their work but also what provides riders with a modicum of relief, both in the precarious conditions of their work and the negative experiences to which they are often exposed (Driver, 2014). This

contribution is relevant to organisation studies more generally, as it underlines the intertwined relationships between workers' fantasies and the structure of their identifications with their modalities of enjoyment and affective-experiences in their workplace. It provides evidence on how workers borrow a certain logic from the capitalist discourse of the labour market and then orient their own subjectivities and fantasies towards the pursuit of an elusive surplus that provides them with enjoyment and at the same time enables them to keep working in the precarious and deplorable conditions they face in their workplace.

Money also acts as the mediator that at the same time keeps the affective experiences at a certain distance and assists the repetition under which affects may be displaced and encountered again. It is quantification as the necessary veil of the negativity of their symbolic identity, that enables and maintains the drive's trajectory. This resonates with the fact that most riders have embraced, begrudgingly or not, the precarious status of delivery work. There is a security in the fear that precarity induces—the artificial precariousness of the riders' conditions helps to veil from them the real precariousness of the human condition as pure negativity (Bataille, 1994, p. 95). As long as the drive and desire remain intertwined with the real lack, they perpetuate the subject of fantasy that veils this lack. Nevertheless, the subjective lack and articulating a relation to being, is something much more difficult than orienting your efforts towards an objective lack which may be fulfilled as long as one obtains the right object. This brings to mind the punishment of the Danaides sisters (Ovid, 1822, p. 462) who had to keep filling leaky jugs with water, although the water always leaked out immediately because the jugs were full of holes. The difference here is that the food-delivery riders prefer to look away from the leaking hole in their jug by entertaining the fantasy offered by quantification that it is only a matter of generating enough surplus to overcome the leak. Additionally, and more importantly, there is another displacement taking place here. The riders displace the leaking hole from their subjective selves as the structural impossibility of totalising their identity, and reposit it towards the objective lack in their bank account. The reason this second displacement occurs is that it is traumatic to recognise and acknowledge the symbolic castration. It is preferable to cover up the anxiety this direct confrontation with the subjective lack would generate with another situation which even though might be problematic or anxiety provoking to a degree, the subject has the imaginary mechanisms in place to deal with it in a less painful way.

On the other hand, the precarious nature of the delivery work, which arguably is also inherent in academic work, the main career path I am considering, is something that is easily

counter-balanced as long as your fantasy enables you to create a positive identification and investment in your work identity. In my case, the kind of positive investment and imaginary identification that academia allows me—in a position that enables you to write and publish, communicate your thoughts and engage in discussions with colleagues about contemporary issues and social pathologies—was nowhere to be found when I was working as a delivery rider. The identification which would recognize and validate my singularity as a particular subject relating to the whole was significantly lacking. In short, the possibilities of subversion and critique of the current state of delivery work were not only lacking for me, but additionally seemed impossible to approach or approximate as long as I was working as a delivery rider. Additionally, on another level I can attest that, through the progress of my personal analysis, I started to formulate the arrangement of my own symptom, and the ways it enabled me to confront reality. A major issue I had during my work as a delivery rider was that the experience of racist and abusive behaviours which are so often encountered in this job, penetrated my symptom formation and frustrated my own ideal image. The imaginary identification of my ideal-ego, as the image representing what I would like to be, would not let go of the insults and rude behaviours towards me (Lacan, 1988, pp. 138–139). At the same time, during my work, I was not merely representing myself but also carrying the symbolic identity of a researcher conducting ethnographic data collection. This symbolic identification of my ego-ideal, as an image where I saw myself as worthy of love (Žižek, 1989, p. 116), resulted in an opposite response to the same rude and racist behaviours I encountered—that I should pay no attention to them and keep doing what I was doing to collect my data and complete my research. This incongruity between my symbolic and imaginary identification left me, as a subject, without any possible position available to invest my subjectivity. It thus generated considerable vexation and aggressiveness from which I could not unchain myself. In a way, one could say that the real time of delivery work was short-circuiting the reality of my fantasy, rendering it intolerable for me, while at the same time spilling over to my symbolic identity as a researcher (Lapping, 2017). Overall, when looking back at the experience, I can see the effects of logical time in my subjectivity as well, and how this past self is already different from the one who is currently writing these lines. I am now able to make sense out of an experience that back then was impossible for me to understand. It is in this way, that I experienced the becoming-ness of myself as a researcher who carries a part of the organization in himself (Harding, 2007). Perhaps in the future, when I have traversed my own fantasy, I will not find similar experiences as insufferable as I did back then.

5.4. Transition to Discussion Chapter

So far, I have presented how the mitigation of the affective-experiences of food-delivery riders is facilitated via quantification and money. I illustrated the retroactive signification that pertains to the subjectivity of the riders and its relation to fantasy where the concept of freedom in food-delivery work was investigated through the psychoanalytic concept of forced choice. The analysis then focused on what was latently missing or elided from the participants' accounts as a concealment of the loss and castration. By breaking down the mechanisms with which the food-delivery subject articulates its subjectivity, its desire and its jouissance and bringing them all together they converge through the different significations available to them to construct the symptom of food-delivery. I traced these different meanings with the purpose of highlighting their effects both in terms of mitigating the affective-experience of rather unpleasant moments during their work, and also keeping the riders engaged with the apps and facilitating the repetition of food-deliveries. I demonstrated how the movements in identifications that the riders entertained via the imagined Other who recognized and acknowledged their freedom and self-control served to superimpose the lack of having, as expressed through pursuing an elusive surplus, onto the lack of human subjectivity. In other words, the food-delivery rider as a subject cannot be totalised completely under any description. Therefore, I investigated the gaps of the different identifications that delivery riders articulated, to reveal the structure that provided the apparent consistency in the riders' narratives. I looked into how these movements—for example, being an immigrant in a foreign country to becoming a future self-sufficient entrepreneur, from working as an employee to being your own boss and controlling your own life—navigated several identifications which were dialectically connected and constituted not only the food-delivery subject, but also the objects that moor it. Furthermore, these objects themselves were not unidimensional but equally susceptible to similar movements—for example from money as mere means of survival, to money as surplus-value, to money enhanced through gamification and productivity all the way to a future fantasy of affluence—where their significations are painted differently, depending on the situation and which function they accommodate for the delivery-riders. It was in this analytical trajectory that the object of money as surplus via quantification was designated as a nodal point for the riders' discourse. Then this structural configuration which

rendered this surplus as the quest for 'More Money' was elaborated through the different registers of the Real, the Symbolic and the Imaginary to illustrate the different significatory nuances that riders touched on in their experience. It is in this way that one can understand how the gamification as a quantification of money and value can enable the reiteration of the vicious circle of food-delivery work. This object that drives the food-delivery riders is knotted among the quantification of value and representation of money in the applications and it mitigates any negative experiences that are a key part of food-delivery work. This double idealisation of this object serves as both the metonymy of the riders' desire and the metaphor of their symptom, and it is fundamental to discern the proper dimensions of the affective-experience of riders in this job. Simultaneously, this sheds light on the symptomatic formations of riders and explains the repetition of 'one More order' through the use of fantasy and object *a*. The concluding analysis illustrated the difference between jouissance expected and jouissance obtained in food-delivery and the discrepancy between lack-of-having and lack-of-being in delivery-work. It is precisely in the gap of having that being emerges and if a new form of human resource management is to become possible, it needs to start from this acknowledgement and the recognition of castration. Lastly, I reflected on my own experience and the way I made sense of my own work as a delivery rider, in terms of identifications in my own subjectivity. In the following chapter, I examine which modes of enjoyment, or jouissance in Lacanian terms, are produced for the delivery riders and what their ramifications are in terms of organisation and human resource management.

6.Discussion Chapter

In Chapter Four I presented the mechanics of food-delivery work. I started with how this work is advertised and how the principles of freedom and flexibility come to be understood as the key attributes that this job offers to the vast majority of the riders. This was followed by an analysis of the workers' main transgression practices and how these are related to forms of control, consent and resistance in this line of work. The analysis then homed in on the lived-experience of the riders' daily routines targeting how workers speak about their work-performance and future goals, as well as their positive and negative experiences in terms of the challenges and difficulties encountered in one's working life. The concluding section summarised how quantification is ubiquitous in the ways riders express their work-efficiency, the flexibility and freedom of the job, their future goals, as well as how they connect positive affective moments with good earnings and negative ones with lesser earnings. This constituted a deadlock of perspectives that was observed between my own experience as a delivery-rider and those of my participants. In my case the freedom was nowhere to be seen, the earnings were always low, and my affective experiences during the job made the experience insufferable. Chapter Five tackled this difference of perspectives and shed light on how such a radical difference of experiences came to be crystallised in this fashion. Through a psychoanalytic lens I traced the riders' identifications and the different meanings they give them, and provided an explanation of how riders mitigate their experience of affects and at the same time structure their subjectivity in a way that keeps them engaged with the platforms and facilitates the repetition of food-deliveries. Similarly, I was able to reflect on my own identifications and how my view of the work came about, and decided to focus more on problematising how the majority of the workers' subjectivity and experience arises, as a crystallised fantasmatic formation that renders the way the majority of riders perceive the reality of food-delivery work.

This final chapter supplements the way in which the analysis of the subject of food-delivery work has been developed so far. It does so by connecting the perspective with which the analysis broke down the riders' identifications between the different Lacanian registers of the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real, with the broader literature of organisation studies and management. Thus, in section 6.1 I provide an outline of the findings of each data analysis chapter and how these are foundational for the three main themes of research that this study

contributes to, namely precarious and migrant labour, subjectivity and affect, and Human Resource Management (HRM). In section 6.2 I comment on how the themes of the analysis chapters relate to the discussion of migrant and precarious work. In section 6.3 I add to this by illustrating how the findings respond to the literature of subjectivity and affect in organisation studies. Lastly, in section 6.4, I discuss the wider implications of control and consent in the present and future of HRM in food-delivery work. These elaborations are important to understand if one wants to examine migrant food-delivery work from a spherical perspective. Looking at subjectivity does not mean looking at the individual and their thoughts. It is precisely in the incongruencies of the individual with itself that the truth of the subject of the unconscious is revealed, if we want to take Freud's discovery seriously. This is significant, not just in terms of Lacanian theory, but also precisely in the field of organisation studies and management. It is through adopting a Lacanian perspective that a different point of view becomes visible. It allows us to talk about workers' identifications, fantasies, affects, practices of control, consent and resistance, in a totally different way from a normative one. It also enables us to see where the apparent naturality and seamless harmony of these narratives is rooted and the gaps they attempt to conceal, where perhaps the space necessary for change lies. To this end, on section 6.5 I summarise the contributions of this study into the previous literature of management and organisation studies.

6.1. Outline of the Analysis

In chapter Four, the first thing that emerged through the investigation of food-delivery work was how the requirement of maintaining a dynamic base of available riders, pushes companies to suspend or validate accounts depending on the current state of riders' supply in each region. This practice further supports the case of technology platforms and their algorithmic control system reconstituting the socio-economic relations with negative outcomes (Duggan et al., 2020; Wood, Graham, & Anwar, 2019). In addition, gig companies actively influence the demand and supply of the market (Veen et al., 2020). The second empirical finding of the chapter was how riders make use of the freedom and flexibility in this job and see themselves through a lens of entrepreneurship. Although each rider treats their work as something temporary and has their own formulation of how they see their future entrepreneurial self, they all adopt the mindset of entrepreneurial agency which not only increases the experience of precarity (Barratt et al., 2020), but also decreases the chances of formulating

collective agency (Mendonça & Kougiannou, 2023). Riders, by imagining their entrepreneurial ideal-selves in the future, rely on their efforts to make sense of their experience and strive for meaning in the precarious and exploitative conditions of their work (Sambajee & Scholarios, 2023). This is facilitated by the gamification of work that platforms instil in their riders, where, by meticulous calculations work is rationalised in terms of time and money, how much money one may earn in how much time (Woodcock & Johnson, 2018). This practice motivates riders to increase their efficiency and obey the algorithm's control, while maintaining the illusion of autonomy and empowerment (Franke & Pulignano, 2021; Peticca-Harris et al., 2020).

In the section on transgressions, chapter Four illustrated the practice of account renting and how this enables immigrants, without the Right-to-Work in the UK, to find informal access to this job (Mendonça et al., 2023). Additionally, other transgressive practices like multiple applications and tax or insurance evasion—in some cases even trafficking illegal substances— enable riders to increase their earnings. The caveat is that since the platforms' payments are so low, riders have to rely on transgressive dodging to sustain the low-wages they are making. They formulate self-narratives that these transgressions are part of their entrepreneurial freedom as well as the expectation of the system, which are both strong neoliberal identifications. These practices also push riders to consent to their exploitation more readily, as they already find themselves in deeply precarious and vulnerable circumstances (van Doorn & Vijay, 2021). These practices may also be linked to how Fleming and Spicer detected, cynicism in their study, as a supposedly transgressive behaviour, while in actuality it enabled workers to accomplish their corporate objectives (Fleming, 2016; Fleming & Spicer, 2003, 2007).

In the final part of the chapter Four, I examined the negative and positive experiences of food-delivery riders and how they connected with their future goals. The striking fact was that riders elaborated their negative experiences at work as anything that would hinder their earnings, which provided a quantifiable aspect to their negative experiences. Moreover, many riders, in particular migrant riders, have experienced rude or racist behaviours, but notably they have developed coping mechanisms that allow a certain distance to be maintained from such negative experiences. Analogously, the positive emotions of food-delivery were associated with good earnings and although riders shared some experiences of taking pride in their knowledge of the streets in their area and in recognising customers in the streets, the prevalence of quantification is evident in the positive experience of riders as well. It seems that all their knowledge, experience and efficiency in this job, were not experienced as strong positive

experiences, but rather they maintained a neutral affective distance as with their negative experiences, and waited to experience the true, limitless enjoyment when they achieved their future goals. As I have elaborated, almost all the riders have a fantasy of how their future work-self will look and the common element in all of them is that they will be in a position of affluence in the future. In this sense, they treat their current situations as only something temporary, and this temporality is fundamental in the way they mitigate their affective-experiences, entertain their future fantasies and enable themselves to repeat the delivery-work routine every day. Treating their current job as something temporary allows them not to invest in the identity of a delivery-rider and to keep working towards the realisation of their imagined future. This is intriguing as research indicates how the algorithmic control system prevents riders from developing competencies that would be useful in accomplishing their entrepreneurial fantasies (Duggan et al., 2022). Even though riders feel that the freedom and flexibility of this job assists them in achieving a boundaryless career, scholars argue that this flexibility restrains them from pursuing vertical or horizontal transitions in the sector and actually prevents them from fulfilling their desired professional progression (Kost et al., 2020). To better understand this complex and on many occasions contradictory situation about food-delivery work, I turned to a Lacanian investigation of the riders' discourse in chapter Five, to trace the rider's identifications across different registers so as to illuminate how riders' fantasies are connected to certain objects that enable the experience of jouissance beyond the manifest content of their affective-experience.

In chapter Five, the analysis started with the contradiction between a job that was advertised as free and flexible—where the riders themselves agreed that they enjoyed the freedom and flexibility that their work offered—and at the same time all full-time delivery-riders were working a minimum of seventy hours per week. This was also encapsulated in the deadlock of perspectives between my own experience and that of my participants. Furthermore, whereas the majority of participants were able to distance themselves from the affective-experiences that were often encountered in this work, in my case the same encounters produced severe frustration. Hence, I began to investigate the contradiction of choice as many participants claimed that they worked these long hours of their own volition and therefore they were indeed free and flexible to stop anytime. Through a Lacanian lens I tried to locate who was the Other they were addressing when they argued in favour of their freedom to me during the interviews and why it was so important to categorically insist that their job was indeed very free. One answer might be that the figure the riders are targeting is an Other who recognises

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their freedom and flexibility and acknowledges them as free workers who have autonomy and control over their earnings and lives. In this way the empty gesture of subjectivity is unveiled in its importance of concealing the forced choice to work in a very demanding and unfree job for the food-delivery platforms. It is precisely in this sense that the statement 'the subject feels freer when serving a master' should be understood: delivery-riders have taken the forced choice to work a very demanding job with long-hours and multiple negative-experiences, but they themselves choose to work for the applications and have their algorithmic control system as a master and therefore they feel free. The exploration of the discrepancy, between the way riders are able to distance themselves from any affective-experience, in contrast to my own very emotional and distressed experiences, was the next point of analysis. As elaborated in chapter Four, the riders' answers regarding their negative and positive experiences were immediately connected with low and high earnings respectively, thus I tried to reflect on the parts of the interview where that connection was more evident in their testimonies. The analysis identified how riders stopped mentioning the attributes of freedom in these excerpts and highlighted instead their duty to pursue the imperative of growth and enrichment. This brought into the research focus the aspect of surplus that the riders' accounts where hinting at and how this surplus has a very specific meaning and relationship with value. Migrant riders focus on their own self-improvement and self-control and since they believe that changing the world is impossible, they put all their efforts into improving their own individual lives. These neo-liberal identifications are very strong in the majority of the participants and represent the general fantasy of reaching, not just future financial independence, but also a state of affluence. The key in the way these identifications function is through their retroactive signification, the quantifiable value that will satisfy the riders will only be known after it has been received. The state of affluence is always yet to come, while their current job of delivery-riders is just temporary. Of course, platforms further reinforce this with the gamification and the available boosts to earnings that nudge the riders to deliver so as to not miss out on the increased earnings.

This situation where the riders connect quantification with value in its purely monetary signification and the platform systems which, through the gamification of work, encourage the engagement with delivering again and again, is very interesting. It plays a key role in facilitating the repetition of delivery-work and driving the riders to remain engaged in this line of work. Through an analysis of the rapport in the interviews and how participants recognise, in the face of the researcher, the one who will in turn recognise them, and connecting this with

the Lacanian premise that the subject emerges in our speech, one could argue that the quantification through money in this case represents the object-cause of desire. The object *a* is always missed every time a delivery is completed. When the earnings are mentioned, the subject is generated in this gap between 'quantification' and 'money' that propels the rider towards a pursuit of 'more'. This imaginary relation constitutes the subject of delivery-work in fantasising the relationship between quantification and money, and locating the ideal-object that would satisfy his desire in the elusive surplus that will be forever missed, no matter what the earnings. Through this imaginary configuration, riders are motivated to keep working in an attempt to grasp this surplus and further conceal their subjective lack, by superimposing on it the objective lack for more, that is, the idealisation of the surplus. This illustrates how riders objectify themselves as fulfilling the desire of the Other, an Other who desires a surplus which is impossible to reach. This first fantasy of trying to get closer to this phantasmatic surplus, is supplemented by another fantasy; the fantasy with which each rider provides certain attributes to this surplus, what this surplus comes to mean for each individual rider. The data analysis so far has developed the riders' multi-layered identifications and desire and how there is an interplay between symbolic and imaginary identifications which are closely followed as the object of their desire also fluctuates between these different registers and remains impossible to grasp. The conclusion of this section is that the subject's negativity is rejected and concealed and points towards a symptomatic formation where alienation and commodification in the exploitative work conditions is preferred to even considering the acknowledgement of this lack that is inherent in every human being. This sets out the premises from which the articulation of the symptom of food-delivery riders will take place next.

The final section of chapter Five delineated how the structuration of money in its multiple fantasmatic representations and the quantification of a surplus, impacted the way riders viewed reality. I argue how the gaps between the subject of delivery-work and its object, are symmetrical with the gaps between the subject's jouissance and its desire. Through the analysis a parallel comes to be drawn, which shows how the signifier 'Money' comes to occupy the position of the metonymic object of desire, and simultaneously serve as the metaphor of the symptom in food-delivery work. Riders often encounter negative experiences during their work to complete a delivery, but after each delivery is completed, they receive a small payment which supplies them with a glimpse of money in its fantasmatic dimension. This dimension conceals the lack of the Symbolic into the register of the Real where the lack appears whole. There is a fleeting enjoyment every time a delivery is completed and the payment is registered

on the screen of the application. This enjoyment is quickly effaced but the ideal of the surplus still remains and motivates the riders to keep working since, even though this enjoyment is gone its idealisation maintains the veil through which the lack-of-being is recognised only as a lack-of-having. 'Money' as an objective surplus which comes to fulfil an equivalent objective lack will always fail, because the objective lack is superimposed on a subjective lack, the latter owing to the subject's inherent negativity. The objective lack cannot be fulfilled not because of the lack of money, but because it derives from a question of a lack-of-being and not the subject's possessions or quantifiable value. This also illuminates the way many riders discussed the precarious nature of this job. The precarity that is experienced in food-delivery gig-work is just a reflection of the precarious surplus which riders target. The fact that the job is precarious comes to be embraced, as an internal dimension of the already precarious surplus they are aiming for. The crux of this embracement of precarity is that the precarious status of delivery-work, is already a sub-element of the precarious surplus that will finally satisfy the riders, and more importantly the whole pursuit of a precarious object is already a sub-set of the really intimidating precarious dimension of the subject itself. The most traumatic and anxiety provoking embracement is the recognition and acknowledgement of castration, the subjective lack-of-being. Accepting the precarious conditions of food-delivery is a better alternative— while it generates uncertainty about the work, at the same time it also generates a sense of security in not having to deal with the lack-of-being.

The analysis in chapters Four and Five, explained the way delivery-riders are able to keep working full-time at a job which the platforms claim to be only a casual form of work for making some money on the side, and thus to have a temporary horizon, while remaining for many years engaged in this work and keep thinking that this year might be their last one. The immigrant workers find a way of earning money to support themselves and their families back home, and this is something that is very important for them as it enables them to imagine a better future for themselves and to contemplate their potential relative to what it would have been in their place of origin where such a potential does not exist. Therefore, now I will connect the emerging results of the analysis with the contemporary literature of migrant and precarious work.

6.2. Migrant and Precarious Work: Food-Delivery Work

From the outset of this study, I emphasised the importance of exploring migrant workers in UK after Brexit. There are two reasons for this choice. First, there are concerns about certain key sectors which face difficulties in finding the appropriate workers and as a result they still rely heavily on immigrants to satisfy the number of workers required (Fernández-Reino et al., 2020). Second, there is disquiet about how socio-political discourses have suggested an increased mobilisation against immigrants in the UK reinforcing already existing racist and xenophobic narratives (Eberl et al., 2018; Portice & Reicher, 2018). This study has shown how many migrant workers find informal access to work as food-delivery riders through the practice of account sharing that is fundamental to the business model of food-delivery platforms. On the one hand, there is a situation which officially and legally allows workers to share their account with another person and that other person will not be required to certify their right-to-work or to undergo criminal background checks. On the other hand, there are many riders who rent their accounts for a significant amount of money every week to immigrants who do not have the right-to-work in this country and thus find informal access to this job. The structural impossibility that consolidates this situation and blocks any attempts at resolution is that the element of account sharing is fundamental to the characterisation of the workers as freelancers according to the Supreme court's ruling against the recognition of collective bargaining rights for the workers (Independent Workers Union of Great Britain v. Roofods Ltd., 2021). Hence, this situation connects the riders' work, personal life and immigrant status as this informal engagement promotes hyper-precarious working-lives that stabilise this undercover workforce under a legitimate/illegitimate dipole. The food-delivery business model legitimately allows riders to share their accounts with a substitute rider without further control, and at the same time riders generate profits by renting their accounts to immigrants that find illegitimate access to work. Furthermore, this serves as a reason to keep the payments for each order at particularly low levels, since the migrant workers without the right-to-work are willing to work almost under any conditions and payments. Their hyper-precarious situation and limited alternatives push them to accept orders at any price and more significantly—since the official account holders are legitimate workers—it justifies the platform companies claim that the prices are not low, since so many legitimate workers willingly engage in this work-model and are active every day on their applications. Thus, platform companies may use this justification to continuously argue that their payments are not

low since the workers willingly accept them and perpetuate this freelancing model with the precarious conditions and the below-minimum wage payments that accompany it.

This finding is also consistent with past research (Lewis et al., 2015) and underlines how the interplay between flexible and liberal labour markets with restrictive immigration laws result in a hyper-precarious mode of work. The business model of food-delivery platforms, along with the freelancing status of the workers that has been legally contested and defended, renders the application of informal work contracts much more frequent rather than preventing them. Moreover, this finding is in alignment with recent research that also found the same informal access by undocumented migrant workers into the food-delivery sector (Mendonça et al., 2023). Nevertheless, there is an important point which deserves further elaboration here. Mendonça et al. underline how this informal access, owing to the combination of highly flexible, technologically permissive and obscure labour markets, results in experiences of hyper-precarious work for these undocumented migrant workers. I shared this feeling of hyper-precarity while I was working myself as a delivery rider, but through my data collection process I noticed that many migrant workers were not voicing the same concerns about the precarious conditions of this job. There was an apparent gap in how precarity was signified in past research as well as in my own experience, and how the participants of this study related their own meanings around this precarity. Beyond a small minority who shared my views about the hyper-precarious conditions and evidently complained or resisted the exploitative and precarious conditions of food-delivery work through the unions, a majority of migrant-riders came to accept, begrudgingly or not, the precarious conditions of this job as an inherent attribute of modern work. Whereas, research on migrant and precarious work underlines the precarious aspects of food-delivery work (Cano et al., 2021; Gebrial, 2022; Huang, 2022; Mendonça et al., 2023), this research study provides evidence that a large portion of the migrant workers in the food-delivery sector of England does not experience precarity in the same fashion as depicted in past research. This study not only shows how migrant workers treat precarity as a necessary part of life—which they cannot change or influence in any way—but also illustrates the role of dominant neo-liberal identifications and fantasy in enabling the migrant riders to focus on their own actions, thus facilitating their continuous work by enabling a mode of enjoyment as the next part of the chapter elaborates.

This points to a link between the extreme every day experiences of embodiment for migrant, precarious delivery-riders and the functional ambivalence with which an affective-economy intervenes to make these extreme experiences tolerable for the workers. This thesis

connects the literature on embodied aspects of daily experiences—where processes of misrecognition create ambiguity in the perpetual inscription of experiences (Del Busso & Reavey, 2013; Sebrechts et al., 2019)—with research on extreme working-conditions and how workers navigate multiple contradictory meanings in their routine with what Shepherd et al. (2022) identify as a functional ambivalence. As I elaborated in the previous chapter, the present thesis illustrates how the migrant-riders counterbalance the long working hours and derogatory experiences of their work by embracing the precarious nature of their work as a manifestation of their agency. They embrace the freedom of this work by freely accepting these working-conditions—both extreme and precarious—and thus affirm their agency. Additionally, this contribution illuminates the relationship of acceptance as agency, with the transgressive practices that riders often employ, such as multiple applications and tax evasion. These practices—which aim to increase their profits—are directly related to achieving a quantifiable surplus that serves as the counterweight to the extreme and vulnerable conditions they experience. It is precisely through this pursuit of the surplus that the delivery-riders are able to maintain their fantasies and persevere despite the precarious nature of food-delivery work.

This corresponds to the importance of recognition that is assigned to precarious work in recent literature (Armano et al., 2017; Moisander et al., 2018; Motakef, 2019) and further illustrates how a Lacanian approach views the processes of recognition. In studies of work and organisations, Lacanian scholars have argued that forms of recognition may be viewed as a manifestation of the divided nature of the subject (Contu et al., 2010; Driver, 2009c, 2021; Fotaki et al., 2010; Hoedemaekers, 2009, 2021). The data analysis highlighted how this split in the divided subject illuminates subjectivity in food-delivery work and how this is facilitated by the relentless quantification that is propagated in this work. The signification of value with which the delivery-riders think and act, is expressed in purely monetary significations through which they are able to conceal this split. In each instance of receiving payment for the next order, the delivery-rider is never identical to the rider who received the earnings of the previous order. It is in this gap that the fantasmatic nature of the entrepreneurial identifications find fertile ground to root and thereby hide the fact that there will never be any payment that will achieve the surplus that could fill the gap or lack of the delivery-subject. Following Roberts, this study contends that this unconscious nature of misrecognitions is intertwined with the process of the quantification and control practices (Roberts, 2005). In addition to these connections, the same quantification and control that the algorithmic system implements in

food-delivery gig-work are further developed in the subsequent section that focuses on the HRM practices in food-delivery work.

This finding is closely aligned with contemporary research on the same topic of precarious vulnerability in food-delivery in the UK (Valenzuela et al., 2023). As Valenzuela et al. conclude, these ambivalences of misrecognition assist riders to make sense of their vulnerable experiences and at the same time be hopeful and enthusiastic about the future as they hold onto the neo-liberal values of freedom and the autonomy to do so. What this research further unveils is that the migrant delivery-riders also use the precarious and vulnerable conditions of this work to provide a certain security to themselves towards a different kind of precarity. By connecting precarity to quantification and facilitating their own engagement with the applications and completing more orders, they conceal the fear of their own lack-of-being. The way that they identify with entrepreneurial fantasies of future affluence and how freedom and control of their own lives will let them to reach this future state, superimposes the lack-of-having upon the lack-of-being and thus configures a symptomatic formation of our times as elaborated in the symptom of food-delivery work. This key contribution is fundamental in allowing us to grasp precarity, not only in the sense of deplorable, vulnerable and exploitative conditions but also in the ontic desire of the precarious worker to risk life itself by working as a food-delivery rider in a precarised western society. After this articulation of the contributions of this research to the wider theme of migrant and precarious work, I now connect the findings with the literature on subjectivity and affect.

6.3. Subjectivity and Affect in Food-Delivery Work

In chapter Four, one of the findings had to do with the ways in which migrant delivery-riders were able to distance themselves from the affective-experiences that they encountered in their everyday routine. This was true for both positive and negative experiences in their work. The most intriguing part is how they connected positive experiences with increased earnings, and negative experiences with lesser earnings. Again, the theme of quantification is prevalent and it influences the manner with which riders seem to have found techniques to mitigate the negative experiences as the current research has identified that immigrant delivery-riders indeed encounter episodes of racist and rude behaviour from others quite often during their work. What made this job impossible for me to endure for more than four months seemed

to have no effect on full-time riders who had experienced many more racist and harassing incidents than myself in the multiple years that they had been doing this job. To better understand this enigma, I employed a Lacanian analysis in chapter Five to locate how their subjectivity and affective economy was configured to enable them to keep working as delivery-riders. Following the thread from the previous sections, the function of freedom and autonomy, as it was elaborated, plays a significant role in the way they recognised themselves as valuable workers. This was investigated through the lens of forced choice as the empty gesture of subjectivity and the meaning it acquires in this way. This sheds light on the theme of the illusion of freedom that is observed at food-delivery work and which many scholars have identified in this sector (Cano et al., 2021; Li & Jiang, 2022; Umer, 2021; Woodcock, 2020). This study contributes to this literature by illustrating the importance of such an illusory freedom for the subjectivity of the riders. This is what matters to them. The riders' forced choice to subject themselves freely to this job and to embrace the quantification of their labour is made unconsciously. They reserve the right to claim that all the long hours of work they do are done of their own free will. The point where external subjugation meets the agency of the delivery-subject is what constitutes this forced choice and thus the subjectivity of the free, valuable worker that they seek to recognise in their speech.

After developing their subjectivity through identifying with the free and autonomous workers, riders already experience the influence of quantification and value. It is through this influence of quantification—as it is represented in their consolidated earnings, their delivery success rates, number of completed orders and so on—that riders are able to enjoy, and at the same time to mitigate, the affective-experiences by correlating them to a form of quantification. Taking this into account, researchers on the enjoyment of food-delivery riders (Goods et al., 2019; Lin et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2022) have focused on subjective facets of job satisfaction and qualitative approaches which nevertheless do not illustrate the precise role of affective-experiences in facilitating repetition through satisfaction in dissatisfaction, as the Lacanian conceptualisation of surplus-jouissance does. Hence, the Lacanian analysis in chapter Five broke down the different identifications of the riders in the registers of the Symbolic, Imaginary and the Real to connect them with the corresponding aspects of 'Money' as the excess object of the food-delivery riders. This analysis revealed the layers of identification and their interrelation with the layers of quantification which establish the proper dimensions to examine the subject and object in food-delivery and connect it with different modes of enjoyment in the pursuit of desire. In other words, the subjectivity of the migrant-rider is split between a

symbolic dimension of food-delivery in the present and an idealised image of their projected future work-self outside the limits of this work, aimed towards an entrepreneurial affluence so as to facilitate the double use of fantasy that was elaborated in sections 5.2 and 5.4 of chapter Five. This contributes to the literature on embodied affect in organisation studies (Ashcraft, 2017; Dashtipour & Vidaillet, 2017; Gherardi et al., 2019; Rosenberg, 1998) and more specifically to the work of those scholars who adopt a Lacanian perspective for investigating affects (Fotaki et al., 2017; Hoedemaekers, 2018; Kenny & Fotaki, 2014; Kenny, 2012). For example, Gherardi et al. argue for the potential of affect in organisation studies, as it reveals intensities and forces that otherwise might pass unnoticed by the researchers (Gherardi et al., 2019). This study underlines the significance of examining affect and its role for moulding the subjectivity and everyday experience of delivery-riders. Whereas the first impression was that the riders have maintained a distance from experiencing the negative encounters of racism and harassment in their job and at the same time only experience happiness when they are paid at the end of completing an order, the Lacanian analysis highlighted a different version of the riders' affective economy. By virtue of experiencing these racist and occasionally violent incidents, the migrant-riders have shifted their subjectivity to navigate across different imaginary identifications which are connected with the multiple dimensions with which they grasp the object of 'Money' under quantification, as a way to not invest in and validate their symbolic identity of food-delivery riders. Namely, when the riders receive their payment for a completed order there is a part of the expected enjoyment—that the received payment would procure—that is missing from what they actually obtained, and this imaginary dimension of the expected enjoyment is transposed to the next order thereby driving the whole circle of repeating deliveries.This is a fundamental point as it illuminates the kernel of the riders' subjectivity to be something different than just a delivery-rider illustrating the failure of identifications (Hoedemaekers, 2010), and the specific consequences of these failures in terms of their distribution of enjoyment (Hoedemaekers, 2008). On the one hand, this allows them to distance themselves from negative experiences during work, and on the other to receive enjoyment from every small payment they earn through their work. This sustains the disidentification with the identity of a delivery-rider and enhances the recognition of the free and valuable migrant worker who will have a bright future of affluence, either in this foreign country or back home. Every element here is configured in a way that constitutes and enables these forms of parasitic enjoyment and subjectivity by the influence of quantification and objectification. The different transgressive practices also testify to this configuration, as the analysis in chapter four indicated. All the riders' transgressions are focused toward a

maximisation of profitability, of increasing earnings and decreasing expenses in any way that is necessary, even if it is explicitly or implicitly illegal. This also contributes to the literature on the cynical forms of resistance (Contu, 2008; Driver, 2009a; Fleming, 2016; Fleming & Spicer, 2003, 2007) as it helps us to more fully understand the connections between transgression, as a form of a non-recognised resistance, and specific affective investments for the workers and how these are facilitated by the dis-identification that the transgressions enable.

There is a connection here with the broader literature of embodied experiences and critical management studies literature. Scholars have explored the subjective experiences of precarious self-employed scholars (Franke & Pulignano, 2021; Murgia & Pulignano, 2021; Patulny et al., 2020; Sebrechts et al., 2019) and how these are connected with vulnerability, meaningful recognition and self-affirmation. Yet they lack a way to connect their findings with the distribution of enjoyment with which these practices are connected. To give an example, Patulny et al. contend that it is best to have secure meaningful work, worst to have highly precarious work, and slightly better to have safe but alienating rather than risky meaningful work, in terms of avoiding often hidden negative emotions (Patulny et al., 2020). The contribution that is brought by a Lacanian framework to these predicaments is to illuminate the precise relationship between the role of delivery-riders fantasies—the ways in which these fantasies direct the object of each delivery towards a quantifiable surplus and invest it with affect that is experienced through the iterative process of food-delivery—and the established distribution of enjoyment that serves as the glue which ties the repetition of deliveries with the mitigation of the negative affective-experiences that riders encounter almost on a daily basis. Thus, the role of fantasy influences the subjectivity of the riders and also serves as the prop that enables the riders to experience enjoyment through what is being missed in each received payment and the arrival of the future affluence. This articulates the double role of fantasy in the symptom of food-delivery work since the extraction of surplus-jouissance as experienced enjoyment can only be utilised insofar as it is borrowed from the logic of the capitalist discourse that governs this work. This contributes in a clear way to what Kenny et al. (2020) expound on as the role of fantasies at work and on what Driver (2014) underlines as a substitution of a lack-of-being to a lack-of-having. This has a wider relevance for organisation studies at two levels. Firstly, it highlights that any investigation of workers' subjectivity and their affective-experience should include what the role of fantasy is therein and how this configuration orients the riders towards the object of their work. Secondly, the suitability and pertinence of a

psychoanalytic perspective lies in illuminating these interrelationships at the intersection of subjectivity, fantasy, and affective-experience and clarifying how their arrangement is crystallised in such a way that ends up promoting organisational goals at the expense of the workers.

This is a crucial difference and one which I attempted to illustrate by articulating the symptom of food-delivery work in a way that exemplifies how a lack that is engendered from a previous occasion replies to a lack raised on the following occasion, and by concealing the first behind the second, the subject emerges along its desiring structure and diversification of enjoyment. Other critical theories, such as Butler's theory of critical performativity and recognition, although following Lacanian theory closely, miss two important points. The first is the impossibility of any critical perfomativity reaching closure and establishing a totalised identity and the second is that human interest and activity rarely follow the same vector. For example, when scholars in the Butlerian studies propose that processes of recognition reveal an incommensurable gap between intention and experience (Cutcher et al., 2022; Tyler & Vachhani, 2021), they presuppose a certain disambiguity which allows such a distinction to be made. In contrast, Lacanian theory argues that even before intention and experience, there is already an incommensurability between thought and intention by virtue of the unconscious. Hence, Lacanian theory enriches and extends the theory of critical performativity by pursuing a different approach towards a meticulous depiction of the interplay between identifications, fantasies, demands and jouissance and the multiple detours found therein. This is fundamental to the way that the analysis developed the intermodality of the drive and the symptom of food-delivery work. It investigated the fixed-meanings that were observed in the riders' discourse and traced the different identifications that accounted for such meanings to become hegemonic. At the same time, it located the interplay between identifications and fantasies by connecting these with the modes of affective enjoyment in terms of capturing the object of 'Money' in its alternative manifestations in the interior exteriority of the riders' subjectivity (Cederström & Spicer, 2014; Hoedemaekers, 2018).

The contributions of this study to the theorisation of subjectivity and affect in organisation studies are twofold. Firstly, by following the analytic principle that there are only speaking bodies affected by discourse, it illustrates how language morphs the subject and decenters the individual, by virtue of unconscious investments and symptomatic formations which form the basis of interpretation in terms of how people view reality. In this case study, the riders as subjects who are subjected to the discourse of production, reveal in their speech

that even though they present themselves as productive, self-managed and self-controlled workers, there are gaps in their speech through which something contradictory to the logic of quantification and accumulation emerges. Despite investing in a fantasmatic enjoyment of pursuing the excessive surplus that will satisfy their drive of completing one more order, and despite establishing a distance from the negative and positive experiences at work through these identifications, there are occasions that something from the Real is exposed through their enunciations and suddenly there is a surprising experience of affect that goes beyond any immediate correlation with money and quantification. Secondly, in the case of delivery-riders, the different significations of 'Money' and their relation with desire and enjoyment, come to represent 'Money' as an objective surplus that provides satisfaction for an equivalent objective lack.

The subjective negativity which is responsible for the inherent lack of every subject is effaced and concealed, thereby resulting in a transmutation of the lack-of-being to a lack-of-having. By focusing on the lack-of-having, riders' fulfilment and success are constantly transposed to a future self who will accomplish their entrepreneurial fantasies in a state of affluence, and any sign of lack-of-being is rejected and negated. This summarises the formations with which riders have negated the subjective lack that derives from the law of castration and the way with which they balance out the impossibility of desire. Of course, I do not claim that this is the only analysis of my data that is possible, or that it entails the absolute truth as to how things should be understood in this line of work. However I do contend that this analysis is to be distinguished as the place where the question of interpretation about the subject of unconscious in organisation studies should be raised (Driver, 2009b, 2016; Hoedemaekers, 2010; Kenny et al., 2011; Lacan, 2018, p. 207). In the next part of the chapter, I summarise what the data analysis has demonstrated in terms of practices that are relevant and inform our understanding of HRM's role for the management and control of migrant precarious workers in this line of work.

6.4. Food-Delivery Work and Human Resource Management

In the fourth chapter, I presented how riders developed different transgressive practices to counter the low payments that the application companies provided for each order. Through the analysis, it is evident that riders surrender themselves to the applications' Law of

algorithmic control and management through metrics. At the same time, they combine their efforts to transgress any loopholes in this Law, so as to alleviate the financial restrictions that the companies' low payments impose on them (Polkowska & Mika, 2023). This is in agreement with the existing literature on algorithmic control and surveillance governance in food-delivery work (Goods et al., 2019; Griesbach et al., 2019; Woodcock, 2020), as well as the literature on how these processes of control influence transgressive practices by producing a heightened individualisation and gamification around the work (Duggan et al., 2020; Popan et al., 2023; Sun, 2019; Vasudevan & Chan, 2022). This gamification, along with its transgressive counterparts, contributes to the maintenance of the illusion of freedom and autonomy on the part of the workers (Barratt et al., 2020; Cano et al., 2021; Ivanova et al., 2018). At the same time, it intensifies the experience of precarity and exploitation, since the workers feel obliged to engage in such transgressions to earn sufficient money (Franke & Pulignano, 2021; Peticca-Harris et al., 2020). This is particularly true for the migrant delivery-riders, since their intensified vulnerability and limitations render them more prone to consent to their further exploitation (Sambajee & Scholarios, 2023; van Doorn & Vijay, 2021). This is even more so for immigrants without the right-to-work in this country, who find informal access to food-delivery work (Mendonça et al., 2023). This encapsulates the regime of algorithmic control and places the structure of this work in a relationship between the freedom and flexibility that it claims for its workers on the one hand, and on the other, the algorithmic control and management of the workers through metrics. An interesting point to note here is that this relationship is usually thought to exist in tension, meaning that there is a push and pull between the two sides. When the algorithmic control and the metrics become too rigid and crucial for the work, then the freedom and flexibility diminish and vice versa. However, I would claim that these sides are not in an antagonistic relationship but rather are operating in concert with one another. In other words, it is precisely because of the algorithmic control and management of the workers that this job is free and flexible.

The major difference of platform work from other types of work is the complete absence of the manager or supervisor. There is no human responsible for the workers' performance who may exert his power over the workers to deliver better results. Instead, in the manager's empty seat, there is a faceless algorithmic system which monitors some quantifiable aspects of the work such as delivering the orders on time, not having long idle times after picking up an order from a restaurant, the average rating of the rider and so on. With these and other metrics, the algorithmic system might take the decision to terminate or suspend an

account of a rider who does not meet expectations and is thereby deemed unfit for continuing to work as a rider. The specific criteria with which an account is terminated are in this sense obfuscated regarding performance management and even the application companies are unable to provide the exact justification for the suspension of an account (Griesbach et al., 2019; Veen et al., 2020). Thus, the situation concerning the algorithmic control and management of the workers takes on the power of a universal Law that all workers want to abide by. This constitutes the field of the Other in food-delivery work as expressed and dominated by this faceless algorithmic system of management which the riders want to respect and follow with their actions and choices while working. This builds on the previously mentioned literature of control and surveillance as systems which reinforce gamification and exploitation, by connecting these elements to the Lacanian literature in organisation studies (Ekman, 2013; Hoedemaekers & Keegan, 2010; Kosmala, 2013; Resch et al., 2021). It highlights how this field of the Other is constituted and serves as the stage where these processes of control, surveillance and gamification draw their meaning and recognition. This universal Law of food-delivery work, as I characterised it, is different from the actual legal system that is in effect. This explains how the riders, in their attempts to increase their earnings, take advantage of the autonomy and flexibility that the Law of delivery-work promulgates and devise ways in which, although they are transgressing the official rules and regulations, they do so by remaining faithful to the Law of the algorithmic system of control. They respect what they anticipate and presume what the algorithm wants from them in order to leave their accounts and metric ratings intact and at the same time they find other ways of bypassing the written rules of delivery-work (Polkowska & Mika, 2023). Certain loopholes where the algorithm is blind or cannot be made aware of their transgressions such as tax evasion, multi-apping and the other practices were mentioned in chapter Four. An important point to note, is that even though this algorithmic Law is faceless and is not incorporated in any one human subject, it may be incarnated by another person when the riders discuss their work with him. This was the case of the joke that was analysed in chapter 5.2 where the allusion of an Other occupying the position of this Law generated laughter. Precisely because the algorithm is faceless, and not limited to a specific boss or manager, it may be embodied by any interlocutor to which the riders address their discourse about food-deliveries. It was in this sense that I navigated the analysis in the previous chapter, through locating how the riders brought this faceless Other into the picture and superimposed it on me as the other interlocutor in the discussions we had during the interviews. Since one of the findings in the previous chapter was how the riders concealed their subjective lack and rejected the symbolic castration in their pursuit of a surplus object that occupied the

place of more money as the universal quest of this work, it is time now to connect this to the algorithmic system of control and management and discuss the influence and role of the algorithmic system as an HRM practice.

6.4.1 The Human Resource Management of the Algorithm

The riders in food-delivery gig-work have realised how their present and future in this work is not actually dictated by the companies and their board of directors, but rather by the algorithmic management system that is implemented to control the riders on the platforms. Therefore, the riders acknowledge the obscure Law of the algorithm, which by constituting the universal principle that governs their work, also makes the freedom and flexibility possible. The algorithmic rule is identified with a quantification of work that enables the personalised fantasies with which riders envision their future selves and grants them the opportunity to experience their freedom through the particular transgressive practices that each rider may employ in his work. In other words, the universal aspect of the algorithmic system is always sustained and obeyed, in terms of riders wanting to have good ratings and a successful metric representation of their work. However, at the same time, how they manage to engage in transgressions with the focus of remaining undetected by the algorithm, is particular to each rider's experience of this work. What starts to become evident is that the way that the symptom of the food-delivery riders was developed in the previous chapter owes a great deal to the algorithmic system of control that manages the workers. The riders experience the invisible presence of the algorithm through the automatic notifications about the increased demand for deliveries and the nudges to not miss the opportunity to increase their earnings with the bonus being active for a limited time. This is a fundamental part of their work routine that structures their experience in the direction of representing value by numerical digits and directs their pursuit towards the surplus-value of delivering more orders. Additionally, they experience the gaze of the algorithmic system in the aspects of their work which can be captured by it and enjoy the freedom to engage in a hide and seek game between what the algorithm can see and what they can do in the shadows and remain hidden from its sight, although they are always still under its gaze. In this sense, the anticipated gaze of the algorithm which counts and quantifies their performance is translated by the riders into an object of desire to further increase their value and is constitutive of the drive of food-delivery work as developed in the

previous chapter. There is an equivalence between what the algorithm is able and not able to see and monitor, and the gaps within the split rider-subject where, not being identical to himself, he attempts to capture what is missing from him in the pursuit of an elusive surplus-order.

This symmetry of the gaps in the constitution of the subject and the object of delivery-work that were traced in detail in the previous chapter, and what is visible and invisible to the algorithmic system of control, further guarantee the seamless continuation of delivery-work in the different significations with which each rider fills with meaning. These meanings vary among the riders and may range from which street they chose to reach their destination against the applications guidelines, without the disapproval of the algorithm that is surveilling them, all the way to the different transgressions riders may employ without the algorithm punishing them as they find ways to conceal their presence and movement. Consequently, the algorithmic system of control and management serves as the transcendental element of food-delivery work that conditions the riders' perception of reality. It is transcendental in the Kantian sense of demarcating what delimits all possible experience in this work. One could argue that the way in which riders constitute their symptom and engage the drive of food-delivery work in an apparently seamless and consistent fashion is not merely facilitated but rather enabled with the algorithmic system that governs this work. The rejection of lack and castration, along the inconsistencies that emerged in the analysis of the riders' discourse, indicate how the concealment of human negativity may be directly linked to the elevation of an algorithmic system into a self-regulating entity, endowed with the mystic power to engender value (Tomšič, 2015, p. 152). The interpretation of the algorithmic system through a mystical dimension is something many riders illustrated from their individual attempts to provide an explanation of what the algorithm in each application allowed and did not allow. Through their unique experiences, riders were able to formulate an understanding of how the algorithm might treat them. Sometimes it might punish them for rejecting many consecutive orders, whereas at other times riders stated that rejecting orders did not affect the algorithm, but being late for the delivery would make it less likely to receive an order the moment you completed the delayed delivery. In other words, for many delivery riders, the power of the algorithm extends beyond the official quantifiable metrics and surveillance and influences the income and value that riders are able to generate. The ambiguity that exists in understanding the exact way in which the algorithm forgives or punishes, underpins the different interpretations of riders and sets an equivocal space in the experience of this work for each rider to fill with their own particular

meanings. Nevertheless, all the different meanings that may develop under the algorithms' gaze have two things in common. The first, is the underlining of the objective lack through which delivery-riders are oriented towards the pursuit of one 'more' order which will return a payment of money in the dimension of a surplus, and the second is the negation of subjective lack and loss, since under the algorithm's regime everyone is translatable to a quantifiable subjectivity. We see how the contrast between objective and subjective lack, a want-to-have and want-to-be, emerges again in the significations of the riders under the algorithm's gaze. This contributes to the existing literature of HRM in terms of highlighting the lack of humanity in the algorithmic system of food-delivery work (Johnsen & Gudmand-Høyer, 2010) by demonstrating a clear way in which the inherent human lack is rejected and substituted with a quantifiable subjectivity. The algorithmic system of control and management restricts the riders, but at the same time enables their freedom as self-controlling and self-disciplined workers—workers who make use of their autonomy by furthering their exploitation and commodification under the gaze of quantification.

After examining in detail the role of the algorithmic system as a practice of HRM in food-delivery work, it is possible to connect and relate the restrictions that the quantification of the algorithm imposes in a different way, that is, to the very freedom and flexibility that this job alleges for its workers. In contrast to the first impression, these two very different things are not working in opposition but rather in concert. You are free precisely when you are controlled. The algorithm's principle, as the universal Law, governs riders and enables free space for particular identifications and fantasies as well as individual practices that go unnoticed in the shadows of delivering where the algorithm might be blind but its gaze is still there capturing the subject. This role of the algorithm as the Law dictates the limits of experience in this work and is homologous with the quantification that renders money as both the metaphor and metonymy of the riders' symptom and desire. The current discussion of the algorithmic system of control and management once again touches upon the opposition between lack-of-having and lack-of-being that was mentioned in the previous chapter. This illustrates, in a clear-cut fashion, how modern practices of control and management such as the algorithmic system within food-delivery work, neglect the inherent negativity of the riders and direct them towards quantifiable versions of subjectivity by facilitating the constitution of the field of the Other where the signification of value is totalised. The last section of this chapter offers a succinct summary of the key contributions of this study.

6.5 Summary of Empirical Contributions

Before summarising the empirical contributions, I return briefly to the research questions to condense how the present thesis has answered them.

Q1: How do migrant riders make sense of their precarious working conditions and what identifications do they develop—with their unique fantasies and particular objects—to structure their subjectivity and sustain their working-selves?

Q2: What modes of enjoyment underpin their lived-experience and how are these maintained and repeated in the different forms of control, consent and resistance that emerge in their work? How do processes of identification and subjectification enable and mediate these?

Q3: What are the modern practices of control and management in food-delivery work that are instrumental in constituting these identifications and modes of enjoyment, thereby designating the coordinates of a HRM system in this line of work?

Starting from the first question, this study discovered that the migrant riders embrace the precarious conditions of their work by not investing in their current identity as delivery-riders. Instead, they focus on the idealised versions of their future professional-selves supported by the use of fantasy, where at this future point they will have achieved an entrepreneurial success and attained a state of affluence. The analysis unveils the double use of fantasy in rendering the object of food-delivery desirable and pushing the riders towards the pursuit of an elusive quantifiable surplus which mitigates the negative experiences they encounter in their daily routines. The analysis illustrates the importance of the forced choice for the subjectivity of the migrant riders, as it is through their own free will that they subject themselves to these precarious and harsh conditions of food-delivery gig-work. In this way, the delivery-subject is never identical to itself, as riders are split between the present of delivering in precarious conditions and an idealised image of their projected future work-self.

For the second research question the data analysis elucidates the different forms of transgressions that riders employ in their work and how these are also oriented towards an increase of their earnings, abiding by the rules of gamification and quantification that are dominant in this gig-work. Moreover, the previous interrelationship between subjectivity, fantasy and the object of food-delivery is connected through a logic of lack and surplus to how

riders experience enjoyment in the vicious cycle of accepting and delivering the next order. Precisely by experiencing that something is missing from each delivery they complete and that each corresponding payment provides satisfaction to them that is lacking compared to what they were expecting, the riders transpose this compelling aspect to the next delivery they accept, thus accessing a surplus-enjoyment which allows them to keep working despite the negative experiences they encounter in their daily routine.

The last research question is answered by revealing the precise coordinates of the algorithmic system of management in food-delivery and how this faceless system of control delineates the rule of quantification as the fundamental principle of this work. The algorithm, by constantly tracking the metrics of the riders, particularly in terms of their orders and payments, establishes a quantitative logic of counting which governs the lived-experience of this work. In this way, riders translate their efficiency, and the positive and negative experiences of their work, to a correlative gain or loss in income. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrates that it is because of the rigid metric control of the algorithm that the riders experience this work as free and flexible. It is owing to this algorithmic system that the riders borrow its logic in structuring their own unique fantasies and develop their own ways to transgress the rules that the algorithm has set. Thus, the algorithmic system guides the riders to the ways with which they mitigate their negative experiences and simultaneously experience enjoyment in pursuing the delivery of the next order to come.

There is an equivalence between what the algorithm is able and not able to see and monitor, and the gaps within the split rider-subject, not being identical to itself, attempts to capture what is missing in the pursuit of an elusive surplus-order. Riders understand how the surveillance and control of the algorithm restrict their profits and implement the algorithm's logic of quantification in devising transgressions that will increase their earnings. Hence, the riders' identifications and their recognition of the free and flexible nature of food-delivery is conditioned by the coordinates of the algorithm. They operate in concert with the gamification that the algorithm propagates. It is therefore evident that the psychoanalytic framework that this research adopts enables a holistic approach to answering these questions individually and also to illuminating their interrelations and how each aspect of the research questions feeds into the next, creating a complex nexus of layered influences and effects. After succinctly answering the research questions that were posed in this thesis I now move onto a summary of the empirical contributions.

The first part of the discussion summarised the main findings of the two data analysis chapters and then connected these to the corresponding literature on migrant and precarious labour, subjectivity and affect, and the HRM system of the food-delivery work. In this final section, I present the contributions from the findings of this study which improve our understanding on two main points, firstly the experience of precarity in food-delivery work and secondly, the role of quantification in food-delivery work. The first key contribution is that the experience of the precarious and vulnerable conditions that migrant riders face in food-delivery work is embraced and not opposed because it serves two important purposes: acceptance as affirmation of their agency that offers protection from experiencing a more threatening precarity; and access to a mode of jouissance. The second key contribution of this study is that the quantification instigated by the algorithmic system that controls and manages the riders, functions as the Law of food-delivery by constituting the interior for which there is no exterior. The rider who finds himself transgressing this law is in a position of exclusion that is precisely his form of inclusion, since it is in this way that the law has grasped him. These two contributions are interrelated and encompass the majority of the findings of this study in a way that enables us to view these two contributions as the obverse sides of food-delivery gig-work. I now elaborate each contribution and integrate it with the corresponding literature.

Navigating and accepting the precarious nature of this work is no small feat and the delivery-riders who do so accomplish a series of outcomes with multiple ramifications. Firstly, through embracing precarity riders are able to validate their identity as free, valuable migrant-workers who generate value in this foreign country and have their own entrepreneurial goals and fantasies. This contributes to the literature of precarious and migrant work (Cano et al., 2021; Gebrial, 2022; Huang, 2022; Mendonça et al., 2023) as for example Mendonça et al. who studied the hyper-precarious and exploitative conditions that informal immigrants endure as delivery-riders. Additionally, this builds on past literature on subjectivity in organization studies (Driver, 2009c, 2016; Hoedemaekers, 2009, 2021; Kenny et al., 2020; Shepherd et al., 2022; Valenzuela et al., 2023), as the Lacanian framework employed here highlights how this forced choice of the free, valuable worker is the empty gesture that matters for the subject and delineates the split rider-subject who does not identify as a delivery-rider but as the never-identical rider who generates value and pursues the surplus. As Valenzuela et al. argue, it is the embracing of the precarious nature of food-delivery work that allows a recognition of their vulnerability and through the neoliberal values of freedom and autonomy the riders animate their desire. The current contribution builds upon these arguments and further relates them to

the possibilities of enjoyment in the form of surplus-jouissance that these riders experience when their devices vibrate after completing each order and the payment is collected in their application. There is a strong affective dimension that is enabled in this embrace of the precarious work they do—precisely in constituting themselves as desiring entrepreneurial subjects, the riders are able to experience jouissance in the object of Money that they receive through the work. Simultaneously, they sustain their impossible desire by never reaching satisfaction, as they pursue a surplus that will remain elusive in the dimension of Money in the Real register.

This section contributes to the literature of affect in organisation studies (Cederström & Spicer, 2014; Fotaki et al., 2017; Kenny & Fotaki, 2014; Kenny, 2012; Resch et al., 2021). For example, Fotaki et al. argue that the affective element has potential to shed light on many aspects of work. The present studyilluminated how it is possible for the delivery-subject to create new states of being and not only mitigate the negative affective-experiences he encounters at work, but also find modes of enjoyment there. Whereas someone like me finds pain and suffering in such work. The last element of this contribution is linked to how this embracing of the precarity facilitates the concealment of the lack-of-being by using a double imposition of fantasy that drives riders to continue this work by directing them towards a want-to-have rather than acknowledging their lack and castration. This is what connects it to quantification as the Law that governs food-delivery work and renders the embracing of precarity its obverse side. The first fantasy is where riders try to grasp the phantasmatic surplus, while this surplus is already supplemented by another fantasy—the fantasy where each rider endows this surplus with certain attributes, that is to say, what this surplus comes to mean for each individual rider. In this way, riders continuously engage the platforms of delivery-work by concealing their lack under this imaginary pursuit of a surplus that enables their fantasies of a future in affluence.

The second key contribution of the findings is that the algorithmic system of control instigates a quantification which serves as the human resource management of delivery-riders. It builds upon the literature of control in food-delivery work (Cano et al., 2021; Griesbach et al., 2019; Li & Jiang, 2022; Mendonça & Kougiannou, 2023; Veen et al., 2020) by offering the argument that the relationship between the freedom and autonomy that this work provides and the quantification of the algorithmic system that measures riders along a plethora of metrics are not antagonistic, but complementary. In other words, as it has been demonstrated, that it is not that the freedom of this work starts where the restrictions and sight of the algorithm stop,

but rather that the freedom and autonomy of food-delivery are made possible precisely by these restrictions that the quantification of the algorithm propagates. Further, this contributes to the literature on the gamification of gig-work (Deterding, 2019; Popan et al., 2023; Sun, 2019; van Doorn & Chen, 2021; Vasudevan & Chan, 2022; Woodcock & Johnson, 2018). For example, van Doorn & Chen argue against any universal mode of gamification and maintain that there are differences between the situated techniques of gamification and their corresponding impact on workers. This study underlines how it is indeed not the gamification that is universal but the law of the algorithm which instigates a universal quantification and constitutes the gaze of the algorithm as an object of desire for the riders to develop quantifiable subjectivities. It is not a question of good or eligible gamification inside the applications and/or gamification in terms of transgressive practices that riders employ where the algorithm's eyes do not see them. Even in the practices of minimal cheating, fiddling and exploiting loopholes in the algorithms' law (Polkowska & Mika, 2023), the rider-subjects find themselves in line with quantification by affirming the law of the algorithm through its exclusion. This is a fundamental point which constitutes a place—like a Möbius strip—where the inside is inherently fused with the outside. By staying inside this algorithmic law, the riders end up on the outside where they embrace their precarious conditions and consider themselves free and valuable workers. The two sides connect within a topological manifold where they can neither push against nor merge with one another. It illustrates the excess of the Law in terms of its validity over the imaginary meaning—through their transgressions, the riders are attempting to suspend all laws and therefore establish the law of quantification as such, the Law that functions as its own permanent transgression.

This chapter has provided an overview of the analysis of the empirical themes that emerged across the two data analysis chapters of the three data sets from the ethnographic diary, the participant observations and the interviews. These findings were then aligned with the corresponding literature, namely migrant and precarious work, subjectivity and affect, and systems of control and human resource management. Then the findings were consolidated under two key contributions: (1) the rider's embracing of precarity in their work; and (2) the algorithmic system of control as a human resource management practice. These could be viewed as two sides of a Möbius strip that represents the experience of food-delivery work for migrant-riders. In this way, the subject and object of food-delivery work were traced along with their different identifications and connected with modes of enjoyment and desire. Both contributions highlight a lack of humanity in the case of food-delivery workers and the

algorithmic system that controls and manages them through quantification. The contributions suggest that the rejection of human negativity and the lack-of-being are what are fundamentally concealed under the symptomatic formation of food-delivery gig-work. What is effectively concealed is the delivery-subject itself, and the different ways with which the individual attempts to cover its own lack and castration.

Conclusion

This concluding chapter provides a summary of the entire thesis, before summarising an account of the contributions. Then the limitations and directions of future research are elaborated. The final section reflects on the research process as a whole.

Chapter One surveyed the literature in which this study is posited. It started with positing one pillar of the research in studies of migrant and precarious labour and how researchers have examined the precarious experiences of migrant workers in terms of their affective dimensions. I then reviewed literature which investigates the practices of control and consent as indispensable elements of the workers' experience and this was followed by literature that analysed forms of resistance in precarious and migrant work as equally important elements to be considered. The second pillar of this research is based on how workers' subjectivity has been explored in work and organisation studies, illustrating the strands of research that have looked into control, consent and resistance to inform their analysis on subjectivity. This was accompanied by an expositions of how scholars in critical management studies have utilized a psychoanalytic framework to further enhance our understanding of subjectivity. These three perspectives were then brought together converging on the points of examining precarious and migrant workers' subjectivity through examining how forms of control, consent and resistance are affectively experienced and how they influence subjectivity while adopting a psychoanalytic lens for the analysis. The final parts of the chapter presented the precise scope of the research in terms of directing this case study to food-delivery gig-work and the research questions that guided this thesis.

Chapter Two elaborated the Lacanian psychoanalytic theory that informed this research and indicated how psychoanalytic concepts would be utilised as taken from the clinical field into a social analysis context. It started by introducing the three registers of the Symbolic, Imaginary and the Real and their use in analysing identifications. It then moved on to comment on the mechanisms of metaphor and metonymy as the main ways to produce meaning from language and how this implicates desire and symptomatic formations. The second part of this chapter delved into the fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis and pointed out the use that transference, repetition, the unconscious and the drive would have for the analysis which followed. The last part of the chapter investigated the connection between psychoanalysis and politics by presenting the four discourses that constitute the social-bonds and how the role of

enjoyment is played out by surplus-jouissance. The chapter concluded with the main concepts and their use for the discursive analysis to be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

Chapter Three presented the methodology of this thesis. It began with a discussion on epistemology and ontology and set out the impossibility of knowledge and the impasse of ontology as psychoanalysis is founded on the gap that constitutes the kernel of negativity in human subjectivity. It continued by developing the ethnographic approach of this study that consists of observation and participation in the food-delivery work as well as psychoanalytic interviews. The chapter then discussed potential variations of discourse analysis and how it concluded that a Lacanian discourse analysis would allow for an in-depth analysis of workers' subjectivity that takes into consideration the affective-experiences of the riders. This was followed by a discussion on the reflexivity and ethics, as the role of the researcher is fundamental in the research undertaken. The chapter concluded by summarising the philosophical underpinnings and the characteristics of a Lacanian discourse analysis.

Chapter Four is the first of the two data analysis chapters. It presented the fundamental elements of food-delivery work, broken down into three main parts. The first is how easy it is to start working as a delivery-rider and to be your own boss. The second shows how this is complemented by the freedom and flexibility that this job apparently offers. The third element involves the transgressions that workers often employ in this line of work. The second part of the chapter focused on the daily experience of the riders, divided into three sections. The first demonstrated the role of efficiency and knowledge in their daily routine as key elements that generate sufficient earnings from this job. The second explained how riders describe their negative and positive experiences while at work. The third outlined the future goals that riders have in relation to the temporary nature that this work alleges to be. The analysis emphasised how the emerging object of money is ever present in these sections along the quantification that pervades all actions and experiences of the riders.

Chapter Five is the second part of the data analysis where the findings of chapter Four were examined under a psychoanalytic framework to make sense, not only of what is manifest in the riders' discourse, but also to locate the unconscious latent content. Starting by the deadlock of perspectives that emerged between my own ethnographic experience and the way the riders spoke about their own, it detected the identifications of the riders as they oscillate between the different significations of 'Money' as a quantification of value. By examining vignettes from the interviews, this was connected to the enjoyment that is available in pursuing

and delivering orders and the use of fantasy as a means to mitigate the harsh experiences often encountered in this work. Additionally, the role of freedom in this job was investigated in terms of a forced choice and its importance for subjectivity. These elements constitute the drive of food-delivery work that maintain the majority of the riders in engaging with the platforms' applications for several years, despite the low-payments and cruel experiences that most migrant riders encounter. The analysis then connected the object as money via quantification and the subject of delivery-work with its different identifications to formulate what could be called the symptom of food-delivery work. Through the use of metaphor and metonymy the consequences to desire and lack-of-being were discussed as the analysis highlighted the rejection of the subject's negativity and castration in firmly positioning itself as a quantifiable subjectivity.

Chapter Six is the last substantive chapter of the thesis where the findings of the previous chapters are discussed and integrated within the respective literature. The findings highlighted how the migrant workers are embracing the precarious nature of this work and combining neo-liberal and entrepreneurial identifications in which precarity appears as something natural that motivates you to work and earn money. The Lacanian perspective highlighted how this mode of subjectivity connects to jouissance as there is a distribution of enjoyment in the forced choice of working freely and autonomously. The role of fantasy was implicated in the discussion and how it facilitates long-term engagement with this work as well as mitigating the negative experiences that they often encounter. The final section of this chapter elaborated how the algorithmic system of control operates in this work and how it constitutes a new mode of Human Resource Management by instilling a universal Law of quantification.

<u>Contributions</u>

This research highlights the importance of incorporating an analysis of the forms of control, consent and resistance as well as the affective elements of the work experience to gain a more developed understanding of the subjectivity of the migrant and precarious delivery-riders. This is because the elements of food-delivery and the ways that control, consent and resistance manifest in the riders' daily-lives are intertwined and play a constitutive role in conditioning the lived-experience of the workers. Additionally, the psychoanalytic framework

that this study employed, allowed a discourse analysis to be performed that takes these practices into consideration and, with its rich conceptual toolkit offers a different perspective on their signification and how they influence the workers' subjectivity. Thus, by locating the points where the riders' discourse was converging in certain ambiguities of meaning around specific signifiers and then tracing the different identifications and significations in these points of inconsistency, it enabled the analysis to elaborate on the role of fantasy, jouissance and desire in this case study. Moreover, the subject of the unconscious was in the spotlight of the analysis as the extimate locus of speech where the subject enjoys without wanting to know anything about it. This permitted the analysis to conclude with two main contributions that are interconnected and mutually inform one another.

The first contribution is that the experience of the precarious and vulnerable conditions that the riders face each day are embraced and not resisted. They see these conditions as something natural, belonging to this environment which is foreign to them. This serves to facilitate their neo-liberal identifications and entrepreneurial fantasies. Embracing the precarious work also entails a strong affective dimension—by constituting themselves as free, autonomous, and desiring workers they access surplus-jouissance in the payments they receive, as they pursue a quantifiable surplus with each order they accept. At the same time, this permits riders to neutralise the affective-experiences that they encounter and engage the platform applications in the long-term. Lastly, this configuration of subjectivity also has implications for the being of the workers as it employs a double imposition of fantasy that conceals their lack-of-being and negates their symbolic castration. This is intimately connected with the quantification that operates as the Law of food-delivery work and therein lies the second contribution of this study.

The second contribution of this study lies in its demonstration of how the algorithmic system of control establishes a quantification which serves as the human resource management of delivery-riders. This algorithmic system of control forms a complementary relationship between the freedom and flexibility of this work. It is precisely because of this system's invisible gaze of quantification that the riders experience their work as free and, in a variety of ways, they transgress the system in order to increase their earnings. This formulates the Law of food-delivery as a Möbius strip where the free and autonomous riders, walking on the side of quantification, fulfilling all the perceived rules of the algorithm, end up on the other side where with their transgressions attempt to suspend all laws and thereby they abide even more fully by the Law of the algorithm.

Practical Implications

This thesis underlines how the psychoanalytic perspective of the unconscious allows a different, in-depth analysis of migrant workers subjectivity and experience in their precarious work. By examining the discourse of food-delivery work and articulating relations with surplus-jouissance, desire, and being, as they are established in the impossibility of language, the subject of the unconscious emerges as radically decentred from the individual worker. Additionally, the psychoanalytic framework illustrates, not just how the current situation is configured in terms of the migrant riders' subjectivity and affective-experience, but also its potential to change into new subjective positions. With this in mind, I abstained from suggesting any normative solutions to such a complex situation as the one constituted in the intersection of platform gig-work with migrant and precarious work. I am unsympathetic to attempts to underplay this aspect or to reduce it to a more familiar and commonsensical view. My reasons for this are twofold. The first is found in the ways in which a topology of the unconscious allows the analysis to present the situation by illustrating the interrelations and influence that certain aspects of food-delivery work—such as freedom and the algorithmic system of control—have in shaping the subjectivity and lived-experience of the workers. The second, is that the psychoanalytic use of an interpretation is not to resolve an impasse but to shed doubt on how the impasse came to be established in the first place. Psychoanalysis adopts a perspective of suspicion towards any meaning, as the signifier is incapable of totalising its signification, hence at the moment of making a conclusion, one has to cast doubt on what he interprets. Be that as it may, doubt opens up the field of the Other where the game of signification is played and enables new directions of meaning to become possible where previously they were not. In this sense, the possibilities exist for making the migrant-riders' experiences and subjectivity a central aspect of consideration in future policy-making in immigration as well as in employment relations in gig-work. In doing so, perhaps platform companies could be made more accountable for managing their workers and migrant-workers could face a less vulnerable and exploitative working environment.

__Reflections and Limitations__

This study builds upon the existing literature to suggest that valuable insights may be gained from developing an understanding of the forms of control, consent and resistance, as well as the affective-experience of the workers in analysing workers' subjectivity and suggests that a psychoanalytic lens is an appropriate methodological tool to conduct such an analysis (eg. Driver, 2009b, 2016; Hoedemaekers, 2009, 2021; Kenny et al., 2020; Valenzuela et al., 2023). It is however, not without its limitations. The following section discusses these limitations, the ways in which I tried to mitigate the impact of these limitations on the research process, and finally some suggestions for directions in future research.

This study was conducted as part of a doctoral research project and therefore it was under time and resource constraints. The fact that most of the riders were reluctant to participate in an interview with me, pushed me into offering a financial incentive to those who agreed to be interviewed. As the initial incentive was not sufficient to convince delivery-riders to have a discussion with me, I had to double the original amount and I was thus able to conduct only 22 interviews. Additionally, the time constraints meant that I had to finalise the empirical data collection and move on to the analysis in a rather rapid fashion in order to finish on time. Of course, the fact that the first year of my PhD journey took place under the effects of lockdown due to the Covid-19 pandemic did not assist me in any way in preparing the ground for my fieldwork, and delayed the setting-up of contacts that could have been beneficial from the beginning. Without these resource and time restraints, I could have conducted more interviews and reached a more embedded position within the riders' community, not only in Colchester but also in London. With this in mind, conducting a broader fieldwork in terms of geographical locations and spaces could be an interesting area for further research. Moreover, the aspect of gender was something that was not investigated in the current research and research which pays close attention to the aspects of gender in different cultural backgrounds in this work could provide fruitful outcomes.

The auto-ethnographic approach of this study had some implications as well. During my work as a migrant delivery-rider I was overwhelmed by the negative experiences of this work and struggled to find a way in which this job could be tolerable for everyone. In this way, I identified as the migrant worker/researcher who needed to find a way to improve this job and raise awareness of how insufferable it was. Nevertheless, by coming to admit this identification

and fantasy of mine, I was then able to listen to what my participants were saying without trying to push my own views upon them, but rather trying to locate where their identifications and fantasies made their own perception of this job possible. Hence, I was able to analyse their speech and trace where the enjoyment and role of surplus-jouissance might be at play and to be attentive to the riders' perspectives, despite the fact that they were so different from my own.

My role as a doctoral researcher with a primary interest in psychoanalysis meant that throughout the research process, I sought to position myself within the literature of clinical and philosophical origins and at times struggled to translate this into a close reading and analysis of the empirical material. This was a steep learning curve for me and at times I felt like I was occupying an extimate position to this research at the intersection of my role as a researcher, delivery-worker and clinical trainee. Despite the limitations discussed above, my own role and experience in these positions meant that I was able to gain insights and access that otherwise would not have been possible. In other words, the benefits of my personal research journey along with my auto-ethnographic positioning may be considered to outweigh any limitations that this positioning imposed.

Overall, the auto-ethnographic element of the research underpinned many of the reflections and limitations of this study. However, it was this auto-ethnographic positioning that allowed me to conduct the research in the way I did. It facilitated my contacts with fellow migrant riders by virtue of being an immigrant myself, helped me establish rapport and transference with my participants during the interviews, and allowed me to work through the different perspectives in ways that were constructive for the analysis. Moving beyond this thesis, directions of future research could include developing wider cultural and regional comparisons—potentially in the UK as well as with other countries and regions of the world— as well as conducting a closer examination of the role of gender in this line of work.

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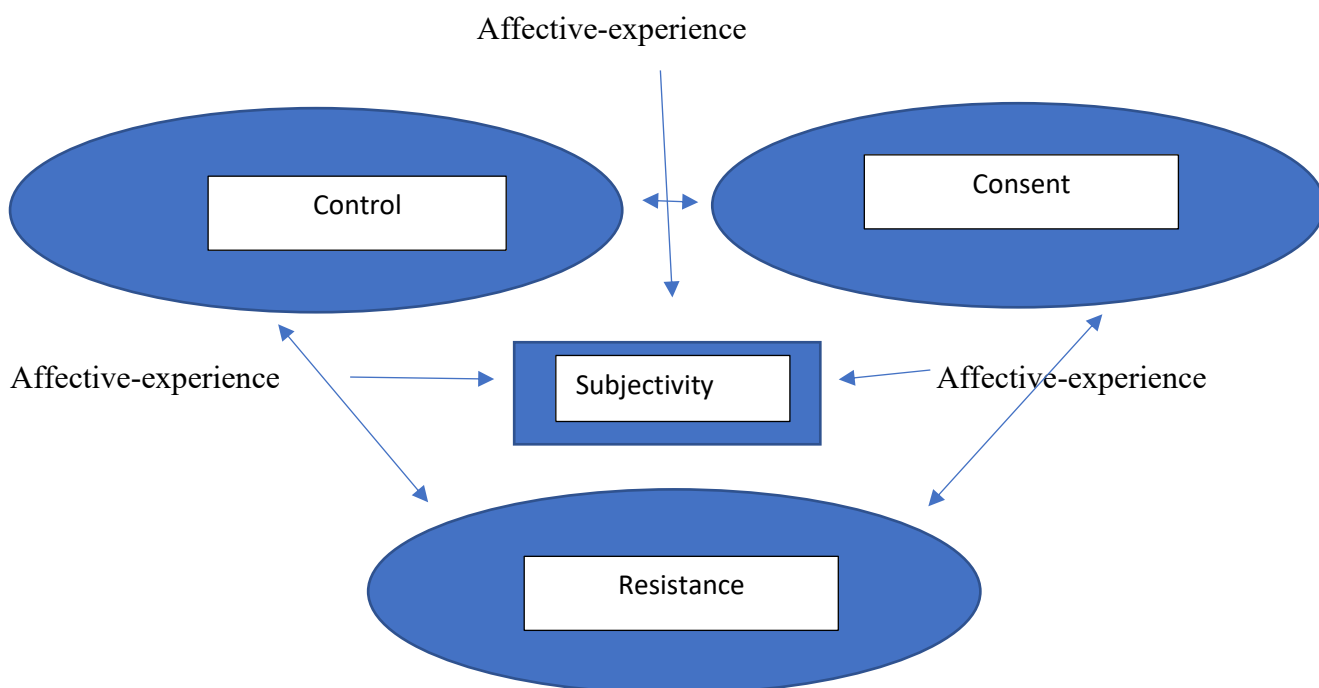
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Appendix

Interview themes, interview guide

Affective-experience

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        Control              Consent

Affective-experience  Subjectivity  Affective-experience

            Resistance
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How did you start working as a delivery rider?

What was your view on the job before you start and how did it change after experiencing it first-hand? What discrepancies can you pinpoint and how can you explain that?

What was the reaction of your close ones when you communicated to them about your new work? Which emotions do you think guided their reactions?

How was your first interactions with the delivery app? Did you find it easy to navigate and use the apps?

Describe a typical day in your life, what are your thoughts in a typical day at work?

How do you interact with the app, on a typical working day? What would you prefer, what would you change if you had the chance?
(What do you think about the apps' influence on your work, how does that make you feel?)

Do you usually follow the app's guidelines or not? If you resist it, how and why?

How do you feel about the organisation's communication with you, either through the app or through emails? (any thoughts on the protect the neighbourhood initiative from Deliveroo? What was your reaction to this? What about the training seminar/classes from the organisation? What do you think about them? Were they helpful/interesting?)

How was your learning curve in using the app? Do you feel you improved in their use over time? If yes, how? What consequences did this have for your work?

Do you have a specific memory or example while working, that made you feel particularly proud/happy/sad/frustrated/angry? Why you felt this way?

How much have you invested for your work equipment? Do you think it was a worthy investment?

What obstacles/impediments do you experience while working? (these can range to harsh weather or anything you experience as making your work harder.) Do you feel these extend beyond your working hours, or not? Why?

Has your life changed in any ways since you started working as a delivery rider? If so, in which ways?

How do you think the change in prices has affected your work? How do you address this in your own words/actions?

What do you think about the riders' strike actions? Have you personally joined any strike demonstrations/picket lines? Why?

Do you believe there is a possibility of improvement and positive change? Do you think this can be achieved from individual or collective actions?

How do you think others perceive your work in your personal life? Is there something that strikes you in people's reactions when you tell them that you work as a delivery rider?

What do you think about the way others see you while working as well as outside the working hours when you speak about your work? Is there a difference between these views? Why?

Where do you see yourself in the future? What would you change compared to now?

What are your thoughts about your colleagues, as well as how you feel they view yourself while working? Do you think there are discrepancies in these views? Why?


Thoughts:

 Work-continuity. What work you were doing before you arrive in the UK, how you view the difference between now and the past?

Food delivery claims freedom at work with working as few or many hours you want and stopping and starting whenever you feel like it. How do you feel about your freedom at work?

Table of Participants:

Interview	Participant's Pseudonym
1	Michael
2	González
3	Alonzo
4	Quincy
5	Yaritza
6	Amber
7	Isaac
8	Dania
9	Raul
10	Tomas
11	Niko
12	Hassan
13	Anabella
14	Rhys
15	Agustin
16	Dax
17	Sierra
18	Saniyah
19	Joslyn
20	Allen
21	Angel
22	Laci

Screenshots of Monthly Earnings by a very successful Rider:
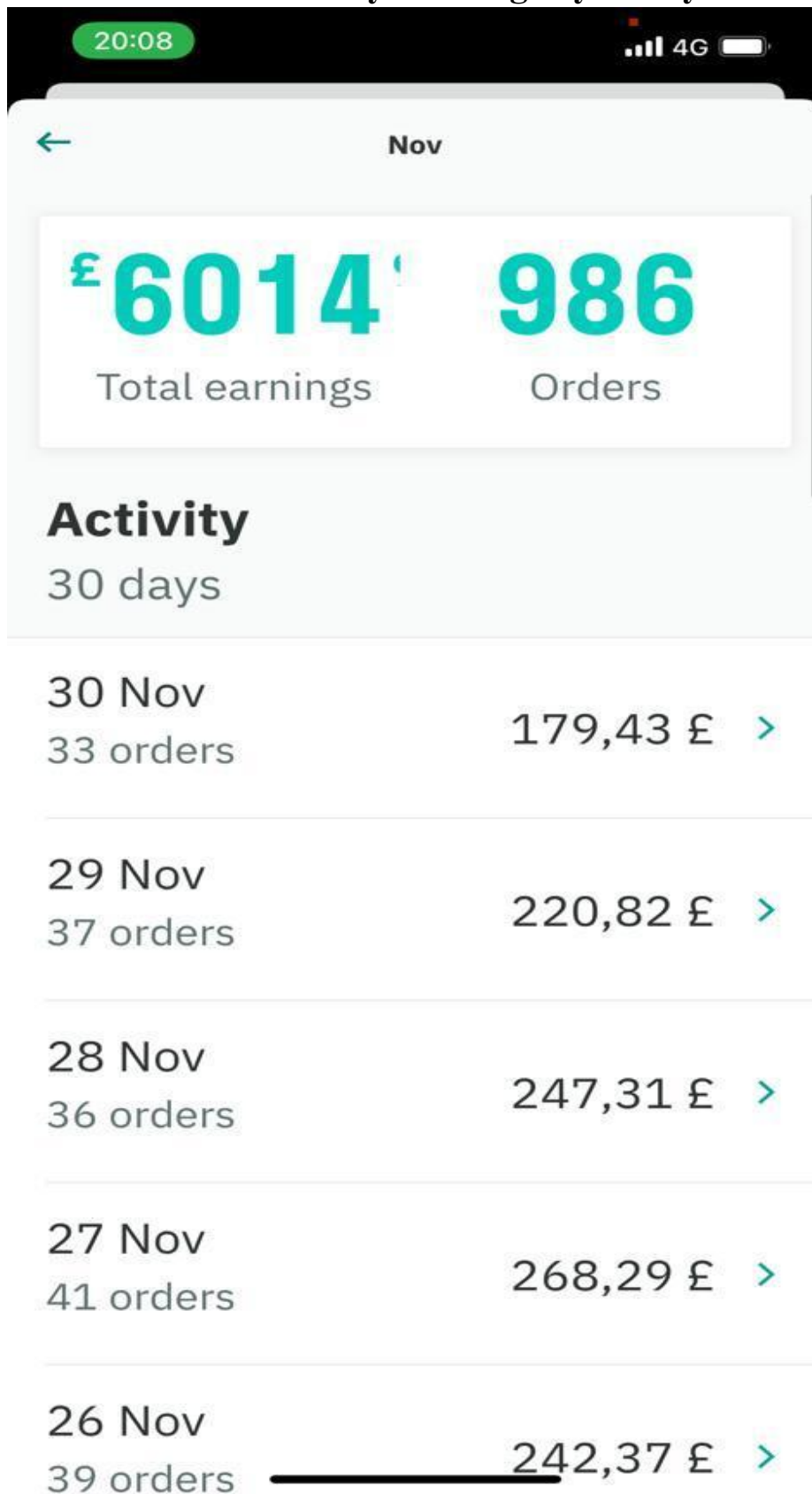
←   **Dec**

£6089   966

Total earnings   Orders

Activity
30 days

31 Dec
30 orders   198,51 £   >

30 Dec
39 orders   244,45 £   >

29 Dec
15 orders   73,16 £   >

28 Dec
21 orders   121,07 £   >

27 Dec
33 orders   208,88 £   >