Negotiating The Algorithm: Worker Agency And The Strategic Use Of Opacity In The Platform Economy: Evidence From Mexican Gig Workers

Alberto Borbolla[1], Monica Felix[1], Salomon Dominguez[1]

[1]Department of Economics, Universidad Anáhuac Huixquilucan, Mexico, MX

Abstract. This article investigates the asymmetric relationship between the algorithmic control of digital platforms and the agency of ride-hailing drivers, arguing that worker responses are not homogeneous but are instead organized along a continuum of differentiated agencies. Through a qualitative study based in Mexico City, five driver archetypes were identified, whose micro-strategies were analysed through the frameworks of structural vulnerability and strategic power. The main theoretical contribution of this study is the conceptualization of differentiated precarity, which posits that the vulnerability inherent in contractual instability is moderated by the driver's social trajectory and prior economic capital. Through the study it is demonstrated that profiles with greater capital (i.e., the Strategic, the Artisan, the Precarious in Transit) employ micro-strategies of arbitrage and shadow organizing to fragment algorithmic control. In contrast, those with critical economic dependence (i.e., the Algorithmic, the Excluded) resort to tactical submission and forced adaptation as survival strategies. The study concludes that autonomy in digital work is reconfigured as a struggle to insulate one's identity and resources from the system's total control. The resulting policy implications suggest the need for differentiated regulatory solutions that protect the most vulnerable segment. The study's limitations, including social desirability bias and its specific geographical focus, pave the way for future longitudinal research and the development of mixed-methods approaches to quantify the economic impact of collective agency.

Keywords: Digital Platforms; Algorithm Management; Worker Agency; Differentiated Precarity; Structural Vulnerability; Shadow Organizing.

INTRODUCTION

The growth of the labor model based on flexible, short-term, and on-demand work—associated with the gig economy—is transforming the dynamics of urban labor (Kadolkar et al., 2025). According to the World Economic Forum (2024), the global value of this sector is projected to triple, rising from US$ 556.7 billion in 2024 to US$ 1,847 billion by 2032. A primary driver of this phenomenon is the expansion of digital platforms, which have evolved from bilateral structures into multi-sided ecosystems, integrating diverse actors and intermediation relationships (Zhu, Huan, Lu, Luo, and Zhu, 2024). These platforms operate through what has been termed as 'algorithmic management' (Kadolkar et al., 2025), which is defined as a system that coordinates and controls work through algorithms and predominantly transactional relationships (Adekoya et al., 2023).

Algorithmic management seeks to optimize efficiency through four principal mechanisms: matching, control, incentives, and feedback. However, this optimization generates significant tensions, such as the loss of autonomy and privacy, and the emergence of biases or digital discrimination; therefore, a structural paradox arises: the greater the algorithmic efficiency, the weaker the protection of labor and personal rights (Zhu et al., 2024). Extensive research has documented that this model of digital mediation creates power imbalances and new forms of labor precarity. Platforms function as shadow employers that exert control through allocation, surveillance, and evaluation algorithms, thereby restricting worker autonomy. Nevertheless, the

dominant literature tends to interpret driver responses—such as digital strikes, obfuscation, or boycotts—solely as defensive reactions to algorithmic control, failing to recognize their strategic or creative dimension (e.g., Forsyth, 2023; Liu and Yin, 2024; Zhang, Lu and Li, 2025).

Within this context, the guiding question of this research is: How do workers negotiate their autonomy within a regime of algorithmic management characterized by opacity and uncertainty? Rather than conceiving algorithmic opacity as a mechanism of unilateral oppression, this study interprets it as a strategic resource that workers can employ to exercise agency and reconfigure the structure of control to their advantage. From the analysis of the relationship between agency and uncertainty, the authors developed five preliminary archetypes of algorithmic agency, conceived as heterogeneous ways of confronting uncertainty and transforming it into spaces of tactical power.

To understand this phenomenon, the authors propose a Framework of Algorithmic Agency that integrates three complementary theoretical perspectives: Precarity (Standing, 2011), Strategic Power (Crozier, 1964), and Capitals (Bourdieu, 1986). This framework allows for a rethinking of labor autonomy in contexts of algorithmic control and situates platform work within a sociology of digital power, thereby providing an innovative perspective on debates concerning precarity, autonomy, and resistance in the platform economy.

The study was developed using a qualitative, exploratory approach, underpinned by an abductive logic oriented toward generating interpretive hypotheses rather than verifying pre-existing theories. The objective was to understand how ride-hailing drivers reinterpret algorithmic opacity and transform it into a source of autonomy and collective action. The research was based on semi-structured interviews with active Uber® and Didi® drivers in Mexico City, selected through theoretical-intentional sampling designed to reflect a diversity of work trajectories, strategies, and degrees of economic dependence on the platforms. This methodological design enabled the identification of emergent patterns of negotiation and tactical agency, without aiming for theoretical saturation, but rather to construct exploratory propositions that contribute to understanding the articulation between precarity, strategic power, and capitals in urban digital work.

As stated previously, from this abductive analysis, the authors delineated five preliminary archetypes of algorithmic agency, understood as dynamic configurations of meaning and action in response to the structural uncertainty of digital control: the Strategic Precarious, the Algorithmic Precarious, the Precarious in Transit, the Excluded Precarious, and the Artisan Precarious. These archetypes constitute an initial theoretical proposal for understanding how algorithmic uncertainty can, paradoxically, enable new forms of individual and collective autonomy within the digital work ecosystem.

1. Critical Literature Review and Conceptual Gap

The field of study on the platform economy has consolidated around a central tension: the relationship between algorithmic control and labor precarity. To critically analyses how the literature addresses this dynamic, the authors reviewed 41 articles published between 2018 and 2024 and indexed in the Web of Science database. The review reveals that the discussion is concentrated around two main strands: labor precarity and algorithmic control.

Through a systematic analysis, the authors identified four theoretical clusters that structure the contemporary debate. Collectively, the reviewed studies tend to conceptualize algorithmic management primarily as a form of domination and a generator of precarity, overlooking its strategic dimension from the worker's perspective. Few works examine the relationship between algorithmic management and worker agency as a negotiated power relationship, where uncertainty could function as a tactical space for action. The main theoretical frameworks identified are described below.

1.1. Algorithm Control and Precarity

In this first field, the literature converges around a central concern: how algorithmic management transforms labor conditions, blurring the boundaries between autonomy and subordination. From the political economy of labor and organizational control theory, power is understood as unidirectional and concentrated in the platform, conceived as a shadow employer. Uncertainty ceases to be a contingent condition and is interpreted as an instrument of disciplinary control, used to intensify productivity and reduce worker autonomy.

De Stefano (2016) initiated this debate by showing how on-demand work reconfigures the capital-labor relationship through an illusory autonomy. Aloisi (2016) deepened the paradox of "false independence," describing it as a form of legal concealment. Rosenblat and Stark (2016) provided ethnographic evidence of Uber's invisible control, where the digital interface replaces human supervision and produces obedience without explicit coercion. Srnicek (2017) interpreted platforms as a new regime of capitalist accumulation based on data extraction, while Charitsis et al. (2018) introduced the concept of surveillance capitalism, focused on capturing labor behavior. Prassl (2018) argued that algorithmic management masks a classic employment relationship under a rhetoric of autonomy. From an ethnographic perspective, Christin (2020) showed how the algorithm disciplines bodies, routes, and temporalities.

Wood and Lehdonvirta (2022) extended this analysis to different platforms, revealing structural patterns of precarity. Graham and Anwar (2019) highlighted the digital division of labor between the Global North and South, where algorithmic intermediation reproduces historical inequalities. Vallas and Schor (2020) conceptualized new digital hierarchies, while Schor et al. (2020) emphasized the dissonance between the rhetoric of flexibility and the experience of subordination. Tassinari and Maccarrone (2020) reaffirmed this tension by showing how the promise of autonomy conceals sophisticated forms of exploitation. Heeks (2022) documented the psychosocial consequences of algorithmic control, such as anxiety, burnout, and economic insecurity. Together, these works consolidate a view of power as structural domination and uncertainty as a disciplinary device. However, this field remains limited by not considering uncertainty as a potential resource for maneuver or a source of tactical agency.

1.2. Agency, Resistance, and Psychosocial Processes

A second group of studies shifts the focus from structural control to forms of subjectivation, resistance, and emotional coping. Drawing on critical social psychology and the sociology of work, these studies explore how workers experience, reinterpret, and resist precarity. The central question revolves around how subjects inhabit algorithmic power and translate it into practices of meaning-making and self-care.

Van Doorn (2018) inaugurated this line by analyzing digital sex work, showing how extreme vulnerability coexists with situated micro-resistances. Johnston and Land-Kazlauskas (2018) studied the emergence of collective movements, highlighting the limitations imposed by algorithmic fragmentation. Glavin et al. (2021) identified that the flexibility perceived by workers is experienced more as emotional isolation than freedom. Gandini (2017) described self-exploitation as a feature of the neoliberal habitus, where the ideal of autonomy is internalized as a moral obligation. Duggan et al. (2020) and Glavin (2020) documented the psychological strategies for managing distress and loss of meaning. Delfanti (2021) identified practices of symbolic resistance—such as humor or digital disobedience—that sustain everyday agency.

Anwar and Graham (2021) highlighted how some drivers reframe their dependence through narratives of professional pride, while Alasoini et al. (2023) reformulated agency as a psychosocial practice of care and reframing. While this strand deepens the experiential and affective dimension of digital work, its approach tends to conceive agency as individual coping, without exploring how these practices could transform into collective strategies or tactics of power capable of modifying the structures that originate them.

1.3. Capital, Habitus, and Social Differentiation

The third theoretical grouping, inspired by Pierre Bourdieu (1986), analyses how economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capitals shape labor trajectories in the digital ecosystem. In this context, platform work is understood as a heterogeneous field, where structural position determines the degree of vulnerability, mobility, and capacity for resistance. In this sense, Stewart and Stanford (2017) demonstrated that social class influences motivations and expectations regarding digital work; and, Gray and Suri (2019) evidenced how educational and social capital condition access to better-paid tasks. For their part, Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) introduced the notion of labor borders, showing the unequal circulation of human capital; and Woodcock et al. (2020) drew on habitus theory to explain how class dispositions shape organization and resistance. An important contribution of Geraldi et al. (2023) is the analysis they did of the internal stratification among drivers based on social networks and technical resources, while Choi (2017) associated class habitus with perceptions of stability showed how symbolic capital conditions the voice and visibility of creative workers. Although these different perspectives provide a relational reading of inequalities, they remain focused on structure, not action, which show that agency is derived from possessed capital and not from the tactical capacity to operate within uncertainty, leaving the strategic potential of algorithmic misfit unexplored.

1.4. Governance, Legality, and Sociotechnical Infrastructures

The fourth field shifts the debate to the institutional level, analyzing how regulation and technological infrastructures configure the employment relationship on platforms. From the theory of digital governance, the following studies examine normative ambiguity, algorithmic opacity, and diffuse responsibility as structural features of corporate power: Prassl and Risak (2017) argued that traditional labor law is insufficient in the face of new forms of digital intermediation; Codagnone et al. (2019) evidenced regulatory fragmentation in Europe; and, in Latin America, Abilio (2023) showed how platforms re-functionalize structural informality, perpetuating inequalities under a technological rhetoric. For his part Stewart & Stanford (2017) identified the tension between innovation and regulation, while Alaimo and Kallinikos (2021) conceptualized platforms as infrastructures of sociotechnical governance; and, Tassinari and Maccarrone (2020) and De Stefano and Aloisi (2016) proposed hybrid regulatory frameworks focused on redefining the digital employment relationship.

In Global South contexts, Heeks (2022) showed that state ambiguity and high informality generate scenarios of legal precarity. In the Peruvian case, González revealed how workers reinterpret formality and informality according to survival strategies, challenging conventional legal categories. Although this field illuminates the tensions between technology and regulation, it tends to reduce uncertainty to an institutional failure, without recognizing it as a space for negotiation between human and non-human actors.

1.5. Toward a Relational View of Agency

The review demonstrates that, despite conceptual advances regarding algorithmic control, labor subjectivity, structural inequality, and digital governance, uncertainty continues to be treated as an effect of power, not as a field of action. However, diverse empirical evidence suggests that workers not only resist but also tactically reconfigure their relationship with the algorithm through practices of adaptation, coordination, and reframing (e.g., Bucher et al., 2020; Park and Ryoo, 2023; Hajiheydari and Soltani Degolsha, 2024). This finding points to a theoretical gap: the lack of a relational theory of algorithmic agency that conceives uncertainty as a dynamic space where structure and action are co-constituted.

The four reviewed frameworks—structural, psychosocial, habitus, and institutional—recognize the centrality of uncertainty, but none of them conceptualize it as a resource of tactical power. This literature review also shows that the fragmentation of the field prevents an understanding of its performance, that is, how workers reinterpret, manipulate, or leverage uncertainty as zones

of maneuver or situated advantage. This study situates itself within this gap, proposing a framework of algorithmic agency that understands uncertainty as the zone of strategic power.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: PRECARITY AND STRATEGIC AGENCY IN THE PLATFORM ECONOMY

This theoretical framework seeks to conceptualize algorithmic uncertainty not as a mere structural limitation, but as a condition of possibility for the exercise of strategic power by digital platform drivers. A significant portion of the literature has positioned gig economy workers in passive or reactive roles in the face of technological control. However, this study proposes an alternative reading: the opacity of algorithmic management not only produces precarity but also opens spaces for tactical agency.

The theoretical model is structured around two complementary analytical dimensions: structure, explained through the notion of the precariat (Standing, 2011), and mechanism, addressed through the concept of strategic power (Crozier, 1964; Crozier and Friedberg, 1979). The first dimension allows for an understanding of precarity as a structural condition of vulnerability and risk displacement; the second explains how, within that very condition, individuals manage to generate margins of autonomy by managing uncertainty. This articulation provides a dual framework that links structural vulnerability with situated agency, forming the conceptual basis for constructing archetypes of action in the face of algorithmic uncertainty.

2.1. The Precariat: The Structural Condition

The analysis of labor precarity has become a central axis in the study of post-Fordist work transformations, where temporariness, discontinuity, and the absence of social protection configure a model in which uncertainty and risk (Hewison, 2016) fall structurally upon the individual (Rodgers, 1989; Vosko, 2010). In the platform economy, this precarity manifests with clarity: the promised flexibility and autonomy are accompanied by the erosion of social rights, income volatility, and constant exposure to instability (Saleem, Farooq, Ali and Khan, 2025). Standing (2011) defines precariousness as an emerging class characterized by income instability, identity fragmentation, and a lack of occupational security. Although his proposal has been debated (Breman, 2013), it remains a key reference by underscoring how risk and responsibility are systematically displaced onto the worker. In this scheme, precarity is no longer a dysfunction of the labor system, but its structuring principle: the worker becomes the individual manager of their own insecurity.

Digital platform drivers represent a paradigmatic case of this condition. Income instability, the absence of formal employment ties, and the need to assume operational and maintenance costs compel them to develop adaptation tactics in the face of algorithmic control. In this context, uncertainty—which ostensibly subjugates them—also becomes a terrain for maneuver. From this systemic vulnerability emerges what the authors term a structural need for agency: the obligation to act in order to survive. This tension defines the dialectic between structural control and individual survival. Platforms transfer risk and responsibility to the worker, who is compelled to respond through self-management strategies. Key structural dimensions in this framework are:

- Survival engine: Daily tactics that allow for risk mitigation and the maintenance of labor activity.
- Displaced risk: Evidence of economic instability and the constant fear of deactivation.
- Assumed costs: The transfer of operational and social security expenses to the driver.

These categories allow to understand precarity as a regime that compels action and prefigures the emergence of autonomy strategies.

2.2. Strategic Power: The Mechanism of Opacity

If structural precarity imposes the need to act, Crozier's (1964) strategic power provides the mechanism that explains how that action unfolds. Jevnaker and Olaisen (2022), drawing on

Crozier and Friedberg (1979), argue that power within organizations is not a fixed attribute but a social relation that arises from actors' ability to navigate and manage zones of uncertainty. In the context of platform work, these zones are shaped by **algorithmic opacity**, which becomes the central source of uncertainty for drivers. Ethnographic studies (Rosenblat and Stark, 2016) show that platforms construct information asymmetries that reinforce subordination, yet, paradoxically, this same opacity generates spaces of indeterminacy where workers can intervene. The algorithm's inability to foresee all variables of human behavior creates a grey area from which drivers can maneuver selecting rides, switching applications, manipulating location, or coordinating with other drivers to optimize earnings. Opacity, therefore, not only reproduces subordination but can also be reframed as a strategic resource. The precarious worker does not possess structural power but does develop a tactical agency based on their ability to identify, exploit, and expand the margins of uncertainty. This reading allows for an analysis of the tension between algorithmic control and adaptive maneuver. The categories guiding the empirical analysis in this dimension are:

- System opacity: Lack of transparency in assignment criteria, pricing, and sanctions.
- Margin of maneuver: Adaptive strategies, such as multi-apping, route selection, or peer coordination.
- Relational power: The capacity of drivers to modify the dependency relationship, sustaining income and relative autonomy.

In sum, Crozier's theory reinterprets uncertainty not as a failure, but as the space where power is exercised and negotiated.

2.3. Conceptual Synthesis: Vulnerability, Risk, and Agency

The articulation between Standing (2011) and Crozier (1964) allows for the construction of a relational perspective on agency in contexts of algorithmic precarity. Standing (2011) provides the structural framework that explains vulnerability and risk displacement as conditions of digital work; Crozier (1964), in contrast, introduces the mechanism that enables agency within those very conditions, showing how organizational uncertainty can be managed tactically. From this synthesis, the three categories—vulnerability, risk, and agency—cease to be understood as separate levels and are conceived as a dynamic system. Vulnerability designates the structural exposure to material and symbolic insecurity; risk refers to the process through which insecurity is individualized and managed as personal responsibility; and agency emerges as an adaptive response that seeks to expand the margins of maneuver within algorithmic control.

Thus, agency does not constitute a form of ideological resistance but a situated practice of negotiation and survival. Drivers do not aim to subvert the system but to operate within it, transforming uncertainty into an operational resource. This form of practical action redefines the relationship between precarity and autonomy, showing that even under intensive control regimes, margins for creativity, calculation, and decision-making persist. This theoretical integration lays the groundwork for the subsequent empirical analysis, in which archetypes of agency will be identified as exploratory hypotheses about the different ways platform workers manage vulnerability, assume risk, and produce autonomy under conditions of algorithmic control.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: TACTICAL AGENCY AND PRECARITY ON DIGITAL PLATFORMS

This study adopts a qualitative and exploratory methodological design, with the fundamental purpose of revealing the underlying mechanisms through which digital platform drivers exercise strategic power and agency in the face of structural precarity and algorithmic control. Beyond merely describing labor conditions, the primary objective is to explore in depth the discourses, meanings, and symbols that inform the tactics and margins of maneuver workers construct to

preserve their autonomy in an environment characterized by uncertainty and vulnerability (Crozier, 1964).

3.1. Research Design and Justification: Multiple Case Study

The research is based on an Exploratory Qualitative Design using a Multiple Case Study (MCS) approach (Creswell and Poth, 2016), focused on the context of urban transport platforms in Mexico City. This approach is particularly pertinent for examining emergent phenomena that are difficult to observe directly, such as tactical agency in the face of algorithmic systems. The MCS is a suitable strategy for the comparative study of a single situation or object (Creswell and Poth, 2016). The purpose of this research is to compare multiple cases to identify patterns, regularities, or common mechanisms that reveal the direct and indirect relationships between precarity and agency. This framework is especially useful for investigating phenomena of a peripheral or covert nature (Gustafsson, 2017).

According to Coombs (2022), the MCS seeks a deep understanding of a phenomenon through the triangulation of interviews, observations, and documents. In this study, this approach enables analytical generalization and the construction of robust hypothesis by identifying patterns replicated across cases. The study's rigor is ensured by the triangulation of sources and methods, which strengthens the validity of the theoretical constructs. Finally, this design facilitates a situated understanding (Stake, 2005) of relational power and algorithmic agency by observing its manifestation in the real, everyday interaction between drivers and platforms.

3.2. Information Collection Strategy: A Situated Approach and Analytical Categories

The study focused on identifying patterns of agency among active drivers on urban mobility platforms (i.e., Uber and DiDi) in Mexico City. Adopting a situated research approach, flexible and adaptive techniques were employed, given the inherent precarity and volatility of the drivers' working conditions. Data collection was structured around three central analytical categories, derived from the Standing-Crozier theoretical framework:

- Structural Vulnerability (Standing, 2011): Captured through narratives about the lack of social security and labor rights, operational costs, economic dependence, and experiences of insecurity.
- Displaced Risk: Referring to the transfer of costs and risks from the algorithm to the driver, evidenced in discussions about sanctions, blockages, accidents, and the unpredictable nature of fares.
- Tactical Agency (Margin of Maneuver – Crozier, 1964): Comprising micro-acts of power and negotiation that drivers employ to manage algorithmic opacity, such as the strategic selection of rides, collective coordination, and the use of information networks.

This phase prioritized participant safety and anonymity over formal exhaustiveness. While this decision implied limited coverage of all possible interactions, it allowed for the documentation of sufficient patterns to generate solid propositions about agency profiles, which might be validated and refined in future research.

3.2.1. Informal Interviews and Intentional Sampling: Phase 1

The data collection strategy began with an exploratory field phase, which was crucial for immersion and rapport building. This phase comprised unstructured, informal conversations with fifteen active Uber and DiDi drivers. The primary aim of this exploration was to map drivers' discourses concerning their labor relationship with the platforms, contrasting dominant narratives — centered on precarity — with emerging deviations that revealed acts of tactical agency. These conversations were conducted by one of the authors over a two-month period in 2025, across different areas of Mexico City. This initial approach allowed for the generation of a first round of working propositions that justified the application of Crozier's theoretical framework (1964), steering the research towards documenting micro-acts of algorithmic resistance and reframing. Additionally, this phase anticipated the high sensitivity and fear of surveillance among informants, which triggered the ethical need to adopt a Non-Recorded Audio Protocol in the subsequent stage. The inclusion criteria for participants, defined to ensure tactical

relevance and operational experience, were: (1) being an active driver on mobility platforms (primarily Uber and DiDi); (2) having a minimum seniority of six months; and (3) operating on at least two applications (multi-apping).

Based on this exploration, five marginal discursive lines that contradicted the narrative of passivity were identified. These are the five ways in which drivers exercise strategic power against the algorithm:

- Multi-Platform Management: Simultaneous use of applications to diversify income sources and optimize downtime, operating as a risk manager.
- Strategic Intermittence: Deliberate logging on and off to manipulate dynamic pricing (incentives) and avoid unnecessary operational wear and tear.
- Bonus Engineering: Deciphering and selectively fulfilling the challenges proposed by the platform to maximize benefits with minimal investment of time/fuel.
- Intelligent Selection: Tactical rejection of rides that compromise personal safety or imply unprofitable operational return costs.
- Guild Social Capital: Use of private social networks to exchange vital information (risks, app failures) and build informal collective security.

These lines served as a guide for intentional sampling in the next phase, which is described in the following sections.

3.2.2. Ethical Adaptation and Memory-Assisted Recording Protocol

The study recognized the structural vulnerability of participants and their exposure to algorithmic surveillance mechanisms. Given the drivers' widespread resistance to audio recording their conversations—expressing fear of reprisals or sanctions from the platforms—this refusal was interpreted as direct empirical evidence of the climate of algorithmic opacity (Crozier, 1964) that conditions agency. To guarantee the ecological validity of the data and prioritize the ethics of the encounter over literal fidelity, a Memory-Assisted Recording Protocol (Willis, 2005) was implemented to replace audio recording. This qualitative method is further explained in the next section.

3.3. Instruments and Collection Examples

3.3.1. Informal Interviews and Sampling: Phase 2

Seven of the drivers whose narratives aligned with these agency profiles were contacted, constituting the final sample. To preserve the rigor of the methodology, the interviews were conducted over a four-month period in 2025 by one of the authors, across different areas of Mexico City. For these seven semi-structured interviews, a conversational approach was used, with an average duration of 40 minutes and they took place opportunistically, during the informants' working hours (in their vehicles or during waiting times), constituting an ecological adaptation to preserve the naturalness of the accounts.

The instrument focused on exploring the analytical categories derived from the theoretical framework: Structural Vulnerability, Displaced Risk, and Tactical Agency. To maintain rigor, a structured recording protocol was implemented, in which interruptions and the environment were documented as part of the empirical context of precarity. And, as stated in the previous section, due to drivers' fear of expressing themselves freely knowing that the conversations would be recorded, a Memory-Assisted Recording Protocol (Willis, 2005) was implemented instead of literal recording. In this way, the interviews were conducted in a conversational format and documented through in-situ manual recording of verbatim notes and contextual observations:

- Verbatim Field Notes: Manual, in-situ recording of key verbalizations, context, and non-verbal observations.
- Immediate Narrative Reconstruction: Within the first hour after each interview, the researcher expanded the notes, incorporating contextual details, narrative sequences, and preliminary theoretical reflections.

This technique ensured the thematic and conceptual fidelity of the accounts, accepting the loss of syntactic precision of colloquial language as a limitation.
Each encounter was documented using a structured situational observation template (see Table 1), which combined three levels of analysis: context (environment, interruptions), verbalization (key quotes), and tactical sense (immediate inferences). Complete documentation and narrative reconstruction were carried out immediately after the conversation ended, ensuring the thematic and conceptual fidelity of each account.

Table 1. Field Data Extraction Template Example.

Category	**Brief Description**
Context	• Date/Time: Wednesday, 7:32 PM (evening rush hour). • Service/Platform: UBER (black car, 2022 model). • Trip/Duration: 12.6 km; 1 hour 23 minutes (long for the distance, indicative of traffic). • Route/Location: Origin: Alfonso Romo Street, Col. Condesa-Vista Hermosa, Cuajimalpa, CDMX (high-income residential area with high demand for dynamic pricing). • Trip/Algorithm Condition: Ride accepted based on the destination and a 1.8x dynamic pricing multiplier (high potential income, high pressure). • Driver Status: Male. This is his second trip of the day; reports a 90% "acceptance rate." He ignores new ride notifications as he has already met his daily goal with this trip. • Encounter Conditions: Conversation interrupted by three DiDi notifications (which the driver ignored) and heavy traffic.
Brief Excerpt	• "I only turn it on when I'm going to work or heading back home. Since I live far away, I almost always get a ride on the way there and another on the way back. I only accept those that don't take me out of my way, and with that, I make some extra money that covers gas and allows me to take my family to the movies."
Analytical Category	• **Margin of Maneuver:** Flexible Agency.
Researcher's Observation	• He perceives his tactic as intelligent: he turns the problem of living far from work into an opportunity to earn extra income. He leverages the daily commute to derive benefit from the platform, transforming a daily obligation into an additional source of income.

Source: Created by the authors.

Subsequently, the instrument was structured around the categories of the theoretical framework—vulnerability, risk, and agency—and aimed to capture examples of tactical decisions in the face of algorithmic uncertainty (Table 2).

Table 2. Interview Analysis Template Example

Excerpt/Quote	**Emergent Code**	**Analytical Category**	**Agency/Resolution Strategy**
" I use Uber® and DiDi®. DiDi® pays quickly and that's good	Payment timing	Financial Strategy / Cash	Income stream optimization agency

because I get cash fast, and Uber® pays a few days later which helps me save a little."	differences / Financial strategy	flow management	
"The fares change from one moment to the next, and you never know how much you're going to earn. If something goes wrong, the problem is mine, not the apps."	Income uncertainty and individual responsibility	Displaced Risk	Risk mitigation agency
"If I go to a remote area and my car gets stolen, while I'm dealing with the insurance and waiting for the payout, how do I generate income for my family?"	Exposure to risks / Lack of economic backup	Structural Vulnerability	Economic resilience agency
"I need to meet my income goal. I set a specific target each day and, when I reach it, I turn off the app. Each time I try to improve how I achieve it."	Reward optimization	Margin of Maneuver	Gamified agency
"I only turn on the app when I have free time or need extra money; I don't follow a fixed schedule."	Intermittent driving	Margin of Maneuver	Flexible agency

Source: Created by the authors.

3.3.2. Complementary Documentary Observation (Indeed Labor Portal)

To strengthen validity through source triangulation, the study was complemented by an exploratory analysis of specific digital content. Given the limited access to closed groups, data collection focused on the Indeed Mexico labor portal, a public forum where drivers openly discuss their working conditions using tags such as "Uber México." A total of 120 posts from the last three months were analyzed by the authors, and 40 of these were selected and recorded as verbatims.

The review prioritized narratives that contained clear expressions of the analytical categories: Structural Vulnerability, Displaced Risk, and Tactical Agency. This documentary observation allowed for the capture of representative experiences of precarity and creativity in managing algorithmic uncertainty. The information was organized and coded to corroborate the emergent patterns from the interviews, becoming a key element in validating the behavioral logics underpinning the five Precarity and Strategy profiles developed in the main analysis (see Table 3).

Table 3. Summary of Documentary Analysis from Indeed® Mexico Labor Portal

Analytical Category	**Code/Description**	**Verbatims**
Structural Vulnerability	Exposure to risks, lack of social security and rights.	"Good form of self-employment, but without social security or benefits." "Well, the work is good because you set your own hours, the downside is that you don't have health insurance and you are exposed to muggings."

		"If I go to a remote area and my car gets stolen, while I'm dealing with the insurance and waiting for the payout, how do I generate income for my family?"
Displaced Risk	Transfer of costs and risks from the algorithm to the driver.	"The fares change from one moment to the next, and you never know how much you're going to earn. If something goes wrong, the problem is mine, not the application's." "The app started charging me too many commissions." "There aren't enough ride requests, and the rides it sends you pay terribly."
Tactics of Maneuver	Individual or collective strategies to manage opacity and risk.	"I need money. To reach that amount, I set a specific goal for myself and when I achieve it, I turn off the platform and try to improve my method of achieving it each time." "You work the hours you want or can, and you earn what you want to earn." "Weekly supplement: I only turn on the app during my commute to and from my formal job, and with that I make a little extra money."

Source: Created by the authors.

4. DISCUSSION AND PROFILE ANALYSIS

The analysis phase integrated the results from a triangulation of sources, which was crucial for qualitative validity. Data from the seven semi-structured interviews were systematically cross-referenced with the discursive evidence gathered from the content analysis of the Indeed digital forum, where digital platform driver discussions are recorded. In each case, the information was contrasted with the primary analytical categories—structural vulnerability, displaced risk, and tactics of maneuver—with the objective of identifying differentiated configurations of agency in scenarios of uncertainty and algorithmic management.

These configurations were systematized into agency archetypes through a process of selective coding of recurrent patterns of action and discursive meaning, resulting in five archetypes: The Strategic Precarious, The Algorithmic Precarious, The Precarious in Transit, The Excluded Precarious, and The Artisan Precarious (see Table 4). Therefore, the archetypes do not seek to establish a static classification but to capture recurrent patterns of action, meaning, and adaptation in the form of situated re-framings that drivers use to reconvert their asymmetric relationship with the digital structure. Each archetype represents a particular way of relating to the algorithm, managing the transferred risk, and assigning meaning to the labor activity. Collectively, these patterns reveal how drivers differentially negotiate their autonomy within digital control structures that displace responsibility and risk onto the individual.

From the perspective of strategic power (Crozier, 1964), the analysis confirms that the rigidity of algorithmic logic inevitably leaves grey areas of uncertainty unoccupied. It is precisely within these margins that drivers deploy tactical maneuvers that, while limited, allow them to retain a certain margin of action and resistance. The following subsections describe and analyze the five identified archetypes, supported by empirical evidence and discussed in light of the theoretical frameworks on agency, bounded rationality, and digital precarity.

Table 4. Profiles of Precarity and Strategy: A Typology of Driver Agency

Proposed Name (Theoretical Tension)	**Dominant Logic (Agency/Tactic)**	**Illustrative Verbatims**	**Dominant Precarity Category**	**Description of Agency/Tactic**
The Strategic Precarious	High Optimization and Selectivity. Uses the platform only during peak pricing; rejects the risk of long trips.	"Weekly supplement: I only turn on the app during my commute to and from my formal job, and with that I make a little extra money."	**Structural Vulnerability (Low):** Income is secondary.	Optimizes time and resources to generate additional income without compromising formal work. Limited but strategic agency.
The Algorithmic Precarious	Tactical Submission and Quota Discipline. Accepts almost all rides to meet a daily income target, minimizing the risk of deactivation due to low acceptance rate.	"I need money. To reach that amount I set a specific goal and when I achieve it, I turn off the platform and try to improve my method of achieving it each time."	**Displaced Risk (High):** Accepts risk to meet subsistence quotas.	Sets daily/weekly income targets and adjusts strategies to meet them, showing high discipline and tactical control over their work.
The Precarious in Transit	Agency of Situational Leverage. Uses travel time and routes from their formal employment to generate marginal gain.	"I only turn it on when I'm going to work or heading back home... with that I make some extra money that covers gas and allows me to take	**Structural Vulnerability (Low):** The platform is merely a complement.	Combines formal work with platform driving, leveraging opportunities derived from their daily routine. Minimal risk exposure, high efficiency.

		my family to the movies."		
The Excluded Precarious	Agency of Forced Adaptation. Post-deactivation strategies; manages financial volatility by switching platforms based on payment reliability.	"I use Uber® and DiDi®. DiDi® pays quickly... and Uber® pays a few days later which later helps me save."	**Displaced Risk (Deactivation/Sanction):** Has been expelled from the primary market and adapts to the secondary one.	Alternates between platforms based on payment reliability and conditions, managing financial and labor exposure risks.
The Artisan Precarious	Arbitrage and Multi-Platform Agency. Actively plays with system opacity, seeking gains from information gaps between applications.	"I set the goal of completing 15 rides in 4 hours for the bonus, and as soon as I achieve it, I leave. Tomorrow, I continue the game."	**Tactical (Maximum):** Uses information to gain relational power (Crozier).	Motivated by internal objectives, reward games, and efficiency strategies. Acts intermittently, turning the app on/off according to their goals and energy.

Source: Created by the authors.

4.1. The Strategic Precarious: Selectivity Agency

This profile configures an archetype of a driver who uses the digital platform as a source of secondary or complementary income, inserting themselves into digital precarity but managing it strategically from a position of external stability provided by a formal job (primary income). Their central motivation is not intensive accumulation but obtaining flexibility and additional income without compromising their primary stability. Algorithmic work is inserted into a structured routine that consciously prioritizes control over risk exposure and burnout. Platform management is based on learned knowledge of how "the city moves," as illustrated by key testimonies: "I select short trips in high-demand areas, so I do quick rides and don't get stuck in traffic" or "At certain times it's better to choose the DiDi platform because you earn more." Their logic of selectivity not only extends income but also focuses on optimal and efficient routes. The non-critical dependence on platform income grants this archetype a greater capacity to exercise agency, allowing them to reject low-yield rides or those that do not align with their planning. Content analysis on peer networks reinforced this practice, identifying advice such as: "If you leave your bonus zone for a long trip, the algorithm penalizes you. Better to cancel or wait at the hotspot." The selective use of the platform becomes an effective tactic for negotiating with the algorithm. This possibility underscores that the structural vulnerability indicated by Standing (2011) is differentiated and situated in the driver's available economic capital. Furthermore, their selectivity is a clear form of margin of maneuver (Crozier, 1964), reframing power in their favor within the grey areas of administrative control.

This archetype's action is the expression of an adaptive strategy aimed at managing risk and reducing uncertainty by controlling schedules, zones, and connection goals. This logic, which seeks maximum control with minimal effort, represents a calculated and discreet form of reframing formality by knowing how to "play with the rules," without fully ceding control of the algorithmic logic. In summary, this profile bases its agency on selective reflection (or selective rationality), which allows the driver to gain control over their schedule and income. Thus, strategic action actively mitigates the effects of the vulnerability inherent in platform dependence.

4.2. Algorithmic Precarious: Tactical Submission

This profile configures the archetype of the driver with a critical economic dependence on the platform, whose primary income comes, if not entirely, fundamentally from their work as a digital driver. This high structural vulnerability (Standing, 2011) subjects them to high operational risk, manifested in the need to accept long work hours, unprofitable trips, or routes in dangerous areas to avoid sanctions or deactivation and meet their daily quota or solve an unexpected payment. This driver's agency logic is one of tactical submission to the algorithm to guarantee a certain cash flow. This behavior is a direct response to their economic need, severely limiting their capacity to exercise agency by rejecting services: "I can't afford to reject. If I cancel too much, the algorithm penalizes me and sends me fewer trips, and I have to bring money home" illustrates this logic of forced obedience.

This high acceptance rate, although forced, positions the driver as a highly reliable element for the algorithm, ensuring the system prioritizes them with a constant flow of trips. In this case, the driver's critical need to reach an immediate economic goal, regardless of risk, forces them to engage with the platform in a gamified mode. That is, the driver defines the target amount and time to achieve it within the application, and it responds by constantly sending trips that bring them closer to their objective. An illustrative testimony is: "I had an unforeseen expense and needed money, I entered how much I needed in the platform and now I'm in a mode where I only receive trips to achieve my goal." This practice is the ultimate expression of tactical submission, where vulnerability translates into the self-imposition of algorithmic goals to guarantee economic survival.

However, this submission should not be interpreted as absolute passivity. It is, in reality, a defensive tactic and a form of bounded rationality. The driver learns the limits of their oppression and uses them to their advantage (Crozier, 1964): they accept total control to minimize the critical uncertainty of demand and ensure a minimum operational stability. This practice reveals a reframing of agency not as open resistance, but as the optimization of survival within a structurally unequal system. In summary, this profile expresses an agency based on achieving rewards that allows the driver to transform algorithmic pressure into a personal challenge, despite the vulnerability of remaining trapped in a cycle of personal achievements.

4.3. The Precarious in Transit: Situational Agency

This profile operates under a logic of strict instrumentality, using the platform to optimize pre-existing journeys or to fund specific capitalization objectives. The relationship with the platform is, by definition, secondary in their labor and financial decisions, which grants them a position of power over the algorithm. This is illustrated in testimonies that demonstrate the fusion of tasks: "...I work in construction, and since it's on the other side of the city, I use the commute to turn on the app and do a few trips. This way I earn a little extra money on a route I have to do anyway." Other non-monetary or specific objectives (distraction, stress reduction, or covering specific expenses like "buying my kids' school supplies") reinforce this utilitarian logic.

The intermittent and strategic nature of this relationship significantly mitigates structural vulnerability (Standing, 2011). In this case, precarity is experienced as a situational condition and not a structural one. This position allows them to exercise an agency that prioritizes personal well-being and future planning over strict application discipline. Their margin of maneuver lies in emotionally disconnecting their personal worth from their algorithmic performance (Crozier,

1964). This makes it easier for them to accept the "rules of the game" momentarily without subjecting their professional identity or sacrificing their life project. The platform is reframed as a tool and a choice, not a destiny, manifesting the agency of leverage in the voluntary act of obtaining a financial resource without ceding control of their long-term trajectory.

In summary, this profile manifests its agency by leveraging momentary opportunities to obtain specific benefits without assuming a permanent commitment, despite the vulnerability of their lack of stability and integration.

4.4. The Excluded Precarious: Agency of Forced Adaptation

This profile represents drivers whose insertion into digital platforms is a direct result of having been excluded from the formal labor market, which demands a forced adaptation to algorithmic conditions for economic sustenance. Persistent difficulties in reintegrating into formal employment intensify their structural vulnerability (Standing, 2011) and instability in the face of risk. Unlike other profiles, the platform is not a temporary or secondary option but the last available resort. The outcome of this situation is the deployment of an Agency of Forced Adaptation. In a scenario of high displaced risk and income instability, the driver imposes their capacity for resilience and skill reconversion. This profile reframes their relationship with the platform as an income generation opportunity while actively seeking possibilities to return to formal employment.

The driver strategically uses time on the platform to establish contacts and capitalize on their prior professional experience. A testimony illustrating reconversion is: "I dedicate myself to giving leadership courses to businesspeople; I invite them to a free course." Another example of generating value outside the algorithm is: "I am a private driver for a user I met here, and now I work for her directly." Although economic vulnerability is high, their attitude is not one of total submission (as in 4.2), but one of pragmatic postponement of conditions while attempting to generate value outside algorithmic control. Agency, in this profile, resides in the identity division between being a driver—considered a "in the meantime" activity—and their true pursuit of fulfilling their professional role. Crozier (1964) would note that their margin of maneuver in the grey area is represented by the discretionary use of downtime for personal training purposes or leveraging close contact with users to establish networks and possibilities for new businesses.

This profile demonstrates a notable capacity to reframe exclusion from the formal market as a resilient subsistence strategy, preventing digital precarization from fully capturing their labor identity and life project. In summary, this profile expresses its agency through the identity division: "in the meantime," thereby reframing precarity as a "phase of life" that can be useful for achieving their reintegration into formal markets or their own venture.

4.5. The Artisan Precarious: Generative Agency

This profile represents drivers who have mastered the grey areas of the algorithm, actively exploiting them for their benefit. Their agency is oriented towards generating profits by identifying algorithmic inefficiencies and information asymmetries. The Precarious Artisan neutralizes the structural vulnerability inherent in the gig model (Standing, 2011) by converting operational experience into strategic capital. Generative Agency manifests in the mastery of multi-apping as an arbitrage tactic: "depending on the day and time, I know which platform (Uber or DiDi) to use to improve my earnings." Beyond individual experience, this profile uses collective social networks, "we have a WhatsApp group that helps us inform each other about the city's traffic conditions;" thus, shared information serves to establish cooperative and predictive intelligence, not only for risk or support but for optimizing routes and fares. This strategic capital also translates into the selection of "short" trips in key areas to establish intensified profitability dynamics.

The margin of maneuver (Crozier, 1964) of this archetype implies a deep knowledge of the platforms' zones of uncertainty. The driver directs their agency towards what they know about the city and how it moves to optimize their economic performance. This profile does not submit

or adapt passively; instead, it actively participates in constructing its own profitability. It confronts the rigidity of algorithmic control through collective and predictive intelligence, demonstrating that power can be displaced towards the worker who masters information and tactics. In summary, this profile uses the platform's grey areas to execute micro-strategies (personal and collective) that allow it to improve its profitability and expand its margin of action.

4.6. The Agency Continuum: Differentiated Precarity and Tactics of Resistance

The five proposed driver archetypes configure a continuum of agency in the face of algorithmic uncertainty. These profiles and their differentiated attitudes indicate that precarity is not distributed homogeneously but is reframed by the actor facing it, which translates into a differential of symbolic, emotional, and operational capital. At one end of the spectrum, the authors find profiles with greater reflexive and predictive capital (the Strategic and the Artisan), who seek, through constant negotiation with the platform, to underscore their relative autonomy. At the other pole, the authors find profiles experiencing greater algorithmic subordination (the Excluded and the Algorithmic), where the promise of flexibility and the acceptance of risk are nothing more than conditions of a structural dependence on digital control. Between these extremes, the Precarious in Transit expresses a micro-agency that seeks the strategic reappropriation of the rules of the game to reframe their autonomy.

This agency continuum evidences that, in the face of algorithmic control, differentiated agencies emerge that find in algorithmic uncertainties a field for maneuvers. These grey areas become strategic opportunities for the reappropriation of control and labor autonomy in multiple forms. In sum, strategic power—in Crozierian terms—is not suppressed in digital work but is reconfigured into fragmented forms of control and self-exploitation that persistently coexist with the pursuit of individual autonomy.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Theoretical Implications of the Agency Continuum

The five proposed driver profiles are the empirical expression of an agency continuum operating in the face of algorithmic control. These profiles allow us to establish the differentiated ways in which drivers position themselves against administrative management, but, above all, they document how algorithmic control, in the exercise of its management, produces grey areas. These spaces of uncertainty are voids that are differentially leveraged by driver agencies.

This discussion addresses two central analytical axes. The first involves contrasting the differential appropriations made by the various driver agencies with the conceptual frameworks of Standing (2011) on structural vulnerability and Crozier (1964) on strategic power. The second axis seeks to establish how algorithmic management produces differentiated precarities among digital platform drivers. The profiles configured imply that each driver deploys their autonomy based on their social situation, which is associated with their specific available resources, their type of economic stability, and their prior labor trajectory. Based on these elements, each profile reframes asymmetric power relations, reconfiguring the dynamics of domination and resistance in this new control regime. The theoretical implications of the identified spectrum of action are examined below.

5.2. Differentiated Precarity: Nuancing Structural Vulnerability

The structural vulnerability described by Standing (2011) is not distributed homogeneously among individuals; rather, its manifestation is differentiated in the context of digital platforms. The intensity of vulnerability correlates directly with the driver's initial social position, defined by their economic resources and social capital. In the case of the group experiencing maximum vulnerability (the Excluded and Algorithmic profiles), autonomy is compromised by a critical dependence on the platform, subjecting them to tactical submission. Their agency unfolds in the strict compliance with rules, accepting high displaced risk (e.g., unprofitable trips) to avoid

sanctions or deactivation. This survival agency confirms Standing's thesis on the feeling of defenselessness. Particularly, the Excluded Precarious (4.4) faces an exacerbated vulnerability that forces constant forced adaptation.

This dynamic strongly contrasts with the other end of the spectrum. In profiles such as Strategic (4.1) and the one in Transit (4.3), precarity is effectively managed or temporized. These profiles exhibit low economic dependence, which mitigates the precarizing effects inherent to the model. Agency here manifests as a mitigation of structural vulnerability through selectivity and leverage (4.1 and 4.3), exercising actions aimed at gaining control over their time and risk exposure. In all cases, this differentiated precarity indicates that while the platform structure imposes a universal risk, the real impact on worker well-being and autonomy is profoundly situational.

5.3. Agentic Action in the Grey Areas: The Reconfiguration of Strategic Power

Jevnaker and Olaisen (2022) build on Crozier and Friedberg's (1979) assertion that in any formal structure of administrative control, complete control is impossible. Within every controlled field, zones of uncertainty inevitably emerge — spaces where individuals can exercise autonomy and gain power.

In the digital context, these zones materialize through algorithmic inefficiencies, information asymmetries between platforms and drivers, and margins not fully governed by the system (such as downtime, route choices, task selection, or the use of support networks).

Across the five driver profiles analyzed, a tactical appropriation of uncertainty can be observed. Drivers employ informal micro-strategies and negotiations within the system's boundaries to mitigate uncertainty and simultaneously enhance their influence and predictability in their interactions with the algorithm (Jevnaker & Olaisen, 2022).

The agency continuum observed in the profiles is distinguished by the differentiated tactical deployment upon this uncertainty. Algorithmic rigidity is confronted through various exercises of micro-strategies:

- Arbitrage and Multi-Platforming: Profiles like the Precarious Artisan demonstrate maximum sophistication, using the tactical management of multiple platforms and collective intelligence as a mechanism that socializes the control of information (the key power resource) to trigger optimal returns.
- Controlled Selectivity and In-Transit Action: The agency of selectivity demonstrates an exercise of power that situates decisions within effective performance loops, minimizing personal risk.
- Submission as Tactic: Even the subordination to the system, observed in the Algorithmic Precarious, reveals a dual act: while it implies subjection, it simultaneously reflects a defensive tactic to control the uncertainty of demand and ensure subsistence, despite maintaining an unstable, high-risk relationship with the platform.

In summary, algorithmic control displaces power but does not annul it, forcing drivers to develop micro-strategies to recover a fragmented autonomy.

5.4. Contrast and Contributions to the Literature

The main contribution of this article lies in identifying a continuum of agency across driver profiles, which reveals situations of differentiated precarity in their relationship with algorithmic control. This control is sustained by establishing asymmetric channels of information and power, with the purpose of imposing standardization and optimization processes on its drivers (Rosenblat and Stark, 2016). In this context, the agency continuum of the studied profiles represents situated modes of adaptation, reframing, and creation in the face of these asymmetries.

The analysis of the deployed strategies underscores the importance of operational and relational capital. The effective use of shadow organizing (Raimi, 2025) executed by profiles with greater reflexive capital, such as the Artisan and the Strategic, is highlighted. These profiles seek the coordination of articulated driver networks, functioning as parallel infrastructures to algorithmic control and building a shared rationality that partially challenges the information asymmetry

imposed by the platform. On the other hand, the profiles with high vulnerability (the Algorithmic and the Excluded) indicate that both labor trajectory and economic dependence are key resources that moderate vulnerability. In this sense, the research proposes that digital precarity is not only defined by contractual instability but fundamentally by the subject's capacity to insulate their identity and resources from the algorithm's total control.

In conclusion, this discussion indicates that the asymmetric relationship established by algorithmic control with digital platform drivers is not static but relational. This relationship is in permanent interaction with the execution of situational micro-strategies that are expressed in different modalities of agency and, therefore, have distinct consequences for worker autonomy and well-being.

CONCLUSIONS

This study established that the response of digital platform drivers to algorithmic control is not homogeneous but is organized along a continuum of differentiated agency. Our primary theoretical contribution lies in the conceptualization of differentiated precarity, which posits that the vulnerability inherent in contractual instability (Standing, 2011) is mediated by the driver's social and economic trajectory. Profiles with greater capital (Strategic, Artisan) use micro-strategies of arbitrage and collective coordination to fragment algorithmic control (Crozier, 1964), while those with critical dependence (Algorithmic, Excluded) resort to tactical submission and forced adaptation as survival strategies. In essence, autonomy in digital work is reconfigured as a struggle to insulate one's identity and resources from the system's total control.

Despite the robustness of the qualitative findings, this study has certain methodological limitations that must be considered. First, being based on semi-structured interviews and self-reported accounts, there is a risk of social desirability bias, where drivers with greater agency (Strategic and Artisan) may have overrepresented their capacity for control and tactical successes. Second, the geographical focus was limited to a single area (Mexico City), which restricts the generalizability of the findings to urban contexts with different population densities, traffic structures, or local regulations. Finally, the nature of the sample does not allow for establishing rigorous statistical correlations between socioeconomic variables and the intensity of agency, limiting the predictive scope of the model.

The findings of the agency continuum has profound academic implications for the sociology of work. The conceptualization of differentiated precarity challenges the homogeneous view of the precariat by demonstrating that vulnerability correlates with the worker's pre-existing subsistence capital, beyond the employment contract. The authors propose that future studies must integrate variables of labor trajectory and social capital to measure agentic capacity, transcending the binary metric of dependence/independence. Furthermore, the evidence of shadow organizing and tactical arbitrage expands Crozier's framework, indicating that algorithmic control generates a new form of strategic power based on shared information, where resistance becomes fundamentally technological and collective.

From a practical and policy perspective, the existence of differentiated precarity implies that regulatory solutions must be equally differentiated. Policies cannot be limited to a single employment status; they must be designed to protect the segment of maximum vulnerability. For instance, the Algorithmic and Excluded profiles require urgent social protection measures and unemployment insurance to mitigate their critical dependence. In contrast, the regulation of shadow organizing could focus on ensuring transparent information channels that benefit all drivers. The study, therefore, not only diagnoses the fragmentation of power but provides an empirical typology for designing public policies that seek a more just and effective intervention in the platform economy.

Based on the presented findings, several crucial lines of research open up to expand the understanding of algorithmic precarity:

- Impact of Regulation: Investigate how the implementation of specific regulations (e.g., on minimum fares or right to disconnect) affects the effectiveness of the micro-strategies of the different agency archetypes.
- Quantified Digital Agency: Develop a mixed-methods or quantitative methodology to measure the frequency and economic impact of shadow organizing (peer networks) in different cities, providing objective data on the efficacy of relational capital against the algorithm.
- Longitudinal Labor Trajectories: Conduct longitudinal studies to track the mobility of drivers between archetypes. This would help to understand whether precarity is a trap or a genuine bridge.

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AB, MF and SD conceived the study and were responsible for the design and development of the data analysis. AB, MF and SD were responsible for data collection and analysis. AB and SD were responsible for data interpretation. MF wrote the first draft of the article. All authors read, reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.
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