

A Descriptive Mixed-Methods Examination of Corporate Social Responsibility,
Accountability, and HRD in the Access Economy

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Tasha S. Hart-Mrema

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Dr. Joshua Collins, Co-Advisor
Dr. Rosemarie Park, Co-Advisor

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my nephews, Derrick and Derrion Reeves, Elijah Hart, Isaiah Hart Dunn, Terry N. Hart, and to my god children, Aubrey Hill, Adam Boddie, Julius and Danni Armstrong. My prayer is that this dissertation will inspire you all to pursue your dreams.

*In Memoriam of Henry and Lena Hart,
Erma Louise Fletcher and Theolia James,
May your love and legacy live on!*

Prologue: Reflection of Motivation

As a member of the older Millennial generation, I, like many in my generation, am uniquely positioned between pre-internet days and the current days of widespread internet usage. I vividly remember spending my days without looking at a computer screen or holding a cell phone. During my teen and young adult years I saw a transition from large body televisions to flat screens, cordless house phones to small wireless cell phones, which then turned into touch screen smartphones. Growing up, there were all types of public service announcements warning people not to get into cars with strangers. Now, it's commonly accepted to simply call an Uber or Lyft, which can be driven by almost anyone. This unique experience has caused me to introspectively look at myself as a consumer and also analyze the markets of which I, and others like myself, become willing participants. I often participate in the access economy as a consumer because of the novelty, ease, and convenience of having a product or service at my fingertips. I enjoy using food-courier services, I shop on online frequently, and I admit that there are times when I'm reluctant to enter a retail store because I can so easily look online for what I want. Yet, even as I consume and applaud the digital access to resources, I have become increasingly concerned about safety practices, quality assurance, and the lack of transparency between some online platform companies and the consumers they serve. I have never taken an Uber, but I find it quite interesting that initially there weren't any real protocols in place to keep drivers and customers safe. I sometimes gloss over the terms and conditions of platform companies, but after paying more attention to the fine print, I realized that many of my most utilized companies have been somewhat deceptive in how they market themselves.

My desire for privacy in the way that I once knew (before the emergence of mainstream internet) compelled me to look deeper into how my online information is being tracked, stored, and sold. Then I began to research the net worth of the founders of the top platform companies and I learned more about the criticisms of these companies as a collective part of the wage disparity in the United States workforce. Laws have not caught up with the constant shift in services offered through these types of online platforms, and although more people have begun to take notice of the issues at hand, the continuous evolution of internet capabilities create difficulty in knowing where to begin. Initially, these types of companies appear great for everyone (founders, workers, and consumers), but as they grow in size and power, they become institutions that impact a large part of society; and yet, they often remain accountable *only* to their shareholders. That seems like a great idea for an entrepreneur looking for a low risk way to enter a market and make ends meet, but just as we expect children to grow into socially responsible adults, I believe it is necessary for platform companies to grow from small start-ups into socially responsible business institutions. I find myself conflicted about the morality of owning or investing in a platform company, but admittedly I have considered doing so several times. It is this consideration that led me to question what type of responsibility I would assume for my business operations should I one day become a platform owner. Would I push responsibility onto the workers and consumers? Would I be able to develop policies for people using my platform and would such policies even be enforceable? How could my platform company be socially responsible and still maximize profits? What should I do to ensure the safety of platform users? Would I provide some type of oversight to ensure quality service or

products? As an HRD scholar with a background in Industrial-Organizational Psychology, these types of self-reflective questions are what motivated me to conduct this study and explore possible solutions to the issues of a new technological era.

Abstract

App-based companies have emerged as legitimate forms of business, giving way to gigs, odd jobs, and convenient access to goods, products, or services. As with all business, growth brings the need for socially responsible change. This study presents an original exploration of factors that underlie stakeholder perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the access economy (i.e. gig/sharing economy). The access economy is framed as a complex adaptive system and benefits of platform companies are discussed along with prevalent criticisms regarding worker classifications and unethical business practices. By utilizing a mixed methods survey, empirical evidence is provided that not only identifies a negative association between observed versus expected CSR in the access economy, but also provides insight on the need for four types of platform stakeholder responsibility. Although findings revealed that perceptions on accountability were spread across stakeholder groups, the overarching theme is that more accountability should be allocated to platform companies. The data support the idea that consumers expect platform companies to go beyond mere onboarding and to establish some form of worker protections in line with what would generally be expected from a more conventional business model. Opinions of platform accountability appear to be influenced by expectations associated with specific industries (e.g. transportation vs. tourism) and whether or not workers would have direct contact with consumers. Individual factors such as ethical ideology, risk aversion, desire for certain types of service attributes, and propensity toward social proof techniques are shown to be associated with perceptions of CSR. This study serves as a starting point for the field of HRD to enter the access economy.

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List of Abbreviations

AE	Access Economy
B&M	Brick and Mortar
CAS	Complex Adaptive System
CEDOR	Consumers' Ethically-Based Distrust of Online Retailers
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
CStR	Corporate Stakeholder Responsibility
EDA	Exploratory Data Analysis
HRD	Human Resource Development
PCSR	Psychosocial Behavioral Corporate Social Responsibility
PSR	Platform Stakeholder Responsibility
SBHRD	Stakeholder-based Human Resource Development
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
T&D	Training and Development

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Technology has proven to be a powerful economic force and the emergence of technology centered business operations has swiftly changed the nature of work for average citizens, entrepreneurs, and society as a whole. *Platform companies*¹ have influenced the way business is perceived, altered how individuals think of work, and pushed economic development in a new direction. These are companies that allow individuals to monetize tangible assets (e.g. house, car, clothes) for temporary use, provide on-demand services (e.g. food or grocery delivery), and facilitate the sale of goods or services (e.g. Netflix, Amazon). Such companies are considered to be part of an evolving *access economy*, which is a collective reference to companies with decentralized business models that utilize an online platform as the foundation of their existence and rely on the internet as their primary way of conducting business. Bardhi and Eckhardt (2012) describe this phenomenon as market-mediated interactions that parallel conventional business-to-business interactions, where in this case the business can be an individual instead of a conventional business entity. The access economy offers a unique technological medium from which consumers are able to quickly gain access to goods or services and individuals are able to quickly offer their services or products to others (Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2015).

¹ Platform companies are also known as app-based or gig companies: They rely on a technology framework to facilitate business transactions between two or more interdependent user groups (e.g. consumers, service providers, product owners)

Evolution of the access economy has created a space for everyday citizens to pursue entrepreneurship within the boundaries of virtual business. Ordinary citizens are now able to embrace their entrepreneurial spirit while exhibiting “the capacity and willingness to develop, organize, and manage a business venture along with any of its risks in order to make a profit (Business Dictionary, n.d.)” Compared to more traditional businesses, self-employment through digital platforms pose little financial risk. This is one of the primary reasons that finding work through a platform company has become lucrative to everyday citizens. Although discussion of a contingent and independent workforce is not new in the field of Human Resource Development (HRD) (Beck, 2003; Russ-Eft et al., 2014; Scully-Russ & Torraco, 2019), the progression of the access economy raises concerns about worker protections and possible ethics violations. I argue that many of these issues can be addressed through *Corporate Social Responsibility* (CSR) with emphasis on understanding the presence or possibility of *Training and Development* (T&D) initiatives for contingent workers (GAO, 2017; José Chambel & Sobral, 2011).

Echoing Callahan (2012) and many other HRD scholars, I aim to push the field beyond its traditional limits of remaining in safe spaces of how we conceptualize HRD, and rather focus on what HRD could or ought to be in relation to the needs of a digitally progressive society. Through a descriptive assessment of technology-based companies and a parallel mixed-methods survey, this study examines perceptions of accountability and CSR in the access economy. Understanding that one of the primary functions of HRD is to focus on changes in the workforce, this study sought to identify types of training and developmental avenues that would be suitable for a contingent workforce. There are two

assumptions guiding this study. First, the field of HRD is believed to have the capacity to successfully infiltrate and become a large force that drives the ethical operation of decentralized platform companies, while fostering the development of an autonomous, independent workforce. Second, CSR is assumed to be a widely accepted concept that is expected for all businesses regardless of size, type of business model, industry, or economic status.

The Access Economy Business Model

The visionary premise of the access economy is genius in its own right because it requires the development of a platform that is strategically equipped to link workers with consumers while facilitating legally bound monetary transactions, and yet still remaining hands-off with social interactions among key stakeholders². Ultimately, these companies maintain a multi-sided virtual marketplace that is compatible with, and utilizes, various transaction types. I consider these companies to be third-party facilitators of commerce that provide technical platforms to connect workers and consumers; thereby enabling individuals to make money at their convenience. In the same way, consumers are able to utilize certain services, request a ride, or shop with ease. It is fascinating that the appeal to workers of platform companies is strengthened by the guise of being an independent contractor or “working for yourself”, as this is similar to the highly criticized and illegal

² Stakeholders are considered any person or being that will be impacted directly, or indirectly by the daily operations of a business entity. This includes all shareholders, employees, contracted workers, and community members. Defined further in Chapter II.

practices (in the USA) of pyramid schemes. Yet, platform companies have been extremely successful. Part of the appeal stems from the fact that, in most cases, workers are not told when or where they have to work. At any time, they can decide not to work and they can even work for one or multiple platforms concurrently. Workers can easily drive for Uber and Lyft³, and delivery couriers can work for DoorDash and Grubhub. Some platform companies even allow workers to choose when they cash out the money they have earned, which can reduce wait times for compensation.

Platform companies function on the basis of individual control (workers choose when to work) and ownership of intellectual property (platform algorithm) without much interference from governing regulatory agencies. Because platform companies maintain the position that they are not employers, they have been able to dominate their virtual markets while attempting to rebuff social pressures to conform to more traditional business practices in respect to social responsibility. It appears that several platform companies are accountable to their financial investors which increases emphasis on maximizing profits, and without legal protections for non-financial stakeholders, there is reason for concern. Since these types of companies maintain a virtual presence rather than physical, an underlying implication is that the company has limited control over interactions between workers and consumers; and therefore limited responsibility for the impact of business interactions, whether economic, social, or environmental (Zaffar, 2015). Platform companies are established in such a way that risks to the company are minimized by placing

³ See Appendix A for a list of platform companies

responsibility on the workers, customers, and the various communities being served (GAO, 2017; Pinto et al., 2019; Smith & Kubala, 2018). It is in this regard, that ethical concerns and questions of accountability arise.

Problem Statement

Platform companies have created a unique challenge for understanding what it means to be socially responsible in a virtual space. Although the access economy has been successful in adding value to society, there are several issues that cause concern about the economic and social impact that platform companies are having on the current workforce. It is interesting to see the swift acceptance of these companies as legitimate businesses, while also observing a heightened resistance to the lack of social accountability. Traditional brick and mortar (B&M) business models freely accept employees as an internal part of their whole business framework, but platform companies treat workers as autonomous, distinct, and completely separate from the platform. As predicted by Beck (2003), HRD practitioners and those in related fields are now challenged with enhancing...

a redesigned labor force that embraces new criteria for knowledge work beyond the employment standards of recent generations, and where an emerging independent labor force needs skills based on principles of entrepreneurship rather than on the subject matter expertise [that are] foundational to the basic education theory of the past (p. 32).

Much like the access economy, the field of HRD is guided by the “demands of the knowledge economy and by emerging digital technologies” and this situates “technology

as both a challenge for the practices of HRD and as a means for HRD to develop better and more valuable practices (Evans, 2019, p. 117).” Even if we restrict our notion of HRD to traditional business and focus on the workplace, it would include self-employment, contractors, and virtual workplaces (Beck, 2003).

Accountability and CSR

Business models in the access economy allow for a reduction of accountability for the company. This is often achieved by allocating responsibility and any associated risks to independent workers and consumers who use the platform (Pinto et al., 2019). For example, Uber’s terms and conditions specify that anyone who uses their service, whether it be the drivers or the consumers, are liable for any risks that may occur as a result of using the service (Uber Technologies, 2021). As such, there is a great deal of controversy as it pertains to who should be held accountable when negative interactions occur between platform users. Since many of these companies do not have direct contact with workers or consumers, uncertainties exist about how such companies should (or could) be regulated, as well as what type of quality assurances they should provide. Despite platform companies pushing responsibility onto their users, it is common for them to publicize basic policies or initiatives that can be considered part of an established CSR initiative. As noted by El Akremi et al. (2018), we need to look at stakeholder CSR to “... advance understanding of social identity and exchange mechanisms of CSR impacts (p. 650).” D’Aprile and Talò (2014) also argued that current CSR literature has not heavily considered psychological aspects that could help identify ways to advance CSR initiatives. The current study partially

addresses these concerns by examining perceptions of stakeholder CSR (CStR) on four specific domains within the access economy: *Natural Environment-oriented CStR*, *Worker-oriented CStR*, *Supplier-oriented CStR*, and *Customer-oriented CStR* (El Akremi et al., 2018).

Since research on the access economy is mostly conducted outside of HRD, it is unsurprising that very little HRD literature exists about if or how CSR is developed, implemented, or sustained in the access economy. Several HRD scholars have made compelling arguments that link HRD with CSR (Ardichvili, 2013; Garavan & McGuire, 2010; Garavan et al., 2010; Jang & Ardichvili, 2020a, b), but a more thorough investigation is warranted in order to understand how certain CSR domains are developed in platform companies. As these companies grow in size, the same business principles for B&M companies may or may not hold true; and therefore, it is necessary to understand what types of CSR initiatives can be utilized as a mechanism for helping HRD adapt to a redesigned workforce. Novel training strategies are a key aspect of HRD, and are often utilized to promote organizational effectiveness, implement organizational change, or improve quality assurances. T&D strategies are employed to train workers on how to do their jobs, familiarize new employees with company policies or procedures; and when done correctly, T&D can significantly contribute to an organization's bottom line. In the HRD-CSR literature, discussion of T&D strategies are generally included as a way for HRD practitioners to help facilitate CSR. According to Miller and Akdere (2019) "...a more pertinent question to ask is whether companies are even offering training on the topic of CSR more generally, and specific socially responsible activities of organizations (p. 867)."

Given what is currently known about platform business models in relation to how workers are classified, it would be a great starting point for HRD to explore what socially responsible T&D might look like within the access economy.

Additionally, governing laws fall short in addressing the lack of accountability and transparency in platform companies, yet governing laws are meant to protect consumers and define social expectations about corporate behaviors and responsibilities. These expectations are then reinforced by people across all levels of society (Aguilera et al., 2007). However, since many of the controversial practices in the access economy may be considered legal by default, we must remember that legality is not a guide for morality and laws continuously change based on societal needs. As such, we must work to understand and define some form of accountability for multi-sided platform companies.

Acknowledging Intrinsic Attitudes and Beliefs

It is equally important to assess possible factors that might influence perceptions of CSR. For example, Riquelme and Román (2014) noted the importance of distrust between online companies and their stakeholders. They argued that integrity and benevolence-oriented distrust “reflects a highly emotional assessment that the individual assumes that others usually act opportunistically or manipulatively (p. 140).” Following that logic, the current study examines stakeholders’ (e.g. consumers, independent contractors, community members) level of ethically-based distrust of platform companies in relation to perceptions of CSR. The terms trust and distrust largely concern aspects associated with expectations of positive or negative behaviors from one party to the next, often during an exchange.

More generally, trust between a business and its stakeholders may be understood from the level of confidence the consumer has for the business to display positive or honorable business behaviors. In contrast, distrust can be understood as one's level of confidence in their negative expectations for a company's conduct. Riquelme and Román (2014) explained that "trust and distrust are sustained by quite distinct cognitions," and while "hope, faith or assurance comprises high trust, high distrust is characterized by fear, suspicion or cynicism about negative outcomes and a watchful wariness or even vigilant monitoring for negative behaviors (p. 136)." Other things that might impact perceptions of CSR in the access economy include personal attitudes toward online shopping and individuals' intrinsically held belief systems of morality. Understanding that generational differences have an impact on the use of certain technologies, it is also reasonable to expect demographics such as age and race to play a role in how people make sense of what counts as legitimate and ethical business practices.

Why it Should Matter to HRD

The access economy is a successful, yet chaotic social phenomenon; and navigating its complexities and nuances can present new learning opportunities for HRD. Stewart (2007) and Callahan (2012, 2013) argued that HRD should loosen its grip on what constitutes an organization or what problems worthy of attention from HRD. Still, the field as a collective maintains strong predispositions for focusing on problems that fit within a comfortable boundary associated with traditional notions of HRD. I acknowledge that I am pushing these boundaries. My approach to situating HRD in the access economy is

conceptually complex and abstract, but if viewed appropriately from the perspective of pragmatism, it has significant value for the progression of the field. If we explore the access economy to learn how it functions, identify strengths and weaknesses of the top players, and remain open to venturing into the terrain of overlapping fields, we might be able to find our place outside of conventional work.

I am aware that not all phenomena can be prioritized within HRD, and I can see how some HRD professionals may be put off by how certain aspects of the access economy are conceptualized, particularly when other fields of practice, such as HR management or Industrial/Organizational (I/O) psychology are also equipped to tackle the issues at hand. However, that does not mean that HRD should reject it as part of a relevant research agenda for the field. Tapping into research about the access economy will help HRD scholar-practitioners move away from complacency and accept their role as adaptive agents for addressing all types of phenomena, including those that are pragmatic and technology driven. Placed in the right context, HRD can rephrase and reshape all questions to be relevant “because they are about self and other; power and control; identity and ownership; inclusion and exclusion (Lee, 2010, p. 530),” and these are the things with which HRD is concerned. The self-imposed limits of the field are being challenged and rather than trying to provide a definition of what HRD is, we are moving toward a malleable description of what HRD does or doesn’t do as a way to more freely accept expansive thoughts on what HRD can do (Lee, 2010).

Purpose

As a descriptive and exploratory study, this research seeks to understand perceptions of CSR in the access economy while identifying additional factors that may need to be better prioritized as part of the developmental research agenda for HRD. To my knowledge, a comparison of expected CSR and observed CSR has not been empirically assessed in the HRD literature, and most likely not within the scope of platform companies. Given the lack of attention to CSR within the access economy and the versatile role of HRD, this study serves multiple purposes. First, this study seeks to provide a dialectic, yet integrated review of the literature. The intention is to break down the complexity of the access economy for conceptualization, and then identify areas that would be suitable for HRD to push for CSR. Further review of the literature seeks to provide clarity on holistic and socially responsible approaches to establishing CSR within the access economy by assessing the need for T&D, or rather improving and building upon currently existing platform CSR strategies. This is done by approaching the access economy through the lens of complexity theory, and placing stakeholders and ethics as the foundation of the HRD-CSR connection. This study acknowledges platform companies as *complex adaptive systems* (CAS) from an economic framework, and then theoretically applies observed and somewhat simplified concepts to the real world processes and criticisms associated with interactions in the access economy. To identify possible pathways for platform CSR, this study aims to assess perceptions of accountability and explore whether or not intermediary platform companies are expected to implement CSR practices. Broadly speaking, the overarching intent of this study is to question social expectations for platform companies

and provide a compelling argument in favor of ethically sound business practices from such companies. As such, the following objectives and research questions were developed.

Objective 1: Develop a working framework to describe the access economy.

Objective 2: Assess underlying thoughts about platform accountability.

Objective 3: Identify areas for improvement for companies within the access economy.

Objective 4: Offer suggestions for application of HRD strategies in the access economy.

Research Question 1: Who should be held *most* accountable for socially responsible business practices and outcomes in the access economy?

Research Question 2: How do expectations of CSR compare to perceptions of actualized versus observed CSR?

Research Question 3: How do attitudes related to ethics, trust, and risks impact or influence perceptions of CSR?

Research Question 4: In what ways, if any, should companies in the access economy maintain accountability?

Although there are four primary research questions that guide this mixed-methods study, each strand of data (quantitative & qualitative) provides insight into additional research questions that might emerge throughout the data analysis. The quantitative element seeks to empirically explore relationships between ethical ideology, CSR, and perceptions of platform accountability. A secondary quantitative consideration concerns exploring differences among groups based on demography. The qualitative element explores how individuals conceptualize or prioritize platform accountability, and the need or feasibility

for T&D. The focus on understanding perceptions of possible T&D in platform companies is the starting point for HRD to enter the access economy.

Expected Contribution

The Coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic, although occurring after the conceptualization and undertaking of this study, highlights the importance of this research topic and shines light on the necessity for platform companies to be socially responsible. Companies have begun utilizing independent contractors, gig workers, and other temporary free agents for transporting necessary goods during government mandated lock downs. While existing platform companies worked to streamline the services they offer and increase worker incentives to continue providing services in the face of a global pandemic (Bolino, 2020; Garnett, 2020; Kohll, 2020), many traditional B&M companies, mom and pop shops, and other small businesses were forced to utilize on-demand delivery services or face financial ruin. COVID-19 presented an unprecedented opportunity for platform companies to expand (Rossolillo, 2020) and HRD would do well to expand its focus on T&D in a decentralized work setting, as it is unlikely that primary work conditions will revert back to a conventional setting as it was prior to pandemic.

As pointed out by Jayanti (2011), pragmatism and complexity science are still emerging in HRD, making it difficult for HRD scholars to judge the quality of pragmatic research. However, this study has theoretical and practical significance for HRD and other relevant disciplines in the social sciences. The interdisciplinary aspect will greatly enhance the understanding of how CSR can be manifested within the access economy, and how

HRD can be a driving force that fosters the development of CSR in platform companies. It should be understood that this research is a descriptive study that seeks to understand the access economy as a complex economic phenomenon by exploring the perspectives of interdependent groups that participate in some way. By utilizing a mixed methods approach, empirical evidence is provided that not only identifies perceptions of CSR in virtual business, but also provides insight on the prevalence of unique types of stakeholder CSR for digital business. This knowledge could aid in the development of more thorough processes intended to promote socially responsible behaviors, and could possibly improve consumer loyalty among those who value high levels of CSR. Furthermore, by measuring perceptions of stakeholder CSR in the access economy, HRD practitioners can better identify discrepancies in CSR perceptions on various dimensions. The reflective nature of the open-ended survey items, which will be discussed in Chapter III, can help HRD professionals identify and develop a consensus on how to approach complexities of the access economy that are not readily understood, and cannot be directly measured. An exhaustive review of the literature is expected to highlight the ways in which stakeholder-based HRD (Baek & Kim, 2014) professionals can help implement and facilitate socially responsible initiatives within the access economy.

Scope of Study

This study focuses on the access economy as an economic sector without limits to specific industries. Companies referenced in this research include those present in transportation, marketing, tourism, and many other industries. Perceptions of the access

economy are viewed from the perspective of complex systems with foundations in ethics, economics, and psychology. Examples given about criticisms of platform companies are based on how they function in the USA and the need for certain types of platform responsibility may differ internationally. Results can be used to inform further research, but should not be generalized across countries. Nor should examples provided in this study be generalized to organizations that fall outside of the realm of the access economy, unless such companies are utilizing a business model with characteristics similar to platform companies. It should also be noted that this study does not focus on the philanthropic areas of CSR, but rather emphasizes stakeholder CSR at the worker and consumer level.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides a review of literature on the access economy and the HRD-CSR link. Following Callahan (2010) and Garavan et al. (2015), this chapter draws from a broad range of literature concerning HRD as a developmental, socially constructed, and holistically employed field of applied research. The four primary HRD journals were assessed for the presence of content that could be related to the access economy. Key words such as “gig economy”, “HRD and CSR”, “Sharing Economy and HRD” were used to search google scholar and the University of Minnesota’s library database. Due to limited information about HRD and CSR within the access economy, additional literature was obtained from reputable journals. To broaden the scope and include pertinent information about the access economy, non-refereed publications were assessed. Even so, emphasis was placed on peer-reviewed studies that had some focus on ethical foundations in business or the economic impact of business relations on society. Perhaps unsurprisingly, noteworthy information was found in economics and marketing journals. Selected sources provided a general, yet comprehensive review of large platform companies and CSR. Given the various theories, arguments, and perspectives on each of these topics, the intent of this review was not to provide an exhaustive historical review, but rather to highlight important perspectives on how CSR can be applied in the access economy, and then discuss which areas of CSR could be addressed by the field of HRD. Therefore, the sources selected for this study focused on conceptual frameworks and theoretical CSR processes, rather than CSR effectiveness. First, the debate over the need for CSR is examined by

focusing on the neoclassical economic theory of shareholder primacy versus the ethics-based theory of stakeholder management, with the latter being the basis of the HRD-CSR link in this study. These concepts are then discussed in relation to their place in the access economy. A conceptual framework is presented that situates the access economy as a complex adaptive system (CAS), with special attention to linking HRD and relevant areas of platform CSR.

Theoretical Foundations

Foremost, this study is guided by *stakeholder theory*, which emphasizes concern for the ethical and social wellbeing of people who hold a stake in, or are impacted by business operations and outcomes. In order to understand social responsibility in the digital age, it is necessary to acknowledge the complexity of human interactions. Not only are humans complex, the businesses and social systems in place, particularly within the access economy, are disorderly and chaotic. Platform companies are continually adapting their algorithms to be more advanced, they're updating web interfaces and utilizing predictive web analytics to gain information about their users, and it is likely that these tactics will continue to advance. The scope of this study draws on various concepts that have been discussed in HRD and ethics to provide a solid foundation for exploring perceptions of accountability and CSR in the access economy. Since the access economy has come to be a large part of the national (and global) economy, application of *complexity theory* helps to make sense of the evolving functions of platform companies. Complexity theory is suitable for explaining the nuanced and somewhat unpredictable aspects of CSR (Porter &

Reischer, 2018). When complexity theory is applied to organizations, the notion of a CAS emerges. This is a divergent extension of systems theory, which is accepted as one of the foundational theories of HRD (Fagan, 2014; Swanson & Holton, 2009; Swanson, 2001; Yawson, 2012). According to Swanson (2001), systems theory “captures the complex and dynamic interactions of environments, organizations, work process[es] and group/individual variables operating at any point in time and over time (p. 305)”. With systems thinking, organizations aim to close gaps and meet a specific organizational goal to keep the system in equilibrium, usually by trying to predict behaviors and outcomes. It is often linear and sometimes reductionist with emphasis on inputs, processes, and outputs. However, CAS approaches are dynamic, unordered, and unpredictable. Although CAS have been studied using computational modeling in the hard sciences, social scientists can apply the logic and representative theoretical frameworks to organizations (Hammer et al., 2012; Porter & Reischer, 2018). It is in this regard that I utilize a CAS approach to frame the access economy as a dynamic system. By thinking of organizations as a complex system, we are able to make somewhat objective inferences about how an individual part of the system might impact the functioning of the whole organization. This implies the overall operations of platform companies are more complex than the sum of each of its parts. Platform companies involve external factors that impact stakeholders across various dimensions of the platform. These business models are designed such that relationships between platform users are interdependent and somewhat chaotic. As such, my approach to conceptualizing the access economy at the most basic level involves acknowledging the complexity of platform companies, while focusing on the processes, critiques, and

outcomes as a social phenomenon in need of exploration by HRD. In this sense, platform companies represent social systems, and the performance of such systems are significantly impacted by human behaviors, intrinsic values, and social expectations.

Conceptualizing the Access Economy

Academic literature surrounding the access economy is generally focused on explaining the business models and trying to develop a fitting definition or framework (Acquier et al., 2017; Frenken & Schor, 2017; Kumar et al., 2018; Ranjbari et al., 2018), and discussing problems associated with how platform companies are allowed to operate (Stewart & Stanford, 2017; Wood et al., 2018). These types of articles provide comparisons that highlight parallels between traditional work and gig work, as well as the possible impact that they might have on an economic and social level. Scholarly literature on the access economy can also be found in journals that focus on economics, employment law, ethics, organization development, information technology, marketing, and other related fields of study. From an organizational perspective, much of the literature emphasizes negative aspects of the access economy related to ideas about how platform companies have been able to operate through legal loopholes and abusive practices (Smith & Kubala, 2018; Todolí-Signes, 2017). Job precarity (Sutherland et al., 2019) and worker classifications (Malos et al., 2018) also appear to be common areas of interest for scholar-practitioners. Studies in the management literature include a focus on if/how workers can be managed (Meijerink & Keegan, 2019) and management styles in gig work (Ravenelle, 2019); and articles published in psychology journals emphasize concerns related to social

justice or equality (Smith & Kubala, 2018). In keeping with the themes of how the access economy is discussed by other social science fields, this study presents a review of what the access economy is and how it operates. A conceptualization of the access economy as a CAS is presented prior to discussing detailed criticisms of platform companies, and subsequently venturing into literature on CSR.

Platforms + Sharing + Gigs = Access

The socio-economic consequences of the access economy are massive, as it has morphed into a digital labor market. The use and acceptance of platforms have become a social movement or phenomenon in which a whole generation of people are swiftly changing the way work, business, and ownership is regarded. As stated in Chapter I, the access economy is comprised of several intermediary companies that have a business model with an online platform that can be accessed through multiple devices with an internet connection. The platform connects workers and consumers, with the platform owners having little to no contact with either. These include any collaborative consumption, rental sharing, or on-demand services in which internet transactions are the primary means of business interactions. Generally, these types of intermediary companies do not have a physical location or storefront. The current research is focused on platform companies that utilize two-way user groups for primary operations (Hermans, 2018; Moazed, 2020). By providing a hands-off online platform, these companies serve as an intermediary connection between service agents, product owners, and consumers.

A consistent definition for explaining or describing the access economy does not currently exist and it has been referred to by several different names. In the HRD literature, the phrase *platform economy* has been used to refer to these companies (Scully-Russ & Torraco, 2019). The phrase *sharing economy* is somewhat common, and refers to a social phenomenon involving the collaborative consumption of privately owned goods through use of online platforms (Arcidiacono et al., 2018; Martin, 2016; Wang & Ho, 2017), and it predates use of the phrase *access economy*. The sharing economy describes a specific type of intermediary platform with the most noteworthy sharing platforms being a part of the peer-to-peer rental sharing industry. People who temporarily offer their personal property (e.g. house, car, bike, etc.) to others through mediated online transactions are taking part in the sharing economy. This type of rental sharing business is also referred to as collaborative consumption. However, neither sharing nor collaborative consumption, fully captures the variety of platform companies that rely on peer-to-peer transactions in an “access-based consumption” model (Arcidiacono et al., 2018; Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012). According to Eckhardt and Bardhi (2015), “when ‘sharing’ is market-mediated — when a company is an intermediary between consumers who don’t know each other — it is no longer sharing at all. Rather, consumers are paying to access someone else’s goods or services for a particular period of time.” This includes peer-to-peer, business-to-business, and business-to-consumer transactions conducted using an online platform. The phrase *gig economy* has also been used to refer to people who participate as workers in the access economy (e.g. on-demand delivery drivers) and are classified as non-employees. Companies in the gig economy may also be viewed as part of the sharing economy, but the terminology shifts

the focus from the positive connotations associated with sharing to more accurately depict work for monetary exchanges. The phrase ‘gig economy’ is perhaps the most common and frequent description used for app-based platform companies, but like its predecessors, it is not fully inclusive of the types of work or platforms that make up the access economy.

Martin (2016) presented findings that framed the sharing economy as “an economic opportunity; more sustainable form of consumption; [and] a pathway to a decentralized, equitable and sustainable economy (p. 158)” for those seeking to empower and promote the development of sharing platforms. In contrast, for those who are critical and resistant to such platforms, Martin (2016) frames platform companies as “creating unregulated marketplaces; reinforcing the neoliberal paradigm; and an incoherent field of innovation (p. 158).” Ranjbari et al. (2018) also examined relevant literature to conceptualize sharing platforms. Although the focus of their research was limited to what they describe as the sharing economy, the features they identified are applicable to the broader access economy. Based on a collective understanding in the social science literature, companies in the access economy have an idle capacity (volume for products or services), promote a collaborative form of consumption, employ peer-to-peer connections, and enable temporary access from one person to the next without the transfer of ownership (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2012; Constantiou et al., 2017; Eckhardt & Bardhi, 2015). These companies also enable some type of for-profit activity, are convenient for participants, somehow establish trust in network based activities, and can potentially operate at near zero marginal costs. Adapted from the framework developed by Ranjbari et al. (2018), *Figure 1* provides a visual depiction of key features of platform companies. As depicted, suppliers/workers are

individual owners of goods or services who temporarily provide their idle capacity, goods, or services to other individual consumers (demand agents). The demand agents/consumers then provide compensation in some form to the supplier. Drawing from Beck’s (2003) theory of the independent workforce, the labour provided by suppliers/workers can be “defined as self-employed contract-for-services work through different (p. 27)” companies. Intermediary online platforms are used to facilitate these exchanges. Trust, ease of access, and the perception of low cost benefits are necessary for successful and repeated transactions.

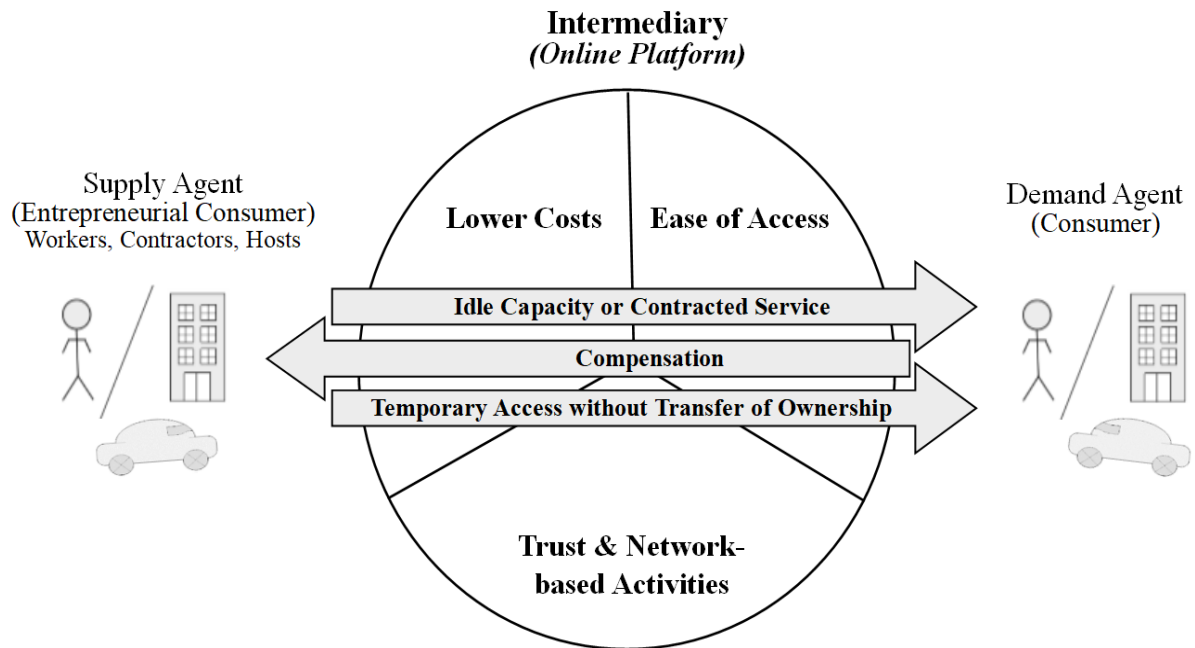


Figure 1: Access Economy Framework⁴

⁴ Adapted from Ranjbari et al. (2018)

Access Economy as a Complex Adaptive System

Now that a general assessment of the access economy has been presented, it can be further contextualized by using principles associated with a CAS approach. HRD has been touted as complex and dynamic by many scholar-practitioners (Lee, 2002; Swanson & Holton, 2009). It is therefore, reasonable to approach new organizational structures and evolving areas of work by applying foundations of complexity science. Complexity science has been discussed in the HRD literature (Ardichvili, 2012; Garavan et al., 2019; Lee, 2002; Yawson, 2012) on systems theory and systems thinking. Although there are several attributes of a CAS, there are some characteristics that can be used to identify, position, or model a system as a CAS. First and foremost, the system must be *complex*, meaning that its properties and/or networks cannot be captured by utilizing a single framework, and separate attempts to model parts of the system are not derivative of each other (Stevens-Hall, 2020). Similarly, all CAS have a component of *emergence* that can be observed when new characteristics, networks, or relationships are continually formed through feedback and human (inter)actions (Dooley, 1996; Fagan, 2014; Turner & Baker, 2019, 2020). Platform companies rely on multi-source feedback and social proof techniques⁵ as a way to persuade or increase consumer participation (Roethke et al., 2020). This is done by creating channels of communication that suggest positive thoughts from certain peer or

⁵ Social proof – phenomenon in which actions, behaviors, and collective opinions influence the perceptions and/or behaviors of others. Platform feedback, reviews, endorsements and shared experiences help consumers decide on a course of action (Amblee & Bui, 2011;). Social proofs allow others to identify a “correct behavior” by paying attention to the actions/opinions of others (Roethke et al., 2020).

social groups. Generally, engagement with a particular platform company must occur by the majority of people in a social group (Dootson et al., 2017; Roethke et al., 2020) or participation might decline. *Self-organization* is another important characteristic of a CAS. It implies that a system operates based on interactions between its individual agents and that structural changes are made through self-renewal mechanisms (Swanson & Holton, 2009) and it is applicable to the access economy because of the self-regulating mechanism of platform users (Berkowitz & Souchaud, 2019). Other characteristics include *chaos*, which refers to the dynamic variations among inputs and outputs of the system; *observer dependency*, which implies that the system can look different to people who hold different perspectives; and *path dependency*, which suggests that the evolution of a CAS will be impacted by past decisions and will adapt accordingly (Stevens-Hall, 2020; Turner & Baker, 2019). Again, this is where social proof techniques comes in as a central piece to the multi-directional feedback present in the access economy.

Jayanti (2011) presents complex organizational systems as functioning with local rules and an understanding that learning in this type of organization is “a dynamic, nonlinear, and emerging process from which knowledge is created (p. 433)” through feedback. Complex systems are also impacted by individual actors who can change the structure of the organization, but the organization can also foster change for individual actors (Dooley, 1996; Jayanti, 2011). According to Dooley (1996), the basic elements needed to model CAS include semi-autonomous stakeholders/agents (i.e. platform workers, consumers) that evolve and lead to a decentralized system. A comparative metaphor posed by Jennings and Dooley (2007) likens conventional business models to a

machine and a CAS business model to a living organism within a socio-economic context. Thinking of the access economy as a living organism helps to explain its growth and quick ability to adapt to changes. It functions as a social and economic institution that emerges and evolves in union with people and society. By dissecting Dooley's (1996) nominal definition of a CAS and applying it to the current operations of mainstream platform companies, the access economy can be modeled as a CAS. Below, Table 1 presents a display of how access economy companies fit within Dooley's nominal definition of a CAS, along with key characteristics of CAS as listed above. The first objective of this research was to develop a working framework to describe the access economy for relevance to HRD. Conceptualizing the access economy as a CAS serves as the first step to meeting that objective.

Table 1

Access Economy as CAS Framework

Dooley’s (1996) Dissected Nominal Definition of a CAS	Access Economy CAS Characteristics
<p>Semi-autonomous stakeholders/agents that evolve and develop mental templates that define how reality is interpreted and what are appropriate responses for a given stimuli. These mental templates are known as <i>schema</i>.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Self-Organizing, Nonlinear, & Dynamic</i></p> <p>Platform workers, consumers, external and internal stakeholders who utilize the apps and online platforms are the semi-autonomous stakeholders. Large scale stakeholder feedback (<i>schema</i>) determines how platform companies operate. Consumer feedback can alter how workers provide services and vice versa if platforms allow workers to rate consumers</p>
<p>Agents or meta-agents also exist outside the boundaries of the CAS, and schema also determine the rules of interaction concerning how information and resources flow externally.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Emergence</i></p> <p>Community members and industry competitors, whether in traditional B&M or other virtual settings, can be considered meta-agents outside of the access economy because they help make the rules and set expectations for the operations of certain sub-systems in the access economy.</p>
<p>Schema evolve from smaller, more basic schema. They are rationally bounded and potentially indeterminate because of <i>incomplete and/or biased information; and they differ across agents</i>. Within an agent, schema exists in multitudes and compete for survival via a selection-enactment-retention process.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Between Chaotic & Ordered</i></p> <p>Ethical ideology, trust, desire for flexibility or convenience, social acceptance/proofing, and risk aversion are a few types of schema that fall between chaotic and ordered; and they differ across individuals and groups.</p>
<p>When an observation does not match what is expected, an agent can take action in order to adapt the observation to fit an existing schema. An agent can also purposefully alter schema in order to better fit the</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Observer Dependency</i></p> <p>App-based companies gain significant value from individual customer reviews. Many companies in the access economy implement a way for</p>

<p>observation. Schema define how a given agent interacts with other agents surrounding it. Actions between agents involve the exchange of information and/or resources. These flows may be nonlinear. Information and resources can undergo multiplier effects based on the nature of interconnectedness in the system.</p>	<p>consumers and workers to leave feedback by providing ratings on their experience. This is one way the companies can develop a standing reputation and improve their processes. The feedback system in the access economy relies heavily on various forms of social proofing, which has been shown to influence consumer behaviors during heightened uncertainty (Wooten & Reed II, 1998).</p> <p>Platform criticisms, increasing calls for change and more accountability are dependent on how closely individuals identify with the issues at hand.</p>
<p>Schema can change through random or purposeful mutation, and/or combination with other schema. When schema change it generally has the effect of making the agent more robust (it can perform in light of increasing variation or variety), more reliable (it can perform more predictably), or more capable in terms of its requisite variety (it can adapt to a wider range of conditions).</p> <p>Optimization of local fitness allows differentiation and novelty/diversity; global optimization of fitness enhances the CAS coherence as a system and induces long term memory.</p> <p>Agent tags help identify what other agents are capable of a transaction with a given agent; tags also facilitate the formation of aggregates, or meta-agents. Meta-agents help distribute and decentralize functionality, allowing diversity to thrive and specialization to occur.</p> <p>The fitness of the agent is a complex aggregate of many factors, both local and global. Unfit agents are more likely to instigate schema change.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Adaptive and Resilient</i></p> <p>Platform companies respond to the demand of their workers, consumers, and community partners.</p> <p>Workers are replaceable so those who provide services through a platform company are free to leave; thus optimizing the number of workers who want to be there. This same logic applies to consumers.</p> <p>Most platform and app-based companies utilize a digital feedback system that allows workers to rate consumers and consumers are encouraged to rate the workers. This feedback can be considered an agent tag because each rating for a single agent is compiled and stored as part of a worker or consumers' profile. This can be used to determine or alter behavior of the agent.</p> <p>Contractors who do gig or on-demand work as a full time job may be more likely to want regulations that dictate a more traditional work relationship.</p>

Dooley's (1996) nominal definition was taken directly from his article. Slight variations and reorganization of the wording was made to improve clarity for application to the access economy and characterization of CAS components. However, the definitional content is relatively the same.

Benefits of the Access Economy

Some collaborative consumption platforms are viewed as beneficial because sharing, rather than owning, is believed to be less resource intensive and therefore, better for the environment (Frenken & Schor, 2017). The idea of sharing has a positive connotation because it is a common idiom that sharing is caring. This view is strengthened by the assumption that sharing might reduce demand for the production of new goods (Frenken & Schor, 2017). However, the primary observed positive environmental impact from the access economy comes from collaborative consumption platforms in the transportation sector, and more research is needed (Frenken & Schor, 2017). Other perceived benefits include convenient access to goods and services. This allows consumers to shop, order food and transportation, or seek last minute lodging at their convenience. Desire for convenience references the extent to which stakeholders want quick and easy access to services or goods. In this sense, easy refers to gaining access to goods and services in a way that does not require deep thinking and having transaction processes that are intuitive. In regard to workers, the idea persists that they are positively benefitting from the ability to gain supplemental income, maintain a flexible work schedule, and exercise a greater amount of control over how they complete the work. Consumers may also be able to obtain certain goods or services at a lower rate, allowing them to save money. It is important for HRD to understand how these types of intrinsic motivations and individual attributes influence access economy participation, especially since there are some uncertainties associated with the use of platforms. Understanding that the access economy

is a multidimensional CAS, it is necessary to select a condensed view of certain dimensions or sub-systems to pinpoint areas for improvement. This study has chosen to focus on criticisms of the access economy as a way to determine where HRD might be able to help promote more ethical business practices or implement some form of social responsibility. As such, a more detailed look at prevalent criticisms are discussed below.

Unpacking Criticisms of Platform Companies

As pointed out by Martin (2016), resistance to current access economy operations stem from the belief that these companies need to be regulated. The lack of corporate governance has increased awareness that platform companies shift responsibility onto independent workers (GAO, 2017), denying them worker protections that are usually guaranteed in a traditional employer-employee business model. Others argue that this new way of business has saturated the workforce with individuals who split their time trying to earn supplemental income outside of normal business hours (Zaffar, 2015). Criticisms largely concern accountability, unethical business practices, the treatment of workers, concerns over safety, and data security. All of these criticisms can be partially attributed to a lack of government oversight.

Accountability

Accountability can be understood by expounding on notions of corporate control (Valor, 2005). That is... who controls the services being offered? Who controls the platform and does controlling the platform outweigh the responsibility of individual owners of goods? These are the types of questions that make it difficult to come to an agreement

or understanding about what type of responsibility is expected of platform companies. In a traditional business structure, there is generally a hierarchy or chain of command that directs responsibility to the top, but with platform companies the chain of command is not clear. Workers are technically self-employed, making it difficult to communicate their grievances to someone in charge. When consumers have a complaint, they can leave feedback on the app, but communication between stakeholders and platform owners is nearly nonexistent for more pressing issues that stem from interactions between workers and consumers. These issues can include theft of personal property, assault, or even death.

Accountability is contingent on not only clarity, but also on the presence of robust channels for communication. A decentralized model, maximized for efficiency and profit, means it is harder to reach representatives at these platforms, Uber being no exception. Understanding who is involved but then finding it almost impossible to speak with a real person, breeds an atmosphere of diminished oversight and clouded liability (Tabib-Azar, 2020, para. 13).

Despite these concerns, intermediary companies do not own the goods or services being accessed; and the facilitating company often has not seen or come in direct contact with workers, services, or goods. In some cases, they do not provide any type of quality assurances and even if they set guidelines for persons who use their platform, they are limited in their ability to ensure that workers comply with those guidelines. For this reason it is imperative to determine who is, or should be, held responsible for upholding ethical business practices.

Corporate Governance

The fear of a potential monopoly in markets once dominated by multiple competing firms, is a point of contention that adds to concerns about access economy operations. Streaming entertainment services most likely played a major role in the near elimination of movie rental stores; companies like Airbnb are overtaking the temporary lodging industry; and Uber has made great strides to become the primary car service for on-demand taxi travel. The exponential growth of these businesses has undoubtedly disrupted their respective markets. It has been stated that Uber and Airbnb “have only become successful in disrupting their respective industries because they have played by different rules, ignoring regulatory regimes, and operating outside the confines of workplace laws as they are currently written (Cao, 2017, p. 1091).” This has led to perceptions of an anti-competitive advantage (Puro, 2018), as some governing laws may apply to traditional businesses that do not cover platform companies in the same industry. By not taking full responsibility and operating in a somewhat unregulated virtual space, many of these companies have been accused of exploitation (Samaan, 2015; Smith & Kubala, 2018; Todolí-Signes, 2017; Wearing & Lyons, 2016). The tourism industry, in particular, has responded by suggesting temporary lodging companies in the access economy be forced to maintain a certain guest to room ratio and maintain the same safety standards that are required of hotels (Wearing & Lyons, 2016). Several states and municipalities in the U.S. are in the process of developing, or have already placed, restrictions on Airbnb hosts for a variety of reasons, such as violations in residential zoning laws, taxation, and safety concerns (Beekman, 2017; Gaines, 2018; Loudenback, 2018; Tucker, 2018). However, the

problem with regulating companies with a collaborative consumption business model is that the governments involved may not have the necessary resources to identify workers and enforce the laws. Furthermore, there remains confusion over how individual owners can make use of their personal property, which generally has already been subjected to taxes; and there are concerns over the legality of auditing or penalizing individual suppliers who participate in the sharing economy (Wearing & Lyons, 2016). Regulatory responses may also vary depending on the geographical location of the workers who use certain platforms.

Power Asymmetry & Treatment of Workers

Even though workers can earn supplemental income, the founders, investors, and platform hosts can earn major profits, which may lead to an even larger gap in wealth distribution between social classes. According to Marton et al. (2017), “there are blatant power asymmetries created by digital service platforms ... setting all the rules and reaping most of the benefits (p. 1524)” while the workers, “as the quasi self-employed users (p. 1524)” of the platform provide the real services and bear the most risk. The improper classification of workers as independent contractors or other types of non-employees is problematic because workers are not granted any lawful protections (in the USA) that are guaranteed to workers with a traditional employee status. Such protections include health insurance, automatic tax withholdings, overtime pay, and sick leave (Kost et al., 2019). Some of the largest and most successful platform companies provide contradictory information on their websites when they advertise for new workers. For example, Uber is

regarded as part of the transportation industry, yet a clause stated in its terms and conditions claims otherwise, and therefore, it does its “driver-partners” to be employees (Uber Technologies, 2020). Similarly, DoorDash, a popular on-demand food delivery platform, maintains that it is not a delivery business. As of November 2020 the company’s terms of service state that it is not in the delivery business, yet the website lists openings for delivery drivers or food couriers known as *Dashers* (DoorDash, 2020a, 2020b). By branding its drivers as Dashers, the company is staking claim to the delivery services provided by the drivers. Such contradictions need to be corrected. It has also been reported that some of the top platform companies have developed and secretly implemented discriminatory and exploitive algorithms to target and refuse services to certain social groups. Mike Isaac (2017), an investigative reporter for *The New York Times* found that Uber had implemented an algorithmic tool called Greyball to deceive authorities in “markets where its low-cost ride-hailing service was resisted by law enforcement or, in some instances, had been banned.” Operation Greyball used...

data collected from the Uber app and other techniques to identify and circumvent officials who were trying to clamp down on the ride-hailing service. Uber used these methods to evade the authorities in cities like Boston, Paris and Las Vegas, and in countries like Australia, China and South Korea (Isaac, 2017, para. 2).

Greyball worked such that location data, credit card information, and personal accounts on social media were used to identify people who Uber suspected of working for agencies that may be investigating the company (Isaac, 2017; Wong, 2017). According to Uber’s Chief Security Officer, the Greyball technology was “used to hide the standard city app view for

individual riders, enabling Uber to show that same rider a different version (Sullivan, 2017).” The company has an exhaustive list of terms and conditions that explicitly state that any data obtained from the use of their platform grants them the right to “**exploit in any manner** such User Content” (Uber Technologies, 2020). These types of practices can severely damage the legitimacy of a company and undermine any notion of transparency. Similarly, DoorDash came under scrutiny for allegedly reducing workers’ wages when consumers provided a monetary tip through the platform rather than providing a cash tip (McGillivray Steele Elkin LLP, 2020). The company updated their pay scale after receiving backlash (Gibson, 2019; Newman, 2019). Shoppers for Instacart, a grocery-delivery platform, publicly shared their confusion over how pay rates are calculated, as well as their general disdain for the conspicuous operations of the Instacart algorithm pay model (Weill, 2019). These examples highlight several of the problems associated with the novel workings of platform companies.

Other social inequalities may arise from collaborative consumption business models, which can be discriminatory and biased against certain social classes (Romano, 2016). One study found that homes posted by African American Airbnb hosts in the USA were priced lower than other hosts (Edelman & Luca, 2014), and a follow up study found that African American customers were more likely to be rejected by hosts when attempting to book lodging (Edelman et al., 2017). These types of issues are difficult to negate because shared goods for collaborative consumption are privately owned; and owners may have intrinsic biases that lead to the denial of goods or services for certain social classes or demographics. These issues may have more validity in certain geographic locations, but

the criticisms are present across the globe. Graham et al. (2017) conducted a qualitative study on gig workers in Sub-Saharan Africa and South-east Asia and concluded that

The bargaining power of workers is undermined by the size and scope of the global market for labor; the anonymity that the digital medium affords is a double-edged sword, facilitating some types of economic inclusion, but also allowing employers to discriminate at will; disintermediation is occurring in some instances, but the combination of the existence of a large pool of people willing to work for extremely low wages and the effects of the importance of rating and ranking systems, is also encouraging enterprising individuals to create highly mediated chains; and those mediated and opaque chains are, in turn, restricting the abilities of workers to upgrade within them. (p. 158).

A more subtle, yet concerning criticism deals with deceptive claims about socially responsible behaviors from platform companies. Some companies may publicize their CSR initiatives to increase brand perceptions, but do not actually follow through with their stated efforts. The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly exacerbated many of these criticisms. Instacart shoppers mobilized to combat what they perceived as inadequate care from platform leadership during the pandemic. They demanded hazard pay and an extension of pay for shoppers who may have been impacted by the virus (Fisher, 2020). Following suit with Uber and Lyft, the company responded by publicly offering two weeks of pay for shoppers affected by the virus. This action is not surprising seeing as how complex systems are designed to adapt based on feedback, but there was still some controversy due to rumors that the company made it extremely difficult for workers to claim that pay.

Corporate Social Responsibility

The pressing controversies and criticisms of the access economy have shifted the movement from blanket acceptance and complacency to a focus on the need for change, ethical transformations, transparency, and a social call for moral leadership at the highest operational level within platform companies. In an editorial essay published in the *Journal of Business Ethics*, Etter et al., (2019) acknowledged the need for CSR in the access economy, and several studies have concluded that HRD can be a driver for organizations to engage in long term CSR activities (Fenwick & Bierema, 2008; Rimanoczy & Pearson, 2010; Sheehan et al., 2014). The concept of CSR is extremely complex because it varies as social norms, values, and moral codes change. Jang and Ardichvili (2020a) asserted that “embedding CSR in organizations is viewed as a complex phenomenon (p. 14)” which requires the field of HRD to tailor their strategies to meet the CSR needs of sub-systems within the access economy. Before this can happen, it is necessary to “discuss and make sense of complex CSR issues and balance diverging interests of multiple key stakeholders (Jang & Ardichvili, 2020a, p. 14).” Therefore, the following sections detail the historical foundations of CSR, along with divergent perspectives on the need for it within organizations. This entails discussion of foundational works and philosophical debates related to the purpose of an organization in a capitalist society. The historical review of CSR is presented and conceptualized based on the stakeholder perspective. Barriers to implementing CSR and the HRD-CSR link are subsequently discussed. Platform criticisms are then categorized according to the foundational dimensions of CSR.

History & Evolution of CSR: The Great Debate

The concept of CSR really began to take shape during the late 1950s and early 1960s, during which time the USA created the Consumer Bill of Rights and developed the National Environmental Policy Act that placed more responsibilities on organizations. Early origins of CSR were expanded from theories and models of corporate social performance (Carroll, 1979, 1991; Sethi, 1975; Wood, 1991). Stages of CSR principles include economic, legal, ethical and discretionary responsibilities (Carroll, 1979), which were later developed into the highly referenced CSR pyramid (Carroll, 1991). Other guiding principles of CSR include corporate legitimacy, public responsibility, and managerial discretion (Wood, 1991). Managerial discretion assigns a moral responsibility to managers, and the field of HRD is tasked with helping organizations prepare managers for that responsibility. The principal of public responsibility holds corporations accountable for outcomes that effect society. Current notions of CSR encompass several sub-dimensions expanded beyond Carroll's (1979) principles to include environmental, technological, and financial maintenance (Carroll, 2009; Glavas & Kelley, 2014; Lobschat et al., 2019). These CSR categories are becoming predominant in the literature and guide the shareholder versus stakeholder debate, which is discussed below. However, they merely explain the rationale for the CSR concept and provide little insight into the operational and behavioral dimensions that are necessary to understand how CSR can be translated from theory into practice.

A concrete definition for CSR does not exist, but a general consensus is that it refers to the role of businesses to act, operate in, and promote socially acceptable practices. The

meaning of CSR is subjective and must be placed in context that aligns with business and social needs. In general, CSR reflects the ethical and moral values in corporate decision making (Branco & Rodrigues, 2007). Taneja et al. (2011) pointed out that the meaning of CSR is bound to change as business operations evolve. Due to globalization and the ease of virtual communication between community members, CSR is expected to reflect local situations that will be guided by global trends and shifts in government regulations (Taneja et al., 2011, p. 2). This is particularly true for platform companies.

According to Garriga and Melé (2004) theories used to conceptualize, explain, or discuss CSR can be divided into four theoretical categories: Instrumental, political, integrative, and ethical. Based on their work, instrumental theories refer to those that are dedicated to increasing financial gains. Political theories are more concerned with organizational power and, if or how that power should be regulated. Integrative theories involve different ideas on how organizations can meet social demands while still maintaining perceptions of organizational legitimacy. As the last of the four theoretical categories posed the Garriga and Melé (2004), ethical theories are concerned with meeting and maintaining ethical values as dictated by social norms. These are the theories that guide the stakeholder perspective in the CSR debate. A large portion of CSR is grounded in normative ethics as it concerns an increasing push for organizations to make moral business decisions in accordance with social norms. Therefore it is necessary to understand and incorporate individual values and biases into developing appropriate CSR initiatives, and to inform knowledge on what is considered ethical in a progressively digital society. In keeping with the pragmatic, complexity-based approach of this study, the following section

highlights the origins of CSR from opposing perspectives with varying philosophical assumptions.

Shareholders versus Stakeholders

The original CSR debate stemmed from a difference of opinion on the purpose of organizations and their role in society. Those in opposition to implementing CSR as a legal requirement hold the idea that an organization is created to secure the interests of its shareholders. This is known as *shareholder primacy*. Those advocating for it argue that the sole purpose of an organization is to maximize the profits of shareholders by using corporate resources only if necessary, and with no other responsibility beyond maintaining compliance with laws and regulations set forth in their respective countries (Branco & Rodrigues, 2007; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Kercher, 2007). This stance is troublesome when thinking about the lack of existing regulatory laws for platform companies, the level of freedom awarded to workers, and the willfulness of companies to connect people without proper vetting. Shareholder primacy is guided by classic economic and instrumental theories. An instrumentalist perspective might assert that only living people have responsibilities and since platforms are nonliving business entities, the notion of them having a social responsibility is inept. This ideology could view implementing training for platform workers, providing quality assurances for food delivery, or data protections as unnecessary business behaviors because they may initially reduce profits for platform shareholders. Porter and Kramer (2002) noted that some scholars believe social and economic returns are at odds; and forcing companies to allocate part of their resources to

address social concerns might hinder their economic success. Proponents of profit maximization claim that even when corporations address social issues, the benefits of doing so are not much greater than if multiple individuals in society would have acted alone (Porter & Kramer, 2002). Those in opposition to shareholder primacy, myself included, argue that the size and power of some organizations create a need for business practices that protect a broader range of people and societies who are impacted, directly or indirectly, by business operations (Hart-Mrema & Paetzal, 2018; Kercher, 2007). The debate continues to be relevant and it has become a pressing issue within the access economy.

While Friedman (1998) was a pioneer for advancing the shareholder perspective, Norman Barry, an English philosopher, produced several works that fueled the debate. Barry was a classical liberal who held strong beliefs against state control and argued that allocating responsibilities beyond the interest of shareholders would lead "... to the politicization of the firm in that many groups and a number of almost certainly competing purposes" would have to "be considered (Barry, 2002, p. 545)." According to Barry (2000), advocates of stakeholder theory and CSR view it as "... perfectly compatible with capitalism, but it in fact undermines the defining feature of that economic system: the exclusive rights of ownership (para. 3)." He argued that this would eventually lead to the democratization of "what is essentially an individualistic economic institution (para. 3)." I disagree with this idea. Even though stakeholder and shareholder perspectives may not be perfectly compatible, they are complimentary. There is no denial that adding social objectives to corporations will challenge the core principles of a market economy as posed by Mansell (2013), and I am not ignoring the possibility that stakeholder theory is

inherently flawed in its assumption that the needs of stakeholders are equal to those of the corporation and that a compromise can be made (Blattberg, 2000). I am arguing that caring for stakeholders is more ethical, socially accepted, and more beneficial for companies and society as a whole. There are situations in which the needs of stakeholders may compete with short-term notions of profit maximization for shareholders, but I along with other advocates of stakeholder management, believe that shareholders are themselves, a stakeholder (Branco & Rodrigues, 2007; Freeman et al., 2004).

Understandably, many companies start out as individual business ventures with the hope of sustaining profits for the founders. As evidenced by the tremendous growth of platform companies such as Uber and Airbnb, the shareholder perspective is prevalent in the access economy. Yet, since CSR has become such a huge part of corporate legitimacy, even intermediary companies need to function in a socially responsible manner. Unlike shareholder primacy, stakeholder management is grounded in ethical and integrative theories. Stakeholders include “groups and individuals who benefit from or are harmed by, and whose rights are violated or respected by, corporate actions (Freeman, 1998, p. 174).” A basic principle of the stakeholder theory stipulates that the overall goal is to reach a balanced compromise between stakeholders and the needs of the corporation (Garriga & Melé, 2004). This perspective goes against the instrumental shareholder view that organizations have a single objective, with Freeman et al. (2004) noting that stakeholder management incorporates a wide range of business objectives. Stakeholder theory suggests that companies have a social responsibility to think about the interests of everyone affected by their business practices, regardless of the possibility that profit maximization may not

be achieved. It is this perspective that prevails in modern society and should be applied to platform companies.

A Need for Platform Stakeholder Responsibility

The most successful platform companies were conceptualized by a single person and/or co-founded by a select few who hold private interests in the business (e.g. Uber Technologies, Postmates). Because of this, many aspects of the access economy are focused on capital gains that support the founding entrepreneurs rather than the needs of the larger community. That is not to say that these companies are not adding value to society, but rather to highlight the individualistic and capitalist underpinnings of platform business models. Social expectations of accountability and CSR are largely dependent on the impact that companies might have on the economy, individual communities, and greater society. It is not contested that larger companies have a larger impact, and this is true for platform companies. There is a growing discussion in the economics literature on the need for a new type of regulation, specifically developed for governing platform companies (Stewart & Stanford, 2017; Todolí-Signes, 2017). Stewart and Stanford (2017) proposed that current labor laws should be revised for clarity and possibly expanded to include independent contractors as a subcategory in definitions of employment, or establishing a set of workers' rights that may be unique to the non-employees of platform companies. Regulating the access economy will be challenging, but it is possible if given the right social conditions.

Malos et al. (2018) utilized case law developments to make the case for CSR to help improve underemployment, compensation, and benefit inequalities for platform workers in the transportation industry. They argued that CSR related to worker classifications is particularly important for “ride hailing and delivery driver industries where public safety concerns are directly implicated (p. 240).” In keeping with Carroll’s foundational framework for CSR, it is understood that compliance with government regulations is expected of all companies, but merely complying is not sufficient. Regardless of the type of business model or industry, all companies are in the business of people. Since people are the key stakeholders in any business, the collective needs of society should supersede focus on profits. After all, there are no profits to be made if there are no people to generate services or products. Businesses, even those operating as an intermediary platform, will not be sustainable without acknowledging and taking on some form of responsibility to meet the needs of those they serve, and the workers who serve them. As evidenced by collective strikes among Instacart shoppers, ongoing litigation over driver worker classifications, and the development of groups specifically aimed at protecting the interests of gig workers, it is apparent that society expects more from platform companies when it comes to CSR. When organizing the Instacart strike, Gig Workers Collective (2020) released a statement reading, in part that,

Instacart has a well-established history of exploiting its Shoppers, one that extends years back before our current crisis. Now, its mistreatment of Shoppers has stooped to an all-time low. They are profiting astronomically off of us literally risking our

lives, all while refusing to provide us with effective protection, meaningful pay, and meaningful benefits.

As can be expected of any company that faces a strike, Instacart made some minor concessions for their shoppers. Perhaps this is because thoughts on how stakeholders are treated can fuel a reciprocating relationship in which social exchanges influence perceptions of CSR, which might then explain intentions to further engage with a company (El Akremi et al., 2018). By this logic, views on stakeholder CSR in the access economy are likely to impact participants' intention to continue utilizing a particular platform company. For example, an individual who has a great customer experience with an on-demand delivery service might view that company as having a high level of customer-oriented CSR, which might then influence perceptions of other CSR categories. Such perceptions could also impact the likelihood that an individual will want to continue utilizing that platform. According to Ranjbari et al., (2018) trust, communication, and coordination are essential components for platform companies. They go on to state that "due to rather informal economic activities in the [Sharing Economy] and the absence of effective regulation in it, trust is an essential input for the system. (p. 12)." This highlights the need for platform transparency, such that stakeholders are aware of their responsibility as users of the platform, as well as being informed about hidden costs, being presented with user terms and agreements that are feasibly written for comprehension by laypersons, and fully aware of how their information is being used, sold, or tracked by evolving algorithms. Reflecting on the numerous criticisms plaguing platform companies, I have developed a

classification of platform criticisms in the economic, social, and technological dimensions of CSR. Refer to Figure 2.

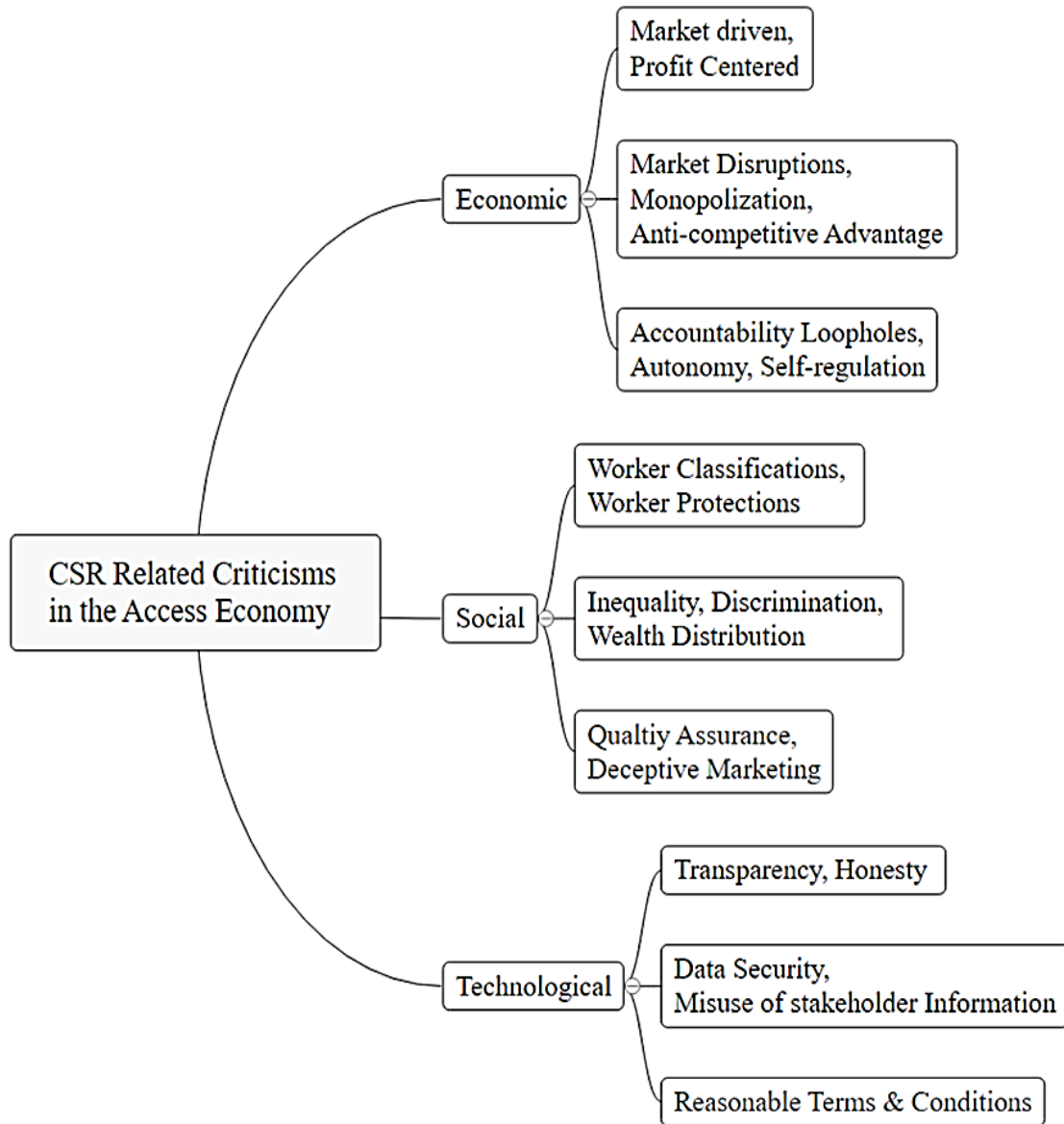


Figure 2: CSR Related Criticisms of the Access Economy

Treating the access economy as a CAS, we should expect to develop new CSR initiatives that respond to current criticisms by examining the CSR agendas of successful

B&M organizations, and adapting them to shape future CSR initiatives for the access economy. CSR in conventional organizations has become institutionalized and should be embedded in organizational policies (Bondy et al., 2012; Lim & Tsutsui, 2012; Marquis et al., 2007; Montiel & Delgado-Ceballos, 2014), which might suggest to platform leaders that there is a need to embed new and measurable forms of CSR into the operations of their platform. One recurring aspect in explaining more conventional forms of CSR is that it should be voluntary, moving beyond government-mandated actions (Hansen et al., 2011; Öberseder et al., 2014). However, the voluntary nature of CSR is questionable, and may be unlikely for platform companies due to increased social pressures. When businesses decide to make changes to their policies or operations in response to a public outcry over certain situations, I consider it a form of involuntary reactive CSR. In an ideal world, companies would be ethically proactive in their CSR initiatives, but that is rarely the case if concern for profit overshadows everything else. From a practical perspective, and in line with the literature presented thus far, it is likely that CSR within platform companies will emerge as an involuntary, reactive, and perhaps court mandated response to the public. Companies may have the freedom to choose which approach or technique will be most appropriate in implementing platform CSR, but the choice to implement CSR is reduced when stakeholders collectively and consistently demand change.

Barriers to CSR

Barriers to implementing socially responsible business practices include uncertainties, associated costs, perceived risks, conceptual complexity, operationalization,

individual mindsets and ideologies, and social comparisons (Abbasi & Nilsson, 2012; Craddock et al., 2012; Garavan et al., 2010). All of these factors impact the likelihood that a complex system with moving targets will be able to successfully implement CSR. Uncertainty over the best way to approach the problem, along with confusion over specific business practices that might impact perceptions of what it means to be a socially responsible organization, impedes the development process. Abbasi and Nilsson (2012) found "...that while corporate social responsibility and environmental concerns are regarded as very important ..., the issue of cost is still predominant (p. 525)." Despite the possibility of long-term benefits, concern over the initial costs are viewed as a top reason for companies not to engage in more socially responsible behaviors. Traditional B&M companies still make an effort to establish some form of CSR, whether it be through T&D, fostering a learning environment for sustainability, or merely promoting their stance on certain ethical issues. Perhaps this is due to labor laws and regulations that guide these companies in how they approach CSR. Yet, platform companies are not obligated to help develop workers (Kost et al., 2019), and this lack of intraorganizational career development is problematic with regard to perceptions of stakeholder CSR.

Humans are bound by social and philosophical notions of morality and ethics, but profit-oriented companies are not. Realistically, it may not be financially beneficial for some companies to implement certain types of CSR and even negative publicity may not be incentive enough to embed human-centric ethics into business practices when the business is able to fill a social demand. However, the agents of a CAS can change its organizational structure and vice versa (Jayanti, 2011). This means that people can

collectively work together to force change based on ethical viewpoints. In uncertain situations, humans generally look to others and this type of social influence or social proofing could help determine what is expected of access economy companies (Wooten & Reed II, 1998). By acknowledging the initial purpose of many platform companies, and yet still recognizing the dichotomy between people-oriented and profit-oriented business practices, it stands to reason that CSR will be manifested in one way or another.

Measures & Methods for Assessing CSR

Researchers utilize many of the same methods for obtaining CSR data. Instruments, such as regulatory environmental impact assessments and green rating scales have been established to push for preventative measures, rather than reactive measures to environmental issues. Some researchers have taken on an observational approach by means of inter-organizational collaboration (Sharma & Kearins, 2011), with few analyzing the outcomes that emerge from changes in company policies, practices, and procedures (Thomas & Lamm, 2012). Differences in CSR outcomes have been assessed from the perspective of consumers and employees (Lee et al., 2013; Paillé et al., 2013). Several factors, including moral and economic issues, have also been examined as motivational antecedents that inform how CSR initiatives are created (Frederiksen, 2010). For anthropocentric fields such as HRD and I/O psychology, perceptions of CSR have been analyzed for interactions and influences on employee engagement and job satisfaction, value alignment, firm performance, commitment, and organizational success (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Glavas & Kelley, 2014; Hart-Mrema et al., 2017). While CSR has been

assessed according to firm size (Zhu et al., 2014), multinational status (Lim & Tsutsui, 2012; Scherer & Palazzo, 2009), and organizational performance, very few studies have examined it within virtual organizations (Korschun & Du, 2013) and no studies in HRD have discussed the controversies surrounding accountability, transparency, or social responsibility within the access economy. Since CSR aims to protect stakeholders, there is a need for more literature on how businesses can implement context specific CSR for categorized stakeholder groups. This review of the literature serves as a starting point by conceptually positioning the focus of stakeholders as the driving force for multi-level integration of CSR in the access economy.

Noting that performance-based approaches to CSR have been criticized in the HRD literature, Jang and Ardichvili (2020a) identified four emerging areas that link CSR and HR functions in the existing literature. These include leadership development, training and education, attention to changing organizational culture, and focus on fostering a critical reflection. Each of these HRD-CSR links can be adapted for application to new types of work in complex systems. With capitalism as an underlying principle of business, it may be impractical to expect platform companies to incorporate CSR in the same capacity as highly regulated B&M companies. This is where ethical leadership comes in, and by extension HRD. Further strengthening the HRD-CSR link is the concern for ethical processes, social wellbeing, and learning through effective communication (Garavan et al., 2010). It is also accepted in the HRD literature that HRD interventions can be used to aid in facilitation and implementation of CSR practices through T&D on ethics and safety (Ardichvili, 2012; Fenwick & Bierema, 2008; Garavan et al., 2010). To summarize the

conceptual origins of CSR thus far: CSR is pragmatic, normative, and goes against classical economic theories of the firm in favor of more ethical theories that benefit society on a larger scale.

The Developmental Role of HRD

The connection between CSR and HRD is the idea that HRD has the capacity to foster, promote, and propel ethical CSR initiatives through learning and development (Ardichvili, 2013; Fenwick & Bierema, 2008; Garavan & McGuire, 2010; Hart-Mrema & Paetzal, 2018; Jang & Ardichvili, 2020b). The development aspect of HRD is a pivotal piece that appears to be missing from the access economy, specifically when trying to understand how CSR fits into the operations of such companies. Ethics and morals should guide the law and HRD would be useful in setting ethical, moral, and socially responsible standards. Governing laws are uniquely powerful in achieving broader coverage of CSR initiatives than voluntary forms of CSR (Aguilera et al., 2007), but it is still important for us to encourage voluntary and self-directed forms of ethical platform behaviors until laws are brought up to date. Becker et al. (2010) presented a strong argument against HRD prioritizing organizations' economic outcomes over utilitarian, just, and equitable outcomes for workers and community members. They argued that when "taken to the extreme, a market-driven approach to HRD appears socially *irresponsible* because it repositions employees as expendable commodities, weakening the chain for employee development...(p. 145)." Although the access economy does not classify workers as employees, the sentiment against treating workers as expendable still holds true.

The access economy is faced with the complexity of building a brand and navigating the uncharted waters of self-regulated virtual business. Given that the field of HRD aims to educate and promote organizational learning, it is uniquely equipped to help shape the evolution of intermediary companies. The field has been described as “a mechanism in shaping individual and group values and beliefs and skilling through learning-related activities to support the desired performance of [a] host system (Wang et al., 2017, p. 1175).” Drawing from this conceptualization of HRD, it is understood that development should focus on both individuals and groups within an organization or platform. Garavan et al. (2015) identified development as person and production-centered. Accordingly, development centered on production is highly relevant to platform companies in that it highlights the economic and competitive nature of companies with emphasis on meeting social and organizational needs (Garavan et al., 2015). Development is also said to be dialogical which is emergent and involves “co-participation, mutual constitution, and sensemaking (Garavan et al., 2015, p. 369),” with context and individual actors enmeshed through socially interactive development. With that being said, HRD professionals would do well to learn more about the autonomous and self-regulating nature of workers in the access economy. Private self-regulating mechanisms are helpful in reducing negative social and environmental impacts of business practices (Wearing & Lyons, 2016), but Vogel (2010) makes a strong argument that those mechanisms “cannot be regarded as a substitute for the more effective exercise of state authority at both the national and international levels (p. 69).” Similarly, Cao (2017) claims that self-regulation is not always effective and can

lead to increased risks to the health and safety of consumers. For these reasons, HRD can and should be proactive in facilitating socially responsible change.

As previously mentioned, access-based businesses may willfully or unwittingly allow backdoor discrimination and biases that can increase perceptions of inequalities (Finley, 2016; Romano, 2016). According to Waite (2013), the purpose of social sustainability is to mitigate social inequalities and prevent injustices among all people, regardless of social class. HRD professionals could help platform companies facilitate better training for independent workers. Various types of training, such as cultural acceptance or general ethics training can be implemented virtually and should be considered a viable option to increase responsibility in the access economy. Gig workers and independent contractors also need to develop soft skills in order to be successful in their roles as part of the contingent workforce (GAO, 2017), so HRD could work to find new ways to foster development at the individual level. Garavan et al. (2010) pointed out that “employee attitudes and behavior in the context of CSR/CS ⁶focuses first on the way in which the organization treats its employees, the way in which employees are developed, and the way in which CSR/CS programs are delivered and monitored (p. 599)”.

Gaps in Literature

There is a lack of literature that explores which components of CSR (economic, social, philanthropic, environmental, or technological) are present in the access economy.

⁶ CS references Corporate Sustainability, which is often involves concern for environmental sustainability and is included as part of CSR discussions

It is apparent that more research is necessary to determine the extent to which participants in the access economy perceive formal CSR as essential. It is also worth noting that as of March 2020, despite the strong emergence and widespread interest in the access economy as an area worthy of study, a keyword search of the primary HRD journals revealed the existence of very few studies that explicitly speak about the *sharing economy*, *platform economy*, *gig economy*, or *collaborative economy*. The terms *online platform* and *on-demand economy* are used in reference to the access economy, but did not yield relevant findings from the field of HRD. Despite recognition of the independent workforce in the HRD literature (Beck, 2003), only one study to date (Scully-Russ & Torracco, 2019) has been published about the place of HRD in the access economy. This is noteworthy since Beck's (2003) independent workforce theory was published nearly two decades ago. The lack of consistency regarding how such companies are referenced creates a problem when searching for scholarly work. Given the scope of the current research study, the description and content provided for understanding the access economy presents only a surface level view of what we know to be a dynamic social system with varying degrees of complexity. Much of the literature concerning the access economy can be found in online blogs, online magazines, and other non-refereed publications. Without negating the value of the information provided through such sources, there is room for more scholars to take note of the issues plaguing the access economy.

Summary

A diverse set of literature from various fields, both scholarly and practitioner focused, add to the idea that a new type of regulation should be established and applied to platform companies (Stewart & Stanford, 2017; Todolí-Signes, 2017). This literature review attempted to highlight noteworthy contributions to the conceptualization of CSR in the access economy and its relevance to the field of HRD. Therefore, it consisted of sources that provided conceptual frameworks rather than empirical evidence on the effectiveness of CSR initiatives. The review of literature supports the need for an exploratory study concerning CSR in the access economy since it has not been thoroughly examined or compared to traditional business structures in the HRD literature. In light of the various theories, arguments, and perspectives on each of these topics, the goal of this chapter was not to provide an exhaustive historical review of each concept, but rather to highlight and make sense of important contributions from past scholars. The first objective of this research is to develop a working framework to describe the access economy for relevance to HRD. This literature review serves as the first step in meeting that objective by framing the access economy as a CAS. Emphasis on categorizing platform criticisms in accordance with dimensions of CSR also contributed to meeting the second objective of identifying areas of interest for application of HRD strategies. Although a review of the literature helped meet the first objective of this study, it also confirmed the importance of the research questions regarding perceptions of accountability and CSR.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the process and rationale for selecting an appropriate research methodology. Having a background in I/O psychology, my research experience has been largely quantitative up until this point. For the sake of exploring novel research topics within the access economy, I utilized a combination of research methods. As it stands, HRD is as much about developing scholars as it is about developing individual workers, groups, organizations, and members of society. Therefore, I challenged myself at every phase of this research project.

Methodological Rationale

This study integrates foundational research methodologies by identifying pragmatically grounded themes and utilizing abductive reasoning (Gold et al., 2011; Jayanti, 2011) to understand pluralistic and complex technology-based social interactions. The access economy has not been heavily studied in the HRD literature, making it necessary to provide a descriptive assessment of CSR as a vital, but misunderstood phenomenon in the digital age. The first part of this study, as presented in Chapter II, provides a descriptive assessment of platform companies and their user base, possible approaches to platform CSR, and critical perceptions of the access economy. Since this research aims to explore aspects of CSR in the access economy from various perspectives, it was expected from the start of the project that qualitative and quantitative data would be necessary for a detailed inquiry. As such, the research was guided by an overlap between

the pragmatic and dialectical perspectives of mixed-methodology research. The research design is somewhat pragmatic because the methodological choice to obtain quantitative and qualitative data concurrently, was influenced by the practical demands of the research timeline, as well as the belief that the access economy as a social phenomenon, is more practical than theoretical. I also accept the dialectical perspective as a paradigm in this research because there was a pre-existing emphasis on the axiological beliefs of morality, ethics, and the necessary inclusion of social values within the research design.

Pragmatic Epistemology

As pointed out by Jayanti (2011) pragmatism and complexity science are still emerging in HRD which might make it difficult for HRD scholars to judge the quality of the research, but in many cases it may be fundamentally necessary. Korte and Mercurio (2017) made the case for pragmatism as a philosophical underpinning of HRD, stating that it “focuses on the practical consequences of what we think and do” and an emphasis of this philosophical stance “is on what we do based on our beliefs (p.61).” In HRD, common areas of interests for pragmatists revolve around realistic outcomes based on human actions, “... the primacy of community (the social context), and the experiential grounding of problem solving through inquiry (Korte & Mercurio, 2017, p. 62).” The HRD-CSR link in the access economy should thrive by understanding the practical implications, so it makes sense to utilize a guided, yet exploratory inquiry for assessing perceptions of socially responsible behaviors associated with platform companies. Furthermore, an underlying assumption of the dialectical perspective of pragmatism is that mixed-methods

research is stronger than purely quantitative or qualitative research, and if done properly, a fuller understanding of certain phenomena can be gained (Rocco et al., 2003a, b).

Abductive Reasoning in Exploratory Research

According to Stebbins (2001), it is appropriate for researchers to conduct exploratory research if “they have little or no scientific knowledge about the group, process, activity, or situation they want to examine but nevertheless have reason to believe it contains elements worth discovering (p. 5),” and that is the case for this study. For exploratory research to be effective in promoting understanding, researchers must remain flexible in looking for and analyzing data (Stebbins, 2001). Empirical exploratory research involves conducting exploratory data analysis (EDA), which deviates from the typically rigid standards of developing a set of hypotheses as the basis of a research project. This is because the goal of exploratory research is to learn the data and attempt to understand if/how the constructs interact with each other, and then see what new questions emerge. When conducting exploratory research, a priori hypotheses may or may not be developed as the research progresses.

It is generally accepted that quantitative analysis is derived from deductive reasoning, and to a certain extent this study does make some logical inferences about what can be expected between certain variable interactions. However, the complex nature of the topic at hand creates the need for an abductive approach to understanding platform companies and the HRD-CSR link as an evolving and complex phenomenon. The abductive approach allows for a descriptive assessment of correlations between key

variables without limiting the mind to a narrow view of what may be expected. Gold et al. (2011) noted that abductive reasoning “is a key, but unrecognized process in HRD work and practice (p. 231)”. They also presented the idea of “hypotheses on probation” which refers to developing plausible hypotheses that “can be substituted if more promising ones can be found (p. 231)” as the research progresses. This aligns with the exploratory nature of the current research, and allows for the discover of new insights within the data. The abductive approach also allows for more in-depth statistical analysis because as the data is visualized and themes emerge, researchers are able to refine their research questions or even develop new ones (Gold et al., 2011; Soltoff, 2020). As such, initial exploratory quantitative tests in this study are conducted with the goal of understanding the data rather than merely accepting or rejecting an implied null hypothesis. Although it is logical to believe that there will be a statistical relationship between observed and expected CSR, it is not possible to know which construct will precede the other. Does one observe CSR based on what they expect, or does one expect CSR based on what they observe is already present? Are expectations of CSR impacted by ethical ideology or do observations of CSR influence ethical ideology? These types of predictive questions are beyond the scope of the current study, and although they are important considerations, attempting to answer them at this point would place unnecessary limitations on what we can learn from the data.

Thematically Grounded

The thematic exploration of qualitative data employed in this study closely aligns with core principles of grounded theory. Yet, the unstructured nature of the survey

instrument lends itself more comfortably to what I refer to as a thematic analysis with aspects of grounded theory embedded in the development and analytical approach. Traditionally, grounded theory has been viewed as a qualitative research method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978); however, researchers have started expanding ideas about grounded theory as one aspect of a research methodology rather than a concrete research method. Several researchers have noted the utility and variations of grounded theory in mixed methods research (Castro et al., 2010; Creamer, 2018). Johnson et al. (2010) conceptualized the use of grounded theory in equal-status mixed-methods research (i.e. equal emphasis on quantitative and qualitative data) as relying on a metaparadigm of dialectical pluralism in exploration and inclusion of multiple realities surrounding a phenomenon. In this sense, one must carefully consider the viewpoints of multiple ontological and epistemological perspectives. Utilizing aspects of grounded theory in mixed-methods research is viewed as a fusion between pragmatism and dialectical pluralism as a way to develop practical outcomes that contribute to social justice (Guetterman et al., 2019; Johnson, 2017), which is a value laden expectation of this study. Timonen et al. (2018) noted that “the most common outcome from a GT study is greater conceptual clarity, or a conceptual framework, which is short of theory in the sense of a comprehensive system of ideas intended to fully explain and predict something (p. 4).” They further noted that,

... it is important to acknowledge that while the application of the GT method *can* result in a theory, in many cases, it amounts to a new or better conceptualization or a framework that links concepts but falls short of a fully elaborated theory that

covers all aspects, stages, consequences, and likelihood of a process or a phenomenon. In our view, claiming that application of the GT method always can, and must, result in theory is incorrect, misleading, and unnecessarily intimidating. (p. 4)

As such, the thematically grounded analysis involved in this research may be viewed as a modified form of grounded theory by some, but the initial intention of conducting this study was not to build theory, rather the intention was to utilize what is already known to make sense of the HRD-CSR link in the context of the access economy, and to remain open to emerging, and somewhat unexpected themes or concepts. For this reason, I refrain from categorizing this research as a purely grounded theory study and instead ascribe the methodological description as thematically grounded. As explained by Hamlin (2015), it is possible to approach research with a grounded theory mindset without strictly following it as a methodology for the study. He goes on to explain that purists may be somewhat put off by even mentioning grounded theory when the selected methodological procedures do not align to the more traditional constant comparative approach to data analysis. For this reason, he developed a simplified philosophical framework to help others understand the nuances of multi-method research. Refer to Figure 3 to view the framework with notation on where the current study aligns.

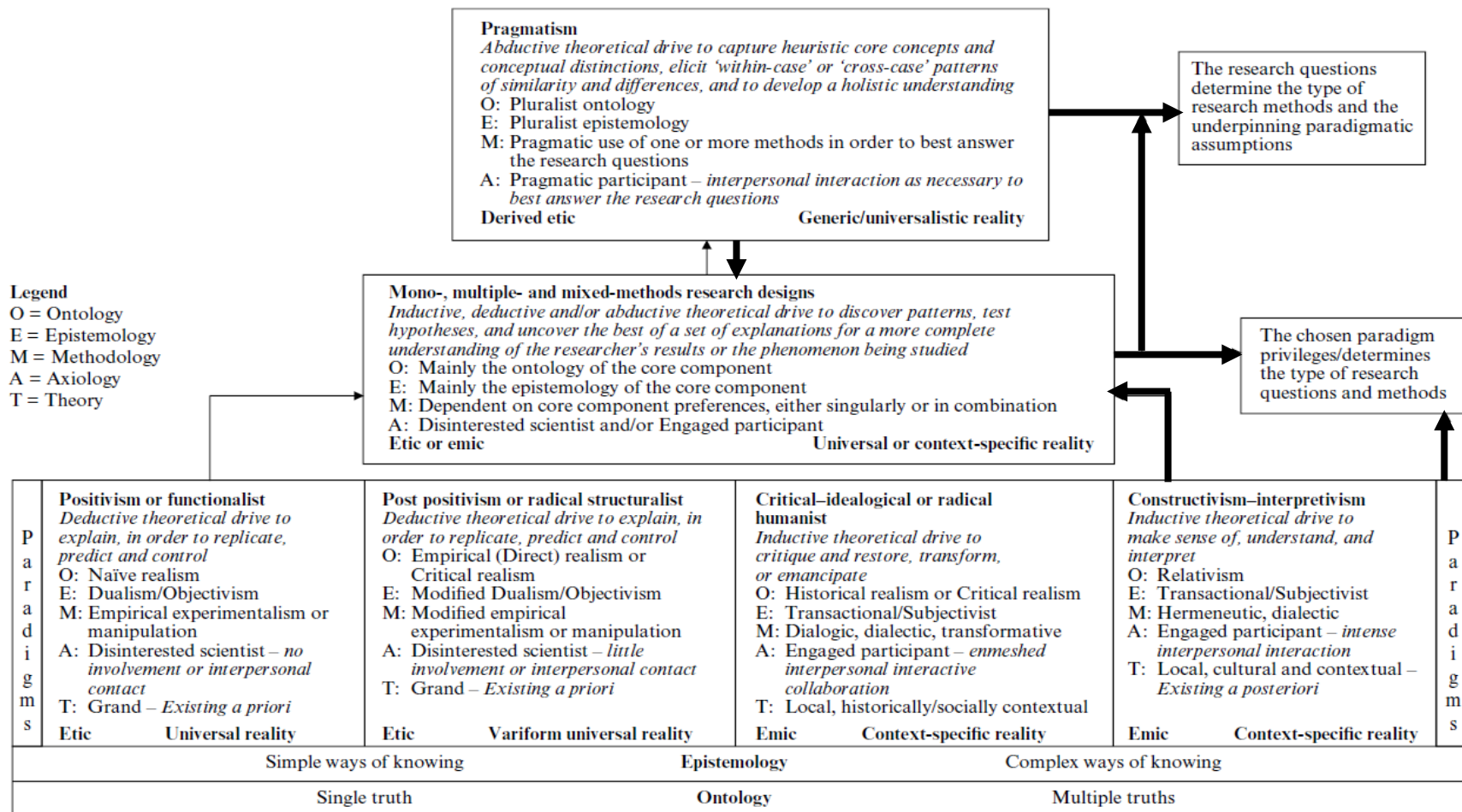


Figure 3: Simplified Philosophical Framework of Research in HRD

Source © R.G. Hamlin (2015)

Research Design

This study utilized an exploratory mixed-model design and has been categorized as inductive without a priori hypotheses (Rocco et al., 2003b; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). However, the overall research design was abductive, incorporating the meanings and interpretations that social agents ascribe to their motives and actions, which are often excluded when research designs align with a purely inductive or deductive research strategy (Blaikie, 2007). This bottom-up approach involves looking at individual situations as the basis for deriving theories of concepts. This contrasts with the more conventional top-down method of testing ideas or concepts to determine the extent to which they align with reality (Blaikie, 2007).

A concurrent parallel mixed-methods online survey was utilized. Unlike a sequential design, a concurrent parallel design implies that quantitative and qualitative data is obtained at the same time (Creswell, 2014). The purpose for adopting a parallel mixed-model research design aligns with complementary and expansive research purposes as proposed by Greene et al. (1989). This research design is complementary because it seeks to measure overlapping, yet different facets of possible CSR within the access economy and it is expansive because it aims to provide breadth and range that allow for subtle nuances in perceptions of CSR and values to be revealed. The conceptual framework⁷ for

⁷ Utilizing this design process allows for qualitative data to be transformed into numeric *data* (Castro & Coe, 2007; Castro et al., 2010) that could then be used to explore statistical relationships between the thematic variables and existing quantitative data.

integrative mixed-methods proposed by Castro et al., (2010) was taken as a starting point and adapted for this study. The basic design progresses through six stages: 1) parallelism in study development, 2) evidence gathering, 3) processing/conversion, 4) data analyses, 5) interpretation, and 6) integration. Refer to Figure 4.

	Qualitative Textual Data					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Stages ⇌	Design	Collection	Conversion	Analysis	Interpretation	Integration
	Open-Ended Focus Questions	Type Written Responses to Surveys	Thematic Categories; Thematic Variables	Content Analyses; Thematic Categorical Coding; Association Matrices	Analysis of Quotations, Storylines	Integrative Analyses, Drawing Conclusions
	Exploratory Ranks and Scale Items	Selected Choice Responses to Surveys	Scale Coding ↓ Codes; Scales	Item Analysis ↑	Recontextualizing ↓ Model Interpretation	
	Quantitative Numeric Data					

Figure 4: Integrative Mixed-methods Research Approach

Descriptive Quantitative & Qualitative Element

The quantitative element of this research aimed to explore associations between perceptions of accountability and CSR. This element of research was expected to provide a numerically descriptive assessment of the data. Although quantitative EDA will be informative, there are several challenges associated with regulating the access economy that cannot be addressed through numerical analyses. Such challenges include the subjective emotions and attitudes that influence social interactions. There’s a reasonable expectation that emotional or attitudinal subjectivity might have an underlying impact on

the evolution of ethical platform operations. Perhaps it is easy for external stakeholders to expect companies to be socially responsible or maintain some form of accountability for safety, ethics, or environmental efforts. Yet, the capitalist and entrepreneurial aspects of platform companies inherently promote profits over people. Thus, it is suitable to acquire qualitative responses to explore pervasive thoughts on the type of responsibility individuals might expect from companies in the access economy. Likewise, knowing that the very nature of platform companies appear beneficial to initial founders or owners presents an opportunity to learn more about how individuals would view platform responsibility if they, themselves, were the owner of such a company. I fully expect this element of qualitative data to provide a wide range of responses and therefore the qualitative element of this research aims to assess underlying thoughts about platform responsibility by exploring the likelihood that individuals would assume responsibility as platform owners.

Integrated Element

The goal of integrating data from the quantitative and qualitative elements of this study is to understand perceptions of CSR in the access economy through a more holistic view of stakeholders. By using a parallel mixed-methods survey design, findings from the quantitative and qualitative elements will be integrated to assess the extent to which quantitative findings align with prominent themes uncovered in the qualitative data. Integration of the data is expected to provide the basis for an enhanced interpretation and understanding of what CSR means in terms of the access economy, as well as make sense of accountability.

Survey Instrument

The survey instrument included open and closed ended questions. The closed ended questions provided quantitative data for comparison and integration with the open-ended qualitative data. The survey comprised of several item types, such as general demographic questions, categorical items, rank-order and point allocation items, and validated Likert-type rating scales to assess perceptions of CSR. The content of demographic and categorical items aimed to capture general information about the population. Such items asked about race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and experience with the access economy as a worker or consumer. More detailed items included questions about the number of hours worked, types of training received, and frequency of use for consumers. It should be noted that the survey was not limited to those working in the access economy, and remained open to all people who met the inclusion criteria of being 18 years or older. The survey was designed such that open-ended responses could provide thick data with the opportunity for participants to provide rich responses. According to Fusch and Ness (2015), “the easiest way to differentiate between rich and thick data is to think of *rich as quality* and *thick as quantity*. Thick data is a lot of data; rich data is many layered, intricate, detailed, nuanced, and more (p. 1409).”

Yes, No, & Open-Ended Items

There were a total of nine items that allowed respondents to provide qualitative textual data. The first three open-ended items appeared as follow up questions to gather more detailed information about selected choices from categorical items. These questions

were often phrased as “you selected... please explain”. The second set of open-ended questions were scenario based such that respondents were asked to provide information about what they would do if they owned a platform company or what they would expect from such a company if they were categorized as independent contractors or hosts to that company. These items provided substantial information about perspectives on the purpose and expectations that stakeholders have for platform companies. The scenario based items were open-ended, yet worded such that responses would be guided. The wording also allowed for closed-ended ‘yes/no’ responses while probing for more detailed information about why or why not. The last three open-ended items aimed to gather detailed information about stakeholders’ opinions and suggestions on ways to improve the access economy and its workforce, with the hopes of revealing areas in need of HRD.

Table 2

Open-ended Survey Items

1. If a company operates online & does not come into contact with its workers, is it responsible for training workers, independent contractors, or hosts on safety and ethics? You selected "It Depends." Please explain.
 2. If a company operates online & does not come into contact with its workers, is it responsible for training workers, independent contractors, or hosts on safety and ethics? You selected YES. What kinds of training do you think should be implemented?
 3. If you owned an intermediary platform or app-based company (ride-sharing, on-demand delivery, online retail), would you assume the responsibility of ensuring the mental stability of contracted workers or hosts? Please explain.
 4. If you owned an intermediary platform or app-based company, who would be responsible for establishing and ensuring that your company is environmentally friendly? Please explain.
-

-
5. If you were working as an independent contractor (not an employee) or host, for an online or app-based company, what benefits would you expect the company to provide?
 6. How do you suggest intermediary platform and app-based companies prepare and train contracted workers?
 7. How can online companies improve their workforce?
 8. What type of laws, policies, or trainings do you think would help improve the access economy?
-

Validated Measures of CSR

To assess various dimensions of CSR, scales from multiple fields were used to provide a more exhaustive approach to understanding CSR in platform companies. Selection criteria for previously validated scales required a reliability level of $\alpha = .70$ or higher. The Corporate Stakeholder Responsibility Scale (CStR), developed and validated by El Akremi et al. (2018), was used to assess perceptions of various types of stakeholder CSR. The scale was validated through seven studies and the researchers established CStR as a multidimensional superordinate construct with higher-order implications. Through repeated validation studies, they provided a stakeholder-based conceptualization of CSR with the proposition that the higher-order CStR scale or any of its individual subordinate scales might be adaptable to measure stakeholders' perception of CSR. It was stated that "... scholars might apply the CStR scale to determine how consumers perceive and react to CSR or how CSR policies affect relationships between companies and their customers (El Akremi et al., p. 649)." For the purpose of this study, four subordinate scales of the CStR were selected and the wording of each item was moderately adapted for context regarding the access economy. The selected subscales are: 1) Natural environment—

oriented CSR, 2) Employee-oriented CSR, 3) Supplier-oriented CSR, and 4) Customer-oriented CSR. The subordinate shareholder and community-oriented scales were not utilized in this study because the content of the items were thought to be limited or possibly absent forms of CSR behaviors in platform companies.

In order to learn what types of CSR may be present in the access economy, it was important to adapt scale items accordingly. Moderately rewording the items on the selected CStR dimensions was done as a way to capture stakeholder perceptions on CSR as something that currently exists within platform companies, rather than something that should exist. In this way, the CStR scale aimed to measure opinions on platform CSR by having respondents reflect on their experience with, or understanding of, platform companies and then provide a realistic, present-tense assessment on what socially responsible behaviors they think such companies currently do. To gain a more thorough understanding of CSR within the context of platform companies, another behavioral CSR scale was also included. The 8-item behavioral dimension of the Psychosocial CSR scale (D'Aprile & Talò, 2014) was adapted such that it would gauge the moral compass of participants' perceptions of CSR from the context of *what should be* done versus *what is* being done in platform companies. This adaptation alters the meaning of the scale such that it represents idealistic perceptions of actions that should be undertaken by platform companies in a socially constructed access economy. D'Aprile and Talò (2014) took seven of the eight items directly from the CSR scale created by Turker (2009). The overall psychosocial CSR scale was composed of subscales for Behavioral PCSR, Cognitive PCSR, and Affective PCSR; however, only the action-oriented behavioral P-CSR scale

was selected for this study. This was done as a way to compliment the selected subordinate CStR scales while remaining consistent in the assessment of perceptions on action-oriented forms of CSR.

Attitudes & Ethical Perspectives

As one of the foundational themes of this study, it was also important to consider how ethical viewpoints might influence or interact with perceptions of CSR. Since many platform companies obtain personally identifiable information and serve as an intermediary connection between agents (workers and consumers), it makes sense to assess how stakeholders' trust would relate to, or influence their perceptions of CSR. Rather than focus on trust as a positive construct, Riquelme and Román (2014), assessed *consumers' ethically-based distrust of online retailers (CEDOR)* along with ethical ideology and risk aversion. "Distrust is not just the absence of trust, but the active expectation that the other party will behave in a way that violates one's welfare and security (Riquelme & Román, 2014, p. 136)." The 4-item CEDOR scale, 3-item Ethical Relativism, and 3-item Ethical Idealism scales were utilized to explore the relationships and antecedents of perceived CSR in platform companies. Although Riquelme and Román (2014) utilized a 4-item Risk-Aversion scale in their study, the 4-item Risk-Aversion scale used in this study was taken from Sharma (2010) to better capture potential risks that might influence decisions to conduct business in the access economy (e.g. I tend to avoid talking to strangers).

Exploratory & Rank-Order Items

In order for HRD to find its place in the access economy, we must seek understanding about who should be held accountable for business interactions and outcomes. Two survey items were included to assess stakeholders' perceptions of accountability. Respondents were asked to rank four stakeholder groups (Company, Customers, Workers, & Government Entities) from *1=Most Accountable* to *4=Least Accountable*. This rank-order item included a functional response validation, which forced respondents to order each stakeholder group as having some accountability before they could move to the next survey item. As a follow up, respondents were given the opportunity to utilize a point-allocation system to provide more information on their perceptions of the level of accountability for each stakeholder group. This item allowed participants the option to allocate between 0-100 points across the 4 stakeholder groups. Total points for the item could not fall below or exceed 100 points. For example, if respondents believed one group was 100% accountable, they were able to allocate 100 points to that group and zero points to the remaining groups. Two more rank-order items were used to assess possible influences of social proofing and preferences for factors (e.g. quality of service) that might influence stakeholder decisions to utilize services or products from platform companies. In this study, social proofs include various types of feedback from people in certain classes or peer-groups that are explicitly shown to consumers or workers as a way to influence their participation in the access economy. Social proofs could include celebrity endorsements, online reviews, or other types of social feedback disseminated as part of a company's marketing strategies. Respondents were asked to rank these items from *1=Most Important* to *5=Least Important*. See Table 3 for definitions of key variables.

Table 3

Variable Definitions

Corporate Stakeholder Responsibility (CStR) – Intended to measure perceptions on the current existence or presence of 4 types of stakeholder CSR that are likely to be associated with platform companies (El Akremi et al., 2018).

Psychosocial Behavioral CSR – positive idealistic expectations for platform companies to act in a socially responsible manner; and more specifically, opinions on whether or not platform companies should implement, maintain, or promote certain action-oriented behaviors (D'Aprile & Talò, 2014).

Distrust (CEDOR) – subjective belief or expectation that platform companies are largely motivated by their own self-interest, rather than the best interests of consumers, workers, or hosts; and the belief that platform companies will take advantage of their space in a virtual environment and/or their platform users by employing deceptive tactics that promote false beliefs about the nature of the products or services that are actually offered by the platform (Riquelme & Román, 2014).

Ethical Idealism – comprised of more altruistic beliefs about honesty, integrity, and the ways in which social truths should be morally dealt with. “Less idealistic individuals assume a more pragmatic ethical approach and believe that ethical acts will sometimes produce negative outcomes for some and benefits for others (Riquelme & Román, 2014, p. 143).”

Ethical Relativism – refers to the extent to which individuals may reject a socially constructed moral truth. Relativist belief systems tend to align with the notion that there are situations in which moral or ethical values may shift, allowing exceptions to always exist to moral principles. This moral philosophy is based on skepticism and a general belief that moral actions are dependent on context and the people involved (Riquelme & Román, 2014).

Risk Aversion – propensity to avoid behaviors or situations that might be perceived as having an adverse outcome (Riquelme & Román, 2014; Sharma, 2010).

Perceptions of Accountability – individuals’ ranked perceptions of accountability across stakeholders when forced to make prioritize one accountability in a hierarchical manner; individuals’ purely subjective allocation of responsibility across platform stakeholders with the freedom to allocate all, some, or none of the responsibility to one or more of the four stakeholder types.

Data Collection Procedure

First, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of Minnesota. Multiple forms of data were collected, drawing on all possibilities (Creswell, 2014). The mixed-methods survey was designed and implemented through Qualtrics, an online survey platform operated by the Office of Measurement at the University of Minnesota. To ensure the confidentiality of participants, no identifying information was requested. The online survey link was emailed to students at the University of Minnesota and posted on social websites such as facebook and LinkedIn using a recruitment script. Participants were provided with a short description of the study and a link to the survey. Upon clicking on the link, participants were prompted to read over the informed consent document, which included another short description of the study and reiterated the age requirement. Refer to appendices B and C to review the informed consent and recruitment scripts. After submitting the survey, participants were directed to a screen thanking them for their participation in the study. Participants were not provided any compensation for taking part in this study. However, one recruitment strategy involved posting the survey instrument on several survey exchange websites where researchers complete surveys in exchange for other researchers to complete their survey. I used several websites that promoted this method of recruitment, including SurveySwap⁸, Prolific⁹, and research exchange facebook groups.

⁸ SurveySwap.com (2018)

⁹ Prolific.co (2018)

This study assessed perceptions of adults ages 18 and older who are familiar with, and/or have participated in the access economy as a consumer, contingent worker, designated employee, or owner. The targeted population was recruited through email invites, social media, and word of mouth. Participation was voluntary, and participants were not asked to give their name or any other identifying information. Given that participants were required to be at least 18 years old to participate, age was the only exclusion criteria in this study. This allowed for the inclusion of people of different races, gender, ethnicities, education, job status, sexual orientation, and religions. The survey was made public on March 12, 2019. After months of recruitment with only a few respondents a day, I created an account with social news aggregation site Reddit. People can view the site without registering, but in order to post content such as links or images, an account must be created. The platform utilizes subforums to organize content by topic such as news, research, food, and many other things. On two occasions, I made a post to the subreddit *r/assistance*, which provides general “assistance of all kinds to all people” so long as the requests are legal and ethical (r/Assistance, 2010). My second post on this subreddit garnered the greatest number of responses, with over 160 responses in one night and over 400 throughout the next four days. It is safe to say that the majority of respondents were obtained via reddit. My second post, made on July 16, 2019, stated the following.

Help with Dissertation Research: Need about 100 more responses for quick survey:

I posted here a few days ago and a few awesome people took my survey. However, I still need quite a few more people (18 or older) to complete the survey before I can move forward in my degree program. The survey is anonymous and takes less

than 10 minutes for most people. It is about social responsibility for online or app-based companies. Do you think those type of companies have an advantage over traditional Brick & Mortar businesses? Who do you think should be held accountable when things go wrong? Please share your thoughts by completing this short survey and feel free to share the link to others (Hart-Mrema, 2019).

Although founded in the USA, Reddit has a presence in multiple countries across the globe. It is ranked in the top 10 most popular websites for the United States and the United Kingdom, and in the top 20 most widely used sites across the globe (Alexa Internet Inc., 2020). Since the majority of participants were recruited via Reddit, it is possible that some responses may have been influenced by cultural contexts that were not assessed through items on the survey. Location and country of origin were not items included on my survey instrument; however, based on responses to my post on *r/assistance* I know that several respondents were from the United Kingdom. Refer to appendix D for a list of websites and social media groups where the survey was posted.

Instrument Adaptation

At the start of data collection, participants were allowed to skip responses. Incomplete survey responses became an issue, and therefore, the survey instrument in Qualtrics was changed such that responses were required for all survey items and participants were not allowed to skip any questions. One recruitment method for obtaining data relied on reciprocity of participation, which meant that I would take another person's survey if they completed my survey instrument and vice versa. Proof of participation, in

the form of screenshots of the Thank You page, was generally accepted as a verifiable medium of exchange. However, it became clear that several people were skipping through the survey in order to take a picture of the last page without responding to the survey items. Therefore, I removed the option to skip multiple questions. The forced response function of the survey required participants to respond to all survey items, but I did not set parameters for minimum and maximum word counts. As such, respondents were allowed to move through the survey by typing any text character into the open-ended items. Based on respondent feedback, minor changes were also made during the early stages of data collection to improve functionality and clarity of some survey items. For example, the point-allocation item had to be revised for functionality. Likewise, a response item stating “Have never worked for an online or app-based company” was added to question seven (see appendix E for the full list of survey items).

Data Analysis

During the first phase of data analysis, raw data was downloaded in Excel and imported into SPSS version 26 from the Qualtrics database. Using SPSS, quantitative data was cleaned, coded, and assessed for overall reliability and validity of the validated scale items. To achieve a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, the required sample size was 385 (Qualtrics, 2019; SurveyMonkey, 2019). Initially, there were 805 recorded responses. All responses that were not at least 50% complete were removed, which left 569 surveys for analysis. Of the 569 responses, there were a total of 441 (77.5%) completed survey responses. The remaining responses (22.5%) had a completion rate between 54%-

86%, which were retained because of the rich qualitative data provided and surveys with 54% completion meant that participants provided responses for rank order items on perceptions of accountability. To retain valuable responses, missing data on scale items were replaced using the Linear Trend at Point method in SPSS. This method replaces missing values with values predicted by regressing on values of surrounding items using the linear trend for those points. Rank-order items were coded such that new categorical items were created for extreme rankings (e.g. most important and least important). This was done using functions in Microsoft Excel. Then the numerical data were copied into SPSS and new categorical variables were created. Although Excel was used to transform text and rank-order items into feasible numerical data, SPSS was utilized for all inferential testing. To assess internal consistency of selected scales, reliability analyses were conducted for each subscale included on the survey instrument.

Textual qualitative data were also thematically coded using Microsoft Excel. Given the large quantity of text, responses were coded up until I reached a point of saturation. In this context, saturation refers to a point in which no new themes are observed from the obtained data, and there are no other options or opportunities to obtain new data which might reveal further themes. Since data collection occurred at one phase, no new data were able to be obtained. When analyzing the textual data, as I reached a point of repeated themes, without the emergence of new themes, I accepted a point of saturation and moved to analyze the next set of qualitative responses. To organize and clean the qualitative data, separate excel sheets were used for each item in two different Excel workbooks. This means that two Excel files were created with multiple sheets in each. In the first workbook,

a helper column was created in each item sheet to organize content according to the response ID. Along with the textual data, individual responses for certain demographic items (e.g. age, race, use of platform, etc.) were also included on each sheet for later reference. The second Excel workbook was utilized to assess the length of responses and gain a better understanding of the data characteristics, such as average word count. In keeping with my ascribed method of thematically grounded analysis, a constant comparative approach was used to examine qualitative data. There were over 3,100 qualitative responses, each of which were read and coded up to a point of saturation. To ensure coding reliability of emerging themes, I reviewed the qualitative data in steps. First, responses from each question were analyzed by reading through and assigning it to one or more categories. Codes were not developed prior to analysis. Instead new codes emerged as I read through the responses for each item. Several responses were assigned multiple codes. Where appropriate, a code was created for Yes/No responses, while single character or irrelevant one word responses (N/A) were assigned to a category column for exclusion. After assigning all responses, up to a point of saturation, to at least one coded category, a secondary review assessed similarities among categories to merge codes and develop more precise themes. Then the categories were assessed for similarity in meaning and condensed accordingly. Merging categories was used as a data reduction method prior to the tertiary analysis for coding responses as suitable HRD areas.

Inferential tests were conducted to assess associations between variables and differences between groups. As with most real life data sets, the assumption of normality was violated. Therefore, non-parametric statistical tests were used where appropriate.

Participant responses were used throughout the analyses to support certain themes and reinforce decisions to include certain predictor variables in the regression models.

Presentation of Findings

Following the practices associated with mixed-methods research, the findings were dissected and presented in sections according to the types of analyses used (e.g. qualitative vs. quantitative). For simplicity, the quantitative element of this research is presented in two separate sections. The first section presents a descriptive assessment of the data sample along with a descriptive report of how sample participants ranked their perception of accountability. The second quantitative section presents inferential statistics that include correlations, between-group analyses, and simple regression analyses. The third section of the findings present the qualitative analyses; and the fourth and final sections of the findings chapter presents an integrated comparative analysis of the quantitative and qualitative findings.

Methodological Limitations

Although the use of a mixed-methods research design offers several benefits, there are some limitations. The survey was designed to gather perceptions about the access economy, but did not capture in-depth accounts of peoples' personal experiences using intermediary platforms. Participants were not asked to provide any details about their actual experience utilizing access economy services, nor were they asked to give any detailed information about their individual experiences working for such companies. The survey sought to understand the thoughts surrounding operations and business practices of

platform companies in a more general sense of what is considered ethical or moral rather than emphasizing peoples' experiences within the access economy. Also, since data collection was anonymous and occurred in the form of a one-time survey response from participants, I was not able to ask more probing questions to the limited respondents who went beyond answering the initial qualitative questions and provided more rich data. The overall dataset provided thick data, but the level of richness usually associated with purely qualitative studies was not fully obtained. Furthermore, the length of the survey led to an increased attrition rate with the quality of some responses diminishing toward the end of the survey. As with any self-report measure, there is a possibility of self-serving bias having some influence on responses to certain items, particularly pertaining to ethical ideology.

Methodological Recap

This chapter provided a detailed account of the chosen methodology. As a mixed-methods study, this research used a self-ascribed methodology that entails thematically and theoretically grounded approaches to analyzing both, qualitative and quantitative data for the purpose of producing pragmatically useful results. The intention of this research was not to develop theory and therefore, the selected methodology merely draws from grounded theory, taking and utilizing specific aspects as necessary. To be clear, this study does not holistically ascribe to grounded theory. A single online survey instrument was administered and adapted as necessary throughout the data collection process. Microsoft Excel and IBM-SPSS 26 were used as the primary software programs for data analyses.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

As mixed-methods study, a great deal of data was obtained for analysis. The breadth of data that I received far exceeded my expectations, and respondent feedback provided a great level of information regarding how CSR can be conceptualized in the access economy. In order to present the findings in a concise, yet cohesive manner, this chapter is broken into four sections. Section I presents the sample characteristics and cross tabulations to show associations between secondary ranked variables (i.e. social proofing). Section II presents findings from the quantitative element of data analysis, which include descriptive statistics, correlations, and differences between groups. Section III presents the qualitative element with thematic analysis, and Section IV presents the integrated findings.

Section I: Sample Characteristics

This section presents a holistic and numerically descriptive assessment of the population sample and data characteristics. Platform participation, preferences for certain types of service characteristics (e.g. speed vs. quality), and propensity toward social proofing are presented in this section. To gain a better understanding of the motivations and attitudes of the sample population, cross-tabulation associations are presented according to certain demographic items.

Population Demographics

The total sample consisted of N=569 usable responses, although not all participants provided written responses. The majority of respondents identified their race as White

(66%), with less than 30% self-identifying as a race associated with socially constructed classes of American minorities. The sample was also largely female (74%), with less than a quarter of respondents identifying as male, and approximately 4% identifying as other. The age breakdown of respondents was also skewed with approximately 71% of respondents being younger than 35 years of age. Demographics for the entire sample can be viewed in Table 4, including a breakdown of the sample population by race, gender-identity, age range, and sexual orientation.

Table 4

Population Demographics

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Race	Black, African, or African American	45	7.9
	Latino or Hispanic	20	3.5
	Asian	67	11.8
	Caucasian	377	66.3
	Mixed or Biracial	29	5.1
	Other	21	3.7
	Prefer not to respond	10	1.8
Gender Identity	Male	125	22.0
	Female	421	74.0
	Trans Male	4	0.7
	Non-Binary/ Gender Fluid	14	2.5
	Prefer not to respond	5	0.9
Age Range	18-24 years	181	31.8
	25-34 years	221	38.8
	35-44 years	106	18.6
	45-54 years	45	7.9
	55 or older	16	2.8
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual or straight	424	74.6
	Homosexual; Gay or Lesbian	19	3.3
	Bisexual	82	14.4
	Pansexual	27	4.8
	Prefer not to respond	16*	2.8

*One person skipped the item about sexual Orientation, and their lack of response was added to the “prefer not to respond” sample, N=569

Demographic items concerning general employment status were placed as the end of the questionnaire due to concerns about survey attrition, which is believed to have had an impact on the response rate to these items. Of the 440 responses received for these items, 70.9% (N=312) reported being employed and 29.1% (N=128), reported being unemployed at the time of the survey. Out of the 312 responses for employed participants, 66% (N=206) reported working full time at 32 hour or more each week, although it was not specified whether or not their employment was associated with the access economy. Approximately 30% (N=95) of employed participants reported working part time, with 3.5% (N=11) of employed participants choosing not to disclose that information.

Frequency of Platform Participation

A large portion of the sample (84.2%) reported participating in the access economy at least a few times a year or more *as a consumer*, but less than 10% of the total number of respondents reported actually *having worked for a ride-sharing or on-demand delivery service*. Of the relatively small sample of people who did report working in the access economy (N=53), approximately 87% (N=46) reported that they received some form of training before working. Orientation and general onboarding appeared to be the most frequent types of training received. Refer to Tables 5 and 6 respectively, for a breakdown of participation frequency, hours worked, reported access economy industry, and associated trainings.

Table 5

Participation Frequency

<u>Consumer Participation</u>			<u>Hours Spent Working in Access Economy</u>		
	N	Percent		N	Percent
Multiple per week	85	14.9	10 or less per week	22	3.9
Multiple per month	184	32.3	10-20 per week (or Seasonal)	21	3.7
A few times a year	210	36.9	21-31 per week	6	1.1
Never	90	15.8	Full time (32 or more)	3	.5
			Never (Ride-sharing, delivery) ¹⁰	510	90.7
Total	569	100.0		562	100.0

Table 6

Platform Industry & Associated Training

<u>Platform Industry</u>			<u>Type of Training Received</u>		
	N	Percent		N	Percent
Ride or Car Sharing	24	45.3	Orientation or onboarding	29	63.0
Home Sharing	5	9.4	Achieving service performance	7	15.2
On-demand delivery	16	30.2	Ethics & Safety	6	13.0
Other	8	15.1	Other	4	8.7
Total	53	100.0	Total	46	100.0

Preference for Social Proofing

Table 7 and 8 present a breakdown of ranked preferences for social influence and types of service qualities. Celebrity endorsements were revealed to be of the least importance in respondents' decision to buy from or work for an app-based or online platform company. Online reviews and company reputation were shown to be the most

¹⁰ Response item stating "Have never worked for an online or app-based company" was added after the survey was published (see appendix E for the full list of survey items).

important consideration. Access to, and usefulness of products or services were ranked as both, the most and least important considerations for utilizing the access economy, which implies that there are some underlying individual characteristics that impact preferences for service characteristics.

Table 7

Propensity Toward Types of Social Proofing

	Most		2 nd		3 rd		Least	
	Important		Important		Important		Important	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	Percent	
Online Reviews	193	33.9	154	27.1	116	20.4	106	18.6
Celeb. Endorsement	153	26.9	53	9.3	65	11.4	298	52.4
Likes/Mentions	50	8.8	186	32.7	279	49	54	9.5
Company Reputation	173	30.4	176	30.9	109	19.2	111	19.5

Table 8

Ranked Preference for Product or Service Characteristics

	Most		2 nd		3 rd		4 th		Least	
	Important		Important		Important		Important		Important	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Access	138	24.3	97	17	83	14.6	100	17.6	151	26.5
Speed	65	11.4	131	23	107	18.8	156	27.4	110	19.3
Affordability	121	21.3	98	17.2	156	27.4	104	18.3	90	15.8
Quality	108	19	150	26.4	115	20.2	112	19.7	84	14.8
Usefulness	137	24.1	93	16.3	108	19	97	17	134	23.6

Rationale for Nonparametric Tests

Since data for all variables violated assumptions of normality with perceptions of accountability also exhibiting a nonlinear association with some constructs, the

nonparametric Spearman's Rho rank-order correlation was used to assess the strength of observed associations among CSR variables (Adams & Lawrence, 2018). While all linear associations are monotonic, not all monotonic relationships are linear; and therefore, it was more appropriate to err on the side of caution and utilize nonparametric inferential tests. Unlike a linear relationship, purely monotonic associations can occur even when the variables are not moving at a constant rate (Laerd Statistics, 2018; Minitab Express Support, 2019). As is the case with the data sample in this study, monotonic relationships occur when the associations between variables tend to move in the same relative direction without a constant rate or linear trend (Laerd Statistics, 2018; Minitab Express Support, 2019). A significant positive monotonic relationship implies that as perceptions of one variable increase from left to right, the perceptions of the other related variables tend to increase from the bottom of a curve to the top.

Section II: Exploratory Inferential Analyses

This section presents findings from quantitative analysis. As is customary with descriptive studies of this type, a-priori hypotheses were not developed; however, inferential testing does have implied null hypotheses. Logical steps for quantitative analyses include assessing variable types, cleaning data, running descriptive statistics, and frequencies to understand the sample population (provided in Chapter IV, Section I), deciding on appropriate statistical tests for the sample, and determining the presence of significance to either accept or reject an implied null hypothesis. The descriptive quantitative element of this study seeks to empirically explore associations between ethical

ideology, expected CSR, observed CStR, and perceptions of platform accountability. As such, variable associations and differences between groups are presented.

Perceptions on Accountability

When asked to rank perceptions on accountability, nearly half of the respondents (N=261, 46%) ranked platform companies as most accountable for ensuring ethical and socially responsible practices. Coming in as a close second, 41.1% of respondents ranked independent workers as the second most accountable party. Customers were ranked as least accountable by the highest percentage (N=221, 39%) of respondents.

Table 9

Ranked Perceptions of Accountability

Valid Percent	Most Accountable		2 nd Accountable		3 rd Accountable		Least Accountable	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
	Workers	73	12.8	234	41.1	187	32.9	75
Customers	135	23.7	78	13.7	134	23.6	222	39
Company	261	45.9	91	16	74	13	143	25.1
Government	100	17.6	166	29.2	174	30.6	129	22.7

To further assess perception on accountability, respondents were asked to allocate points between 1-100 for which stakeholder group they viewed as most accountable for the outcomes of business operations in the access economy. Responses were manually assessed to create a new ordinal variable in which allocated points totaled fifty or more for one stakeholder type, resulting in that stakeholder group being coded as most accountable. For example, if a respondent allocated 57 points to workers, 15 points to the company, 26

to the government, and 2 points to the customers, their response in the new variable would be ordered such that workers are considered most accountable. Findings support the viewpoint of platform companies as most accountable with more than half (N=376, 66.4%) of respondents allocating the most points to that category. Also consistent with initial findings on perceptions of the least accountable party, the least amount of points were allocated to customers, which suggests that customers are viewed as having the least responsibility for business outcomes. Additionally, the point system for allocating accountability revealed a 5th option in which perceptions on accountability were tied between one or more stakeholders, indicating that there is a need for equally shared responsibility between two or more stakeholder groups. Refer to Table 10 to view percentages for points allocations for most and least accountable stakeholder groups.

Table 10

Point Allocated Perceptions of Accountability

	<u>Most Accountable</u>		<u>Least Accountable</u>	
	Frequency	Valid Percent	Frequency	Valid Percent
Workers	57	10.1	42	7.4
Customers	30	5.3	231	40.8
Company	376	66.4	1	.2
Government	27	4.8	126	22.3
Tie	76	13.4	166	29.3

N=566, System Missing 3

Ranked Accountability by Service Characteristics & Social Proofing

For simplicity, the following analyses were conducted using only categories that were ranked number one. There appears to be a significant association between preferences

for service characteristics and how respondents ranked stakeholders in the number one position for accountability ($\chi^2(12) = 94.94, \rho = .000$). Social proofing ($\chi^2(9) = 215.63, \rho = .000$) was also shown to be associated with ranked perceptions of the most accountable party. Refer to Tables 11-12.

Table 11

Service Characteristics Most Accountable Crosstabulation*

	Workers	Customers	Company	Government	Total
Access	18	45	47	28	138
Speed	6	36	10	13	65
Affordability	20	10	78	13	121
Quality	13	10	68	17	108
Usefulness	16	34	58	29	137
Total	73	135	261	100	569

Table 12

*Most Important Social Influence * Most Accountable Crosstabulation*

	Workers	Customers	Company	Government	Total
Reviews	31	16	118	28	193
Celeb Endorsements	14	85	14	40	153
Likes/Mentions	6	24	10	10	50
Company Reputation	22	10	119	22	173
Total	73	135	261	100	569

By visually inspecting the bar charts in Figure 5, it appears that online reviews, company reputation, affordability, quality, and usefulness of products or services might be indicative of whether or not people consider platform companies as most accountable. The

majority of people who ranked celebrity endorsements, social media likes or mentions, and speed of service as most important tend to also allocate more responsibility to consumers.

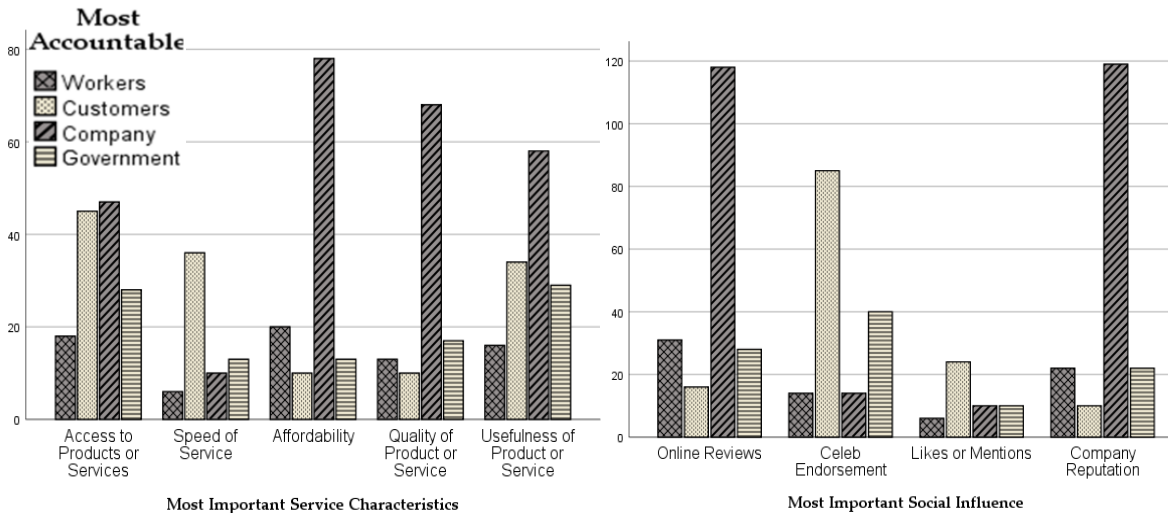


Figure 5: Ranked Accountability by Service Characteristics & Social Proofs

Perceptions of Accountability Based on Demographics

The results of the chi-square tests of independence determined that there is not a statistically significant association between ranked perceptions of accountability¹¹ and gender identity $\chi^2(9) = 12.58, p = .183$. However, there was a significant relationship between perceptions of accountability and age range ($\chi^2(12) = 22.17, p = .036$), indicating that age is related to which stakeholder group is perceived as most accountable. A pattern emerged from the ranked and point allocated responses. The company was ranked as most accountable by the majority of people in all age groups. Independent workers were ranked as second most accountable for the majority of people in all age groups, except those in the

¹¹ Ranked perceptions of the “most accountable” stakeholder group

18-24 year age range. That age group had the majority of people place government entities in the second spot for accountability. A visual display of accountability ranked by age can be viewed in Figure 6.

More specific analyses showed a significant association between age and how respondents ranked platform companies ($\chi^2(12) = 30.18, \rho = .003$) and government entities ($\chi^2(12) = 23.48, \rho = .024$), but there appears to be no significant association between age and how participants ranked accountability for workers and customers (see Tables 13-14). Similarly, the Chi-square results for ranked perceptions of accountability were not associated with working in the access economy ($\rho > .05$). Frequency of participation in the access economy also had an insignificant Chi-Square coefficient. This implies participation in the access economy as a consumer or worker, has no bearing on how people allocate accountability across the four stakeholder groups identified in this study.

Table 13

Chi-Square: Ranked Accountability by Age

	<u>Company</u>		<u>Workers</u>		<u>Customers</u>		<u>Government</u>	
	Value	Sig	Value	Sig	Value	Sig	Value	Sig
Chi-Square	30.18	.003	20.23	.063	13.62	.326	23.48	.024
Likelihood Ratio	33.95	.001	20.26	.062	17.28	.140	24.13	.020
Linear-by-Linear Association	15.46	.000	2.37	.123	6.16	.013	10.41	.001

Asymptotic Significance (2-sided), N=569, df =12
 Ranked Accountability * Age Range

Race was also shown to be associated with how participants ranked accountability. When broken down by race, respondents who identified as White allocated more responsibility to the government than to customers. However, most non-White participants allocated more responsibility to customers than government entities. Respondents who selected “other” for race and provided an explanation, often included what would be considered a racial or ethnic minority in the USA (e.g. Arabic, Jewish, Middle Eastern, etc.). In response to the first research question, these findings indicate with consistency that based on the sample of this study, platform companies should hold the most accountability. Independent contractors also have a large amount of responsibility, but findings regarding the level of accountability expected from government entities and customers can vary greatly depending on a person’s racial background.

Table 14

Chi-Square: Ranked Accountability by Race

	<u>Company</u>		<u>Workers</u>		<u>Customers</u>		<u>Government</u>	
	Value	Sig	Value	Sig	Value	Sig	Value	Sig
Chi-Square	25.43	.114	17.01	.523	30.95	.029	33.20	.016
Likelihood Ratio	23.28	.180	17.48	.490	27.85	.064	31.92	.023
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.47	.225	.791	.374	.232	.630	2.83	.093

Asymptotic Significance (2-sided), N=569, df =18
Ranked Accountability * Race

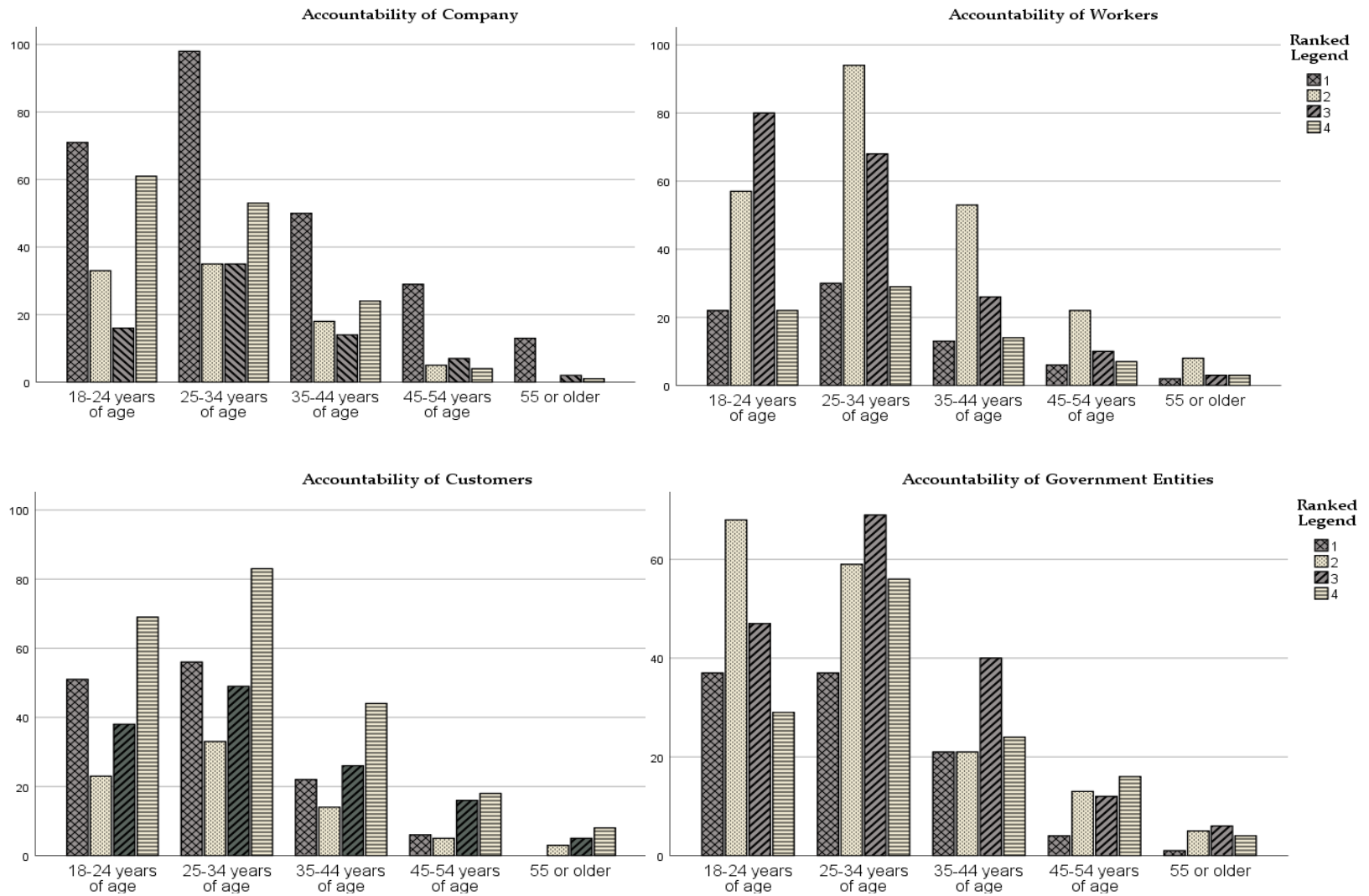


Figure 6: Ranked Perceptions of Accountability by Age Range

Tests of Linearity: Support for CAS Framework

Significant one sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov values confirmed that data for all variables had a non-normal distribution. Since the purpose of this study was to gain more insight into socially constructed ideas about CSR within the access economy, it was my belief that avoiding complex data transformations would be best. The linear trend at point method was used to replace missing values on scale items. There were some outliers in the data set. In the initial data cleaning process, outliers were filtered out, but ultimately retained so as to reduce data manipulation and avoid unnecessary statistical biases. Statistical analyses were conducting with and without outliers, and it was determined that the results were comparable even with retaining outliers. A simple ANOVA table, not to be confused with the between groups ANOVA, was used to test for linearity among variables. The tests for linearity had a significance value smaller than 0.05, implying that there exists a linear association between perceptions of psychosocial CSR and perceptions of accountability for platform companies. The test for deviation from linearity also had a small significance value, suggesting that there exists a nonlinear association in addition to the presence of a linear element. These results indicate that perceptions of accountability tend to have linear and monotonic relationships with several of the variables tested in this study. There existed a nonlinear association between perceptions of customer accountability in relation to perceptions of worker accountability; and there was a linear and nonlinear component associated with perceptions of government accountability and

perceptions of customer accountability. Results of nonlinearity among variables reinforces the conceptualization of the access economy as a CAS.

Internal Consistency of Adapted Scales

In order to determine the internal consistency for each validated CSR scale, multiple reliability analyses were conducted. As stated in Chapter III, missing data on scale items were replaced using the Linear Trend at Point method. Replacing missing data with this method in SPSS allows the system to automatically use information from surrounding values to create a predicted value for missing data. To assess the accuracy of this method, reliability analyses for each scale were conducted for original data with missing items and compared to reliability coefficients for non-missing data. As can be observed in Table 15, reliability coefficients remain stable using the Linear Trend at Point method. Therefore, subsequent analyses utilized data with missing values replaced.

Table 15

Reliability Coefficients for Validated Scales

Scale Name	α^1	α^2	N Items	Mean	Variance	Std. Dev
Ethical Idealism	.785	.785	3	16.92	11.14	3.33
Ethical Relativism	.709	.710	3	13.21	13.57	3.68
Risk Aversion	.769	.769	4	16.78	24.53	4.95
CEDOR	.877	.877	4	20.41	19.73	4.44
Psychosocial CSR	.946	.946	8	46.28	56.15	7.49
Environmental CStR	.953	.953	7	25.24	66.97	8.18
Employee CStR	.900	.902	7	27.57	62.43	7.90
Supplier CStR	.915	.916	5	20.74	39.15	6.28
Customer CStR	.868	.871	5	23.25	27.11	5.20
Overall CStR ⁴	.953	.954	24	96.75	526.48	22.9

¹ Missing values excluded with listwise deletion; ² missing values replaced (N=569)

Table 16

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Ethical Idealism	5.640	1.112	1.238
Ethical Relativism	4.402	1.228	1.509
Risk Aversion	4.195	1.238	1.534
CEDOR	5.101	1.110	1.234
Psychosocial CSR	5.784	0.936	0.877
Environmental CStR	3.606	1.169	1.367
Employee CStR	3.931	1.128	1.274
Supplier CStR	4.147	1.251	1.566
Customer CStR	4.649	1.041	1.084
Overall CStR	4.031	0.956	0.914

Spearman's Rho Correlations

It should be noted that the Bivariate Pearson Correlation was assessed in addition to Spearman's Rho for comparison. All correlations were consistent with those reported in the Spearman's Rho output, except in situations where there was shown to be a non-linear relationship as was the case with perceptions of company accountability. The null hypothesis of a Spearman's Rho rank-ordered correlation specifies that a statistically significant relationship between variables will not exist. Ethical idealism was observed to have a weak, but significant positive relationship with CEDOR ($r_s = .244$, $p < .01$) and a significant moderate correlation with psychosocial CSR ($r_s = .432$, $p < .01$). Idealism was not shown to be significantly correlated with overall CStR. However, ethical relativism was observed as having a statistically significant association with overall CStR ($r_s = .252$, $p < .01$) and risk aversion ($r_s = .131$, $p < .01$), but not with psychosocial CSR. Ethical

idealism and relativism were also shown to be negatively associated with each other, $r_s = -.085$, $p < .01$. This type of negative association has an implication that as ranked scores for one variable increase, the ranked scores of the other variable decrease; although not necessarily at a constant rate as would be expected in a linear relationship. Psychosocial CSR was shown to have a significant positive correlation with CEDOR and significant negative association with overall CStR. All values obtained from the Spearman's rho analyses provided correlation coefficients that are considered weak to moderate values; however significance was still obtained for ranked associations. Refer to Table 14 for correlation values.

Table 17

Bivariate Spearman's Rho for Scale Items

	Ethical Idealism	Ethical Relativism	Risk Aversion	CEDOR	Psychosoci al CSR	CStR
Ethical Idealism	1.000	-.085*	.028	.244**	.432**	-.043
Ethical Relativism		1.000	.131**	.067	-.020	.256**
Risk Aversion			1.000	.151**	-.024	.064
CEDOR				1.000	.335**	-.257**
Psychosocial CSR					1.000	-.106*

Below, Table 18 displays the Spearman's Rho correlations between variables and each sub-dimension of the CStR scale. Although risk aversion was not shown to be associated with overall CStR, it was shown to have a positive and moderately significant relationship with supplier-oriented CStR. Psychosocial CSR was also negatively associated

with perceptions of existing environmental and worker-oriented CStR. However, it was not significantly associated with perceptions of existing supplier or customer-oriented CStR.

Table 18

CStR Sub-dimension Correlations

	Environmental CStR	Worker CStR	Supplier CStR	Customer CStR
Ethical Idealism	-.079	-.045	.023	-.002
Ethical Relativism	.156**	.273**	.212**	.179**
Risk Aversion	.003	.048	.085*	.069
CEDOR	-.218**	-.249**	-.160**	-.161**
Psychosocial CSR	-.116**	-.127**	-.070	.013

Responses to the point allocated survey item was used as individual continuous variables for perceptions on accountability. Perceptions of platform accountability were negatively associated with perceptions of accountability for all other stakeholder groups. Platform accountability did have a positive significant association with idealism, CEDOR, and psychosocial CSR, and negative associations with relativism, risk aversion, and CStR. Perceptions on worker accountability were negatively associated with idealism and psychosocial CSR; Customer accountability was positively associated with relativism, all dimensions of CStR, and worker accountability, with negative associations for idealism and psychosocial CSR. Perceptions of government accountability were not significantly associated with ethical ideology or CStR (see Table 19).

Table 19

Point Allocated Accountability Spearman's Rho

	Worker Accountability	Customer Accountability	Platform Accountability	Government Accountability
Ethical Idealism	-.092*	-.155**	.181**	.011
Ethical Relativism	.032	.108**	-.084*	.010
Risk Aversion	.038	.054	-.099*	.047
CEDOR	-.048	-.028	.104*	-.027
Environmental CStR	.027	.137**	-.055	-0.081
Worker CStR	.081	.106*	-.097*	-0.055
Supplier CStR	.074	.108**	-.088*	-0.043
Customer CStR	.008	.089*	-.065	0.014
Overall CStR	.041	.147**	-.089*	-0.061
Psychosocial CSR	-.110**	-.109**	.145**	.099*
Worker Actable	1.000	.116**	-.546**	-.290**
Customers Actable		1.000	-.593**	-.013
Platform Actable			1.000	-.259**
Government Actable				1.000

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Kruskal Wallis H: Differences Between Groups

A Kruskal-Wallis H test showed statistically significant differences in perceptions for gender identification on all other variables. Statistically significant differences for Race were also identified. Refer to Tables 20 - 21, respectively. Frequency of use was not observed as having a significant impact on the variance in responses for any of the variables, indicating that how often someone uses a platform service does not sway their perceptions of corporate responsibility.

Table 20

Mean Ranks by Gender Identity

	Ideal	Relative	CEDOR	Envir. CStR	Worker CStR	Supplier CStR	Customer CStR	Psychosocial CSR	CStR
Male	219.73	298.82	258.28	307.29	304.72	282.96	305.6	232.63	303.84
Female	300.66	279.36	286.26	277.82	279.97	286.50	279.17	294.58	279.98
LGBTQIA+	293.64	242.53	362.89	219.86	187.39	185.69	200.11	346.25	193.39
K-W H	24.072	2.502	7.386	5.913	8.571	6.621	7.303	16.839	7.628
Sig.	.000	.286	.025	.052	.014	.036	.026	.000	.022

Males (N=125), Females (N=421), LGBTQIA+ (N=18)

Table 21

Mean Ranks by Race

	Ideal	Relative	Risk Aversion	CEDOR	Envir. CStR	Worker CStR	Supplier CStR	Customer CStR	Psychosocial CSR	CStR
Black	277.59	289.37	283.27	271.70	297.69	317.08	316.16	323.38	248.71	317.92
Hispanic	295.43	220.93	299.50	248.55	205.20	244.10	246.15	223.38	303.75	221.08
Asian	222.13	326.16	332.28	274.52	277.66	292.84	309.37	296.90	238.26	304.09
Caucasian	273.62	255.93	255.60	266.98	264.58	262.50	260.06	260.91	272.12	261.12
Multi-racial	294.98	317.71	263.05	301.69	315.17	250.31	243.81	266.14	316.19	256.78
K-W H	8.014	17.318	15.114	1.789	7.985	7.480	11.119	10.434	7.234	10.916
Sig.	.091	.002	.004	.774	.092	.113	.025	.034	.124	.028

Black (N=45), Hispanic (N=20), Asian (N=67), White (N=377), Multi-racial (N=29)

Multiple Mann-Whitney U analyses were conducted as a follow up to the Chi-Square and Kruskal-Wallis H tests, to better understand differences between mean ranks. When compared to male responses, a Mann Whitney U test showed that female respondents had statistically higher mean ranks for ethical idealism ($U = 18746.5, p = .000$) and perceptions of psychosocial behavioral CSR which refers to opinions on what should be done rather than perceptions on what is being done ($U = 20516.5, p = .000$). Those with a gender identity aligning with the LGTQIA+ community had higher perceptions of CEDOR and Psychosocial CSR when compared to those who identified as male or female.

Statistical Limitations

To be clear, the Kruskal Wallis-H and Mann Whitney U nonparametric tests do not measure differences in group means. Rather, means are ranked for each group and the mean rank is assessed for differences. It would be useful to conduct more robust statistical tests in the future. The nature of this research allowed for a large amount of data, but as with most real-life data sets, several assumptions required for more robust statistical tests were violated. Though it might be uncommon to present multiple non-parametric between group analyses, the exploratory nature of this research warranted individual assessments between groups. The problem with exploring differences between more than two groups is that it is more difficult to determine a meaningful alternative hypothesis. This study is meant to be descriptive through uncovering several factors that impact the overall ability of platforms to ethically function as complex adaptive systems. The selected statistical tests provided basic empirical evidence to address research question 1, which concerned

understanding perceptions of accountability in the access economy. A pattern emerged in which the platform company is viewed as most accountable, workers are viewed as second most accountable, and depending on demographics, customers and government entities are viewed as the least accountable stakeholders.

Section III: Thematic Qualitative Findings

Understanding that socially responsible business practices can include a broad range of actions, I developed guided scenario-based questions for respondents to provide as little or as much detail as they wanted. This section provides an overview of the themes that emerged from responses to the scenario items and other textual data. The volume of qualitative responses I received were unexpected, with some respondents providing a great amount of detail to express their views. The qualitative responses were in excess of 3,100 and totaled more than 40,000 words. Over 100 categories emerged from the first round assessment of textual data. Categories were then merged into larger themes concerning perceptions of accountability, potential areas for development, proposed training types for platform companies, and other aspects associated with social responsibility. The length of responses varied for each qualitative item. Table 22 displays the number of responses received for each item as well as the word count for the longest response for each item.

Table 22

Numerical Description of Textual Data

Item	N Responses	Max Word Count	Total Word Count
------	----------------	----------------------	------------------------

1. Other Gig or App Platforms	7	13	30
2. Should companies train workers: It Depends	41	110	998
3. Responsible for Safety & Ethics: Types of Training	455	116	4496
4. You Owned: Would you assume responsibility for ensuring the mental stability of workers or hosts?	467	190	10350
5. You Owned: Who would be responsible for ensuring that your company is environmentally friendly?	466	211	7671
6. You Worked for: What benefits would you expect the company to provide?	463	161	5312
7. How do you suggest companies prepare & train workers?	462	187	6198
8. How can online companies improve their workforce?	407	45	2868
9. Type of laws, policies, or trainings would help improve the access economy?	397	94	2653
Totals	3165		40576

Organization of Emerging Themes

Exemplar excerpts taken directly from the written open-ended responses were linked to provide connections and create an understanding of how respondents make sense of accountability in the access economy. Responses varied in length and detail, collectively allowing for rich, reflective, and unadulterated perspectives. Descriptive responses are categorized to provide context on perceptions of accountability, thoughts on necessary training and development, and other noteworthy findings. To provide a concise descriptive analysis, I assigned the open-ended questions as pertaining to either perceptions of accountability or platform improvement (see figure ?).

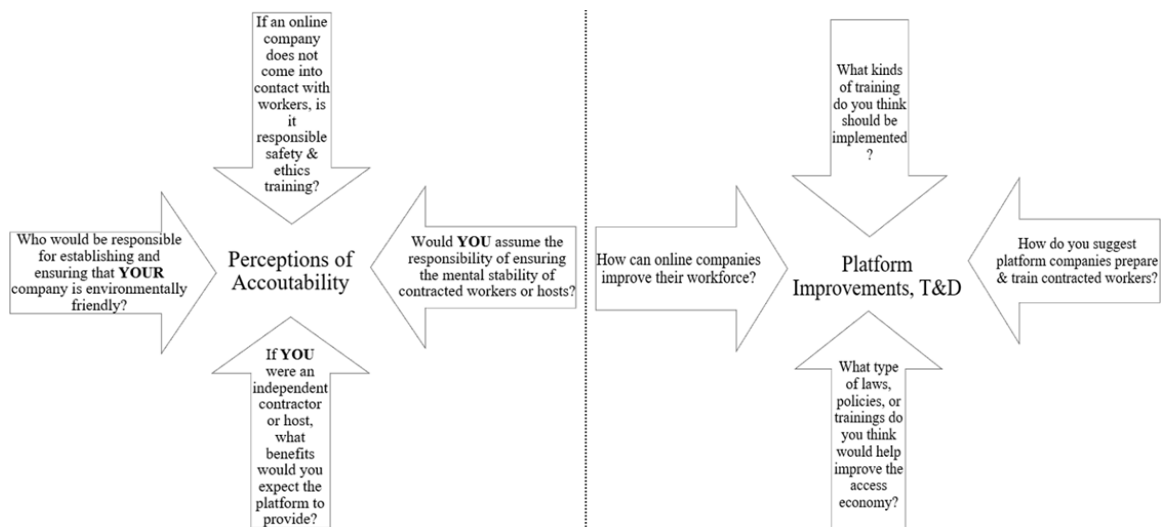


Figure 7: Open-ended Categories

Pluralism of Platform Accountability

The primary research questions concerned who should be held accountable for socially responsible business practices in the access economy. First, responses centered around platform companies as the responsible entity that should be held accountable in various situations. These responses were filled with neutral sentiment about what platform companies should be doing to ensure the safety of workers or hosts. The second theme focused on respondents' tendency to extend notions of accountability to external stakeholders. For example, a recurring sentiment regarding environmentally friendly practices is that government entities should be tasked with setting and enforcing such regulations, and then companies and workers are tasked with ensuring that environmental protocols are followed. In this way, there appears to be a small subset of respondents who believe there is, or at least should be, a hierarchy regarding how environmentally friendly practices are enforced. The third theme dealt with ideas about how responsibility should

be shared amongst all stakeholders; however, it should be noted that responses about shared responsibility still emphasized the need for platform companies to assume the greatest share of responsibility. The fourth theme dealt with counter-arguments against platforms taking on more responsibility. Sub-themes in this category represent negative drawbacks or concerns about the impact of imposing additional responsibility to platform companies through increased government regulations.

Expectation of Training

The majority of respondents (82%) held the belief that platform companies should be responsible for providing some form of safety and ethics training to workers, even if those workers are classified as independent contractors or hosts. A general consensus among respondents in this study also maintained that training requirements in the access economy should depend on whether or not the independent contractors would have face-to-face contact with consumers. Similarly, many respondents expected platform companies to have the same level of accountability as traditional B&M companies, particularly in relation to training and development, incentives, and other forms of worker development.

There have to be open lines of communication. Remote training is already utilized by plenty of traditional businesses, there's no reason the same ideas and technologies can't be applied to this new economic sector. [Q18.22]

A consensus on the need for platform companies to train workers was prevalent throughout the textual data. A number of responses included suggestions for online, web, or app-based trainings, with options for quizzes, tests, or benchmarking practices to ensure the

effectiveness of such trainings. Respondents varied in their ideas on how trainings should be administered with several stating that it would depend on the location and size of the platform company. These sub-themes are echoed throughout the data.

Responsibility for Mental Stability

Respondents were asked specifically whether or not they would assume the mental stability of their workers. Responses to this item were broken into three primary categories: Yes (65.5%, N=285), No (15%, N=65), and “Yes and No” with some degree of ambiguity (19.54%, N=85). There were a total of 435 usable responses for this item. Approximately 65.5% explicitly stated that if they owned a platform company, they would ensure the mental stability of their workers. Nearly 15% (N=65) definitively stated that they would not take on such a responsibility, with several respondents implying that it would be too costly, or doubting that it would even be possible to ensure such a thing. About 19.54% (N=85) of respondents elected not to take an absolute stance and provided ambiguous responses that were more situation specific and concerned several different factors, such as business industry, size, and overall economic impact. One respondent noted the following.

If you are saying "If this guy goes nuts and kidnaps his Uber fare, should I be legally responsible (i.e. sued)?" No. You can perform basic background checks for free. You can look online in most states and see if someone has a criminal record. You can choose to hire someone with a clean record or give a chance to someone who has a minor record. You have to use common sense. I wouldn't hire a convicted

pedophile to work at a day care. I wouldn't hire a person with several DUI's under their belt to be an Uber driver. [Q15, C95]

Another respondent stated that she would assume responsibility “*To a limited degree*” by offering “*...mental health checkups and care, as much as possible*” while going on to state that “*... it's hard to assume responsibility for a stay at home mom who is shipping for others' to earn extra money and is going thru a lot in her life, and other jobs. [Q15, C161]*”. Sharing a similar sentiment, another respondent pointed out the importance of ensuring mental stability when contractors will have “*face -to- face contact with customers, especially in vulnerable positions like with Uber*”. In this case, the respondent stated that they would attempt to ensure that their contractors “*don't have a violent history and keep close eye on reports and complaints with a no tolerance policy. With less contact, [in companies] like Etsy, there would be less emphasis on determining if the person is a risk. [Q15, C219].*”

Some respondents considered the mental health aspect of accountability to be aligned with ethics or morality.

*As an ethical human, I would take responsibility for the mental wellness of my fellow humans. Exactly how much that would be written into the actual bylaws of the company is uncertain. I suppose it would depend on the number of hours the workers chose to work. **Less hours, I would assume they had other income and would take less responsibility.** More hours and I would I believe [that] I would take a similar level of responsibility as I would if I owned a brick and mortar company,*

since it would be clear my company would be the workers' primary income.

[Q15:Cell 192]

Adding to the list of things that must be considered when deciding to assume more accountability is the notion that platform companies should draw from more defined business structures to determine what types of protocols should be implemented. For example, one respondent provided the following.

*I would be more interested in understanding the protocols and procedures of other occupations such as doctors, lawyers, teachers, and even psychologists before I could say that I'd assume the responsibility. **I do think that mental stability is of most concern when acting as the liaison between customer and employee, I'm just not sure if that is the responsibility of the company or of the employee.***

Services are offered and available but not mandated. [Q15.373]

Interestingly, even though the survey items were worded such that respondents should have been aware that platform companies do not consider independent contractors to be employees, some textual data highlights the intrinsic assumption by many people that workers who are contracted under a company's brand are considered employees.

*Mental health is an increasing issue that needs to be addressed. Why should a company be allowed to hide behind their workers with 0 responsibility? They **employ the workers**, sometimes exploit them while raking in tons of profit. Part of **being an employer is accepting that role.***

Opinions on Environmental Accountability

When asked specifically about ensuring environmentally friendly standards, over 65% of participants said they would assume that responsibility as the owner; and several participants said they would attempt to outsource this type of responsibility if the company was large enough. A female respondent noted that “this issue starts with the initial idea - you can't simply expect the individual retailers to produce ethical/environmentally friendly products [Q16.330] 18-24.” Themes surrounding environmental accountability had increased mentions of government regulations. This implies that people may view environmental policies and other social concerns such as mental health, as large scale movements that must start at the top. This is further evidenced by responses such as the following, “I strongly believe regulation from the government is extremely important for it to be possible. If it is not regulated, other companies will not do it and will have an ‘efficiency advantage’ compared to my company [Q15: Cell 370].” Adding to the second theme of external responsibility, the following excerpts are presented in response to how participants made sense of environmental accountability as it is or should be manifested in the access economy.

*This seems to be a **shared responsibility among all parties**. The government entities pass legislation that impacts the environmental friendliness of the company, like gas taxes on ride shares, or legislation that impacts what kind of takeout containers can be used for food delivery. **Employees can take steps at the local level** to be environmentally friendly, and providing that information to the service/platform could be incentivized or rewarded (e.g. environmentally friendly laundering of towels/linens in airbnbs, or reducing idling time in rideshares). **Customers might***

also choose a company that advertises its environmental friendliness, but I think this is a little harder to incentivize. [Q16.249] Female, 25-34 years old

... the level of involvement depends. If we're the ones providing the goods and/or services directly to workers as intermediaries, then we are responsible. If the workers are providing their own, then our responsibility lies only in stating it as company policy for the workers to uphold. [Q16.277], 25-34 years old, Black female

*This is tricky. I personally feel that owning an environmentally responsible company would be a passion of mine that I would take responsibility for if I owned an intermediary platform or app-based business. But, I also feel that **companies that provide excellent products need to do so within regulatory guidelines and are not necessarily required to go beyond those standards.** If it is a company that creates a social good, and the good substantially outweighs the costs it generates - - in other words, if creating the environmental practices are not as high a priority as improving people's lives in other ways -- I wouldn't want to undercut a company's ability to perform their 'goodness' with an expectation that they also be a leader in environmentally friendly practices. For example, I could imagine a rideshare company's corp social responsibility program could involve running a 'meals on wheels' -like program for local folks that cannot easily get out to buy their own food. Would I require all of those cars to be electric? Maybe that is something I would shoot for in the future, but I wouldn't want to reduce the good*

we're providing if it was more of a need in our community than the environmentally friendly policy. [Q16.455]

Understanding the Divide: Factors Impacting Accountability.

Subjective opinions about platform industry emerged as a factor in decisions about how responsibility should be allocated across platform stakeholders, as well as what type of trainings might be expected. Thoughts on platform responsibility and social expectations of ride-sharing companies appear different from social expectations for on-demand food delivery services or general platform marketplaces. Responses included the following.

In situations where the contractor would have direct contact with the consumer, I think training on safety and ethics should be required. For situations like Etsy, I find it less relevant.

References to company size and industry appeared in responses for all open-ended survey questions. Many respondents held perceptions that larger companies should assume more accountability than smaller companies, noting an expected increase in financial capability for larger companies. A female respondent, between 35-44 years old, stated that...

An app based company making above x amount of money a year should be responsible for assessing the mental stability of contracted workers or hosts. An app based company making below x amount of money should have this assessment partially subsidized by the government, which could be paid for by legalizing drugs, & prison, judicial & tax reform. [Q15.106] Caucasian, consumer a few times a year.

Although the general consensus was that larger companies should assume more responsibility, it was pointed out that it may become more difficult for platform companies such as those with an individual marketplace or those in the home-sharing industry to assume more responsibility. One respondent stated that “*It depends on how large the company grew. I would like to take care of the hosts, but if it goes viral and many people sign up it may be difficult [Q15.15]*”. Another counter-argument to having platforms provide training to their workers or hosts is that it may not be possible since workers technically own the products being used to provide a service. Also the autonomous nature of some platform services may have an implied expectation that independent contractors are already prepared to provide a service by the mere fact that they are choosing to do so.

*They can try to train you but they don't know your situation... And it **depends on the type of business**. If you are driving, they can't teach you how to drive, you have to already know all that and they have to assume you know what you're getting into. Same with AirBnB or similar where they don't know your house and you have to be comfortable in the situation to begin with. So they would have to make the training for everyone and that's just impossible but maybe they can help a little.*

Increased Responsibility will Stifle Success.

Contributing to the fourth higher-order theme of counter-arguments for accountability, a small subset of responses maintained the view that trying to align expectations for platform companies with those of more traditional companies would stifle the success of such companies. Although this view was not as prominent as those in support

of more support from platform companies, it did emerge as a strong theme of accountability that uncovered recurring thoughts on applying government regulations to companies in the access economy. The sentiment expressed in this theme is that regulating platform companies to the same extent as B&M businesses would undermine the initial purpose of some aspects of the access economy.

I think other than basic ethics and safety training for contractors, the consumerist economy we have will make or break any new entry. I think that freeing ideas like ride-share or care-share are what some people want and we should let them do it, not stifle ideas like that. Uber had a lot of state obstacles to overcome to become a success. Those were unnecessary. Let the idea rise or fall on its own merit. I never thought people would pay \$20 for half a dozen delivered choc chip cookies, but here we are [Q27.272].

Building the Brand: Trust and Other (Negative) Sentiments

Another secondary sub-theme in support of increased platform responsibility focused on the type of benefits or aid that would help promote a company's image. Based on the context of many responses, platform companies should assume more responsibility because it helps build the brand while providing more consistent service across the company. It was stated by several respondents that workers, regardless of contractor or employee status, are viewed as the face of the company; and therefore, it would be in the best interest of the platform company to ensure the fair treatment of workers, provide quality assurance for products or services, and develop some type of technological support

for workers and customers alike. In addition to providing more support with difficult customers or platform issues, respondents expressed a great desire for more incentives and reward programs to motivate workers and create feelings of value for stakeholders.

*... it is the company's responsibility to maintain a respectable reputation and maintain long term reliability between us and the consumer. If a company forfeits this responsibility it leaves more room for error and unpredictability and allows for the **consumer to not trust our company** and therefore no longer contribute their business to us.*

Findings also revealed a need for more transparency in the access economy. While size and industry are necessary considerations for the likelihood of certain types of responsibility, ideas about the need for trust appear to be applicable to all platform companies. Thematic analysis uncovered the notion of three-way trust between workers (supply agents), consumers (demand agents), and the platform. One respondent stated that they “*would expect [the company] to be honest and clear about the job and payment. (Not like DoorDash and Instacart who subsidize wages with part of the tips) [Q17: Cell 276].*” Other responses that implicate the importance of trust or distrust as important contributors to how people allocate accountability were conveyed with negative sentiments about the access economy in general. One way to gain trust and promote a positive image would be “*by actually hiring employees and treating them as real people and not a means to an end. **Contractors are just a fancy way to avoid paying taxes.** [Q26.209].*”

*These companies exist to **exploit people desperate for money.** Raise the minimum wage to \$15, make these companies pay workers as employees and do away with*

the "independent contractor" bullshit. Make them pay for drivers' insurance while working. Someone needs to tell them Lincoln freed the slaves. [Q27.136]

***They use contractors as disposable automatons, not as people.** They have no respect for workers and do everything they can to pay as little as possible, no matter who it hurts. They can actually admit social responsibility for their contractors. [Q26.177]*

*I think the company should provide some opportunities to continue even if we are just contractors. It is hard to keep jumping jobs, and **being treated as a non-permanent worker.** The company should also invest also give us some PTO. [Q17.453].*

Below, *Figure 8* presents a simplified depiction of the primary themes with the most recurrent sub-themes.

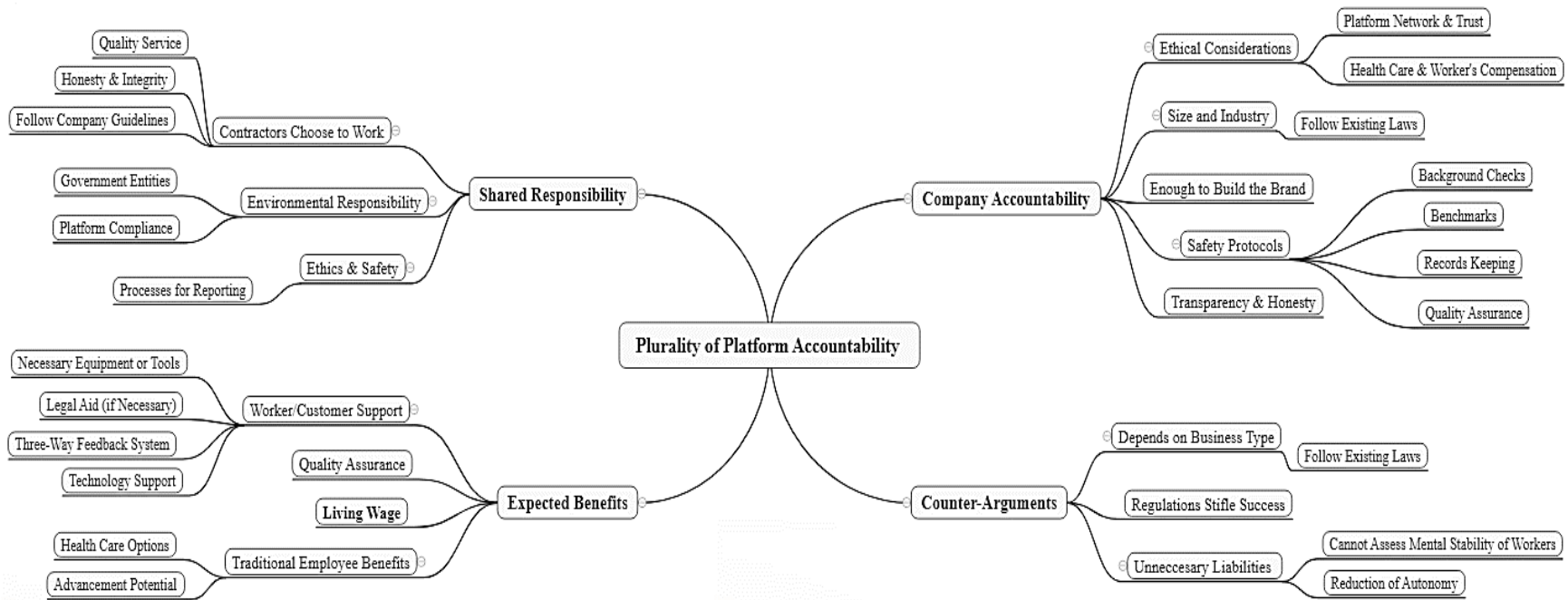


Figure 8: Plurality of Platform Accountability

Platform Improvements and T&D

Several propositions emerged from data about how the access economy can be improved. The previous section discussed ideas about which stakeholder group should be held accountable for certain aspects of corporate social responsibility. Findings suggest that there is room for platform specific regulations that might be developed according to the size and industry of platform companies. In addition to items about platform responsibility, survey participants were asked to provide their thoughts on what specific types of training would be useful to access economy stakeholders. Although there were several suggestions that only appeared once or twice in the entire qualitative data set, several suggestions were reiterated by multiple respondents across the four items concerning platform improvement. The findings below are ordered such that desired improvements and possible paths to platform regulations precede suggestions about application of T&D. Based on the volume of data received, a condensed typology of platform trainings is also presented.

Possible Paths for Platform Regulations.

To protect workers' rights and to have some form of quality assurances for access economy stakeholders, it was largely emphasized that the access economy may "need new laws/policies that govern the new type of economy as it differs from traditional orgs. [Q27.148]." One way to do this would be by forming a union for independent contractors that develop and enforce "regulations on contractors to allow them to qualify for benefits,

and to protect them from predatory management. [Q27.151].” Other ideas about platform regulations are highlighted in the excerpt below.

*... the solution is probably more like a new kind of insurance or licensing arrangement, where some third party establishes a relationship with, say, Uber *and* Lyft where they'll charge would-be employees to train them up to some agreed upon standard, after which they're then eligible to work for any ride-sharing service, etc.. More or less S&P for individuals and across specific skill domains.*

[Q18.87]

General Development

In support of T&D for improving platforms, themes surrounding general development, as would be typical in more traditional business structures, emerged as something that should be considered in the access economy.

*Communication skills, basic social awareness and safety information taught in a workshop environment as a mandatory precursor to employment. As well as printed or interactive media to take away and revise at leisure. A **classroom or workshop is more beneficial than simply giving an information pack**, as it fosters relationships between contractors and allows for them to share experiences and helpful information. I believe **training should be ongoing**, possibly annually, to allow for this sharing of experience and knowledge to continue as well as allowing an opportunity to create inclusion and company loyalty, along with generating a positive image of the company within its contractor base. Good will goes a long*

way towards making problems easier to solve in the long term. [Q18.93] not working for AE.

Development through Mentorship

Findings highlighted the desire for platform companies to offer mentorship or coaching programs to workers. There were several responses in support of coaching, mentorship, or other in-person forms of knowledge sharing. According to one respondent, “the best preparation and training is to schedule times to shadow the more seasoned workers, to see the work in action. Online workshops and seminars are good and cost effective, to be sure, but seeing the work happen is crucial [Q18.149].” Another respondent, who reported working as a contractor in the access economy between 10-20 hours a week, supported the notion of mentorship while expressing a need for platform companies not to rely on virtual trainings.

*It should be more than just some "watch this video" bullshit. **They should get you together with someone else who can show you the ropes and can answer your questions. And they should all have people available to ask questions or a website with FAQ on it. But it should really be a person.** [Q18.62]*

Other respondents took a similar stance by stating the following.

I think there needs to be a variety of options for contracted workers. In main city hubs, and/or especially wherever the main office(s) are located the company should offer in-person training, there should be online training/webinars for those outside of those areas, and access to micro training modules for everyone so that if you

*have forgotten how to do something or want a refresher you can brush up. I would also suggest that there is also [some] **kind of certification process which means the contracted worker has passed a practical test** - for example: Safety Training Certification, Product Knowledge Certification, etc. I do not think a multiple choice test is sufficient to demonstrate knowledge of safety. I'm thinking of it from the point of view of getting your driver's license. You may get your learners' license with a multiple choice test but you would never be issued your real driver's license without a practical test. Something along these lines should be mandatory because there is no one observing the contracted worker to ensure compliance and/or provide coaching (although that might also be an additional training option?) [Q18.127]*

*Online videos and quizzes. We use them in the field of education constantly. And while not always fun or effective, it is the easiest most constant way to reach all workers. Or, **split workers into regions or districts based on geographic location. Then require each worker to attend a live training session and pass a live training questionnaire before being allowed to work for the company.** [Q18.168]*

I expect online modules, lots of tips from other contracted individuals, and checklists for when the worker is getting started to help ensure quality performance from day 1 [Q18.30]

*Prepare and go through a handbook that the employees can keep. **Have a previously hired contractor mentor them for a week or two** (longer if the job requires it) [Q18.36]*

Training for Individual and Platform Development

For a visual display of how suggested training were categorized, refer to Figure 3. In big cities, and for companies with a large presence such as Uber or Lyft, a common suggestion was to develop a training hub for contractors to attend face-to-face onboarding sessions with interactive trainings based on possible scenarios that workers might face. The most common suggestion for training was to implement some form of online or web-based module, or the utilization of interactive videos to simulate possible situations that might occur between workers and consumers. Webinars and virtual meetings with real people were also suggested.

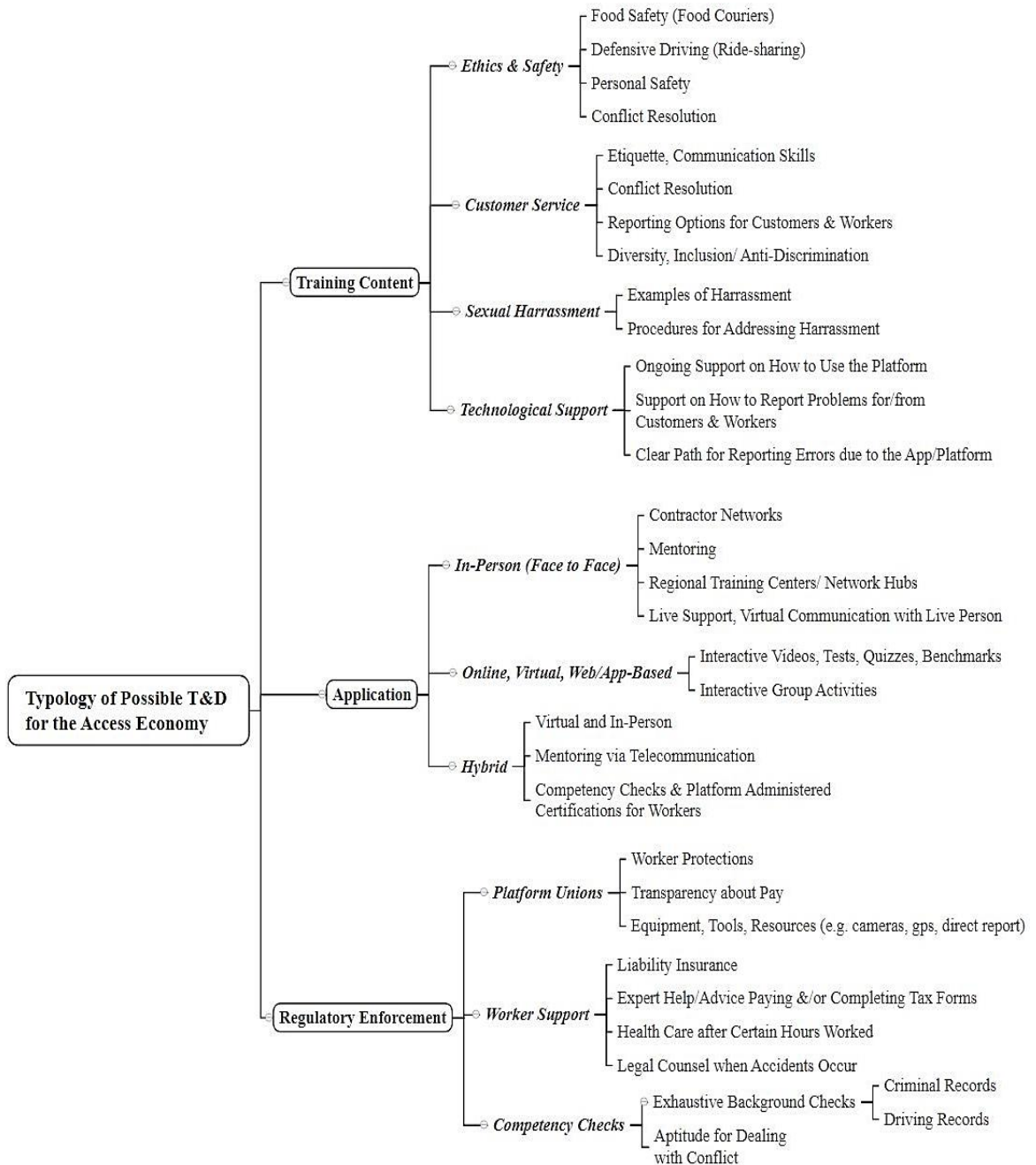


Figure 9: Possible Training & Development for the Access Economy

CHAPTER V: INTEGRATED INTERPRETATION & DISCUSSION

Keeping in mind the complexity framework presented in Chapter II, this section presents an integration and discussion of the quantitative and qualitative findings. It was necessary to provide a reflective interpretation of each element in order to make sense of the information, and develop a holistic view of the findings. By examining perceptions of accountability from those who participate in the access economy, this study was able to provide a little more clarity on one possible role of HRD in developing a contingent workforce. Discussion of the findings will focus on how individual attributes and perceptions may have a larger impact on the access economy. Although research questions did not specifically ask about participants' lived experiences, the scenario-based questions were intended to get participants to think about themselves as a key stakeholder (owner, worker, consumer) in the access economy. First, textual findings are discussed in context for the current state of platform companies. Differences between groups are then discussed in relation to the complexity of influencing factors on perceptions of CSR, as well as the importance of recognizing the impact of pre-existing ethical attitudes.

Distributed Accountability

Although perceptions on accountability were spread across stakeholder groups, the overall tone is that more accountability should be allocated to platform companies. The data support the idea that consumers expect platform companies to go beyond mere onboarding by providing safety and ethics training and worker protections in line with what would generally be expected from a more traditional business model. Opinions of platform

accountability appeared to be largely influenced by expectations associated with certain markets and whether or not workers would have direct contact with consumers. Also, a lot of respondents emphasized the need for background checks, but these measures may already be in place by the largest platform companies. Perhaps there is a need for more strenuous background checks or at least more streamlined protocols for conflict resolution. Age, race, and gender identification all appeared to have some sort of impact on perceptions of CSR and accountability. The differences between race were unexpected, but not unwarranted when thinking about the amount of race related information on cultural differences and expectations. Likewise, Asian perceptions of the government as having more responsibility for platform outcomes aligns with cultural dimensions of Asian countries being more collectivist in nature.

Ethical Ideology and Trust

Initial trust may already be present between users and the selected platform; however, trust between human agents could be strengthened through more strenuous interviewing and onboarding processes that result in some form of certification. This might also satisfy a desire for those who wish to have some type of advancement opportunities. Oddly enough, the study conducted by Riquelme and Román (2014) confirmed a positive association between relativism and CEDOR, but they failed to confirm their hypotheses of a negative association between CEDOR and idealism. My study found the opposite of what they proposed. Relativism and CEDOR were not significantly associated. Idealism exhibited a positive relationship with distrust for platform companies, which does support

the findings of Riquelme and Román (2014). Since platform companies do not operate as a closed system, it makes sense that individuals with idealistic standards or views about how the world should operate would be more likely to distrust companies that do not align with their intrinsic ideological beliefs. Additionally, Riquelme and Román (2014) found that risk aversion was positively associated with CEDOR, which my study also confirmed. Risk aversion and idealism were not associated in my study, as it was in their study.

Existing CSR and Psychosocial CSR

Given the wording for the CStR items on perceptions of the extent to which stakeholder CSR exists in platform companies, it was not surprising to see that perceptions on CSR as something that *should be* done, was shown to have opposing associations with CStR. In other words, it makes sense that having high perceptions of what is currently being done, would be associated with lower perceptions of what should be done. Although the significance of that relationship was marginal at best, both forms of CSR (current and future oriented) operated in accordance with ethical ideology as might be expected. As stated in Chapter III, the psychosocial behavioral CSR scale was adapted such that it would capture idealistic perceptions of CSR. Thus, it no surprise that psychosocial CSR is strongly correlated with ethical idealism as both are concerned with *what should be* versus the more practical notion of *what is*. Having the CStR scale represent more immediate notions of CSR as it currently exists was more closely associated with ethical relativism. These findings strengthen the validity of the adapted scales by providing some confirmation that the reworded items contributed to constructs that measured perceptions

of idealistic versus actual CSR as intended. By utilizing the CStR and psychosocial CSR as complimentary, yet divergent measures of CSR, a great deal of insight was provided on the thought processes surrounding perceptions of platform stakeholder responsibility.

Surprisingly, risk aversion was related to ethical relativism, it was not a large factor in many of the tested relationships in this study. The implication here that increased relativist ideologies may influence whether or not people are willing to risk participating in the access economy. Regardless, the findings concerning risk aversion should be loosely interpreted since the relationships are not clearly understood. Going back to the notion of trust, it is worth mentioning that consumers' level of distrust is tied to perceptions of existing CSR. This is something that would be expected for consumers in traditional B&M business; and this study has confirmed that it is also true for companies in the access economy. The more consumers distrust platform companies, the less likely they are to view those companies as being socially responsible.

Empirical & Theoretical Support of a CAS

While it is not uncommon for real-life data to violate assumptions of normality and linearity, it is worth noting the complex linear and monotonic associations between perceptions of accountability and the other variables because it provides further support for positioning the access economy as a CAS with complex agents and processes (see appendix F, Figure 10 for a holistic visual). It is clear that there is some other underlying mechanism at play that impacts how perceptions of accountability are manifested in relation to intrinsic values and other personal attributes. Based on the level of consistency in attitudes for

platform companies within certain industries (i.e. Uber & Lyft), and the divergence in attitudes for platform companies when compared across industries (e.g. ride-sharing vs. home-sharing), perceptions of the access economy as a whole, are certainly dynamic. Further supporting the access economy as a CAS is the emergent and self-organized expectations of what industry specific platform companies should do to be considered socially responsible. Participants repeated response of “*it depends*” exemplifies the path and observer dependent characteristics of a CAS as it highlights how expectations and perceptions of platform companies can be different for users who have differing perspectives.

Typology of Platform Responsibility

The access economy is a CAS in need of specific types of CSR to improve the wellbeing of workers, and strengthen the trust of consumers. Due to the dynamic nature of platform companies and the unique interactions among their agents, development can take many different trajectories. In order for HRD to enter the access economy workforce, it would be appropriate to utilize leadership strategies that align with complex notions of accountability. It was nice to see that participants in this study supported the idea that larger companies should assume more responsibility, as this is something that is understood for more traditional companies. Integrated findings also support the idea that platform companies should assume more accountability for T&D. The literature on the access economy concerns the need for more government regulations to establish and enforce platforms’ responsibility for their workers. Interestingly, the findings of this study found

that people may not actually want more government regulations, and yet there is an expectation that platform companies will voluntarily act in an ethical manner by treating workers fairly and providing more quality assurances for consumers. In an attempt to better dissect the findings, I have proposed four types of platform stakeholder responsibility (PSR) as an extension of more traditional CSR types that should and could be implemented in the access economy. The first is a type of *Socio-political PSR*, which hinges on the involuntary-voluntary spectrum of CSR. As mentioned in Chapter II, this would be considered a form of reactive CSR. It involves social pressure to publicly take a stance on social issues and acceptance of accountability for the indirect impact of intermediary interactions. As echoed throughout the responses in this study, socio-political PSR might necessitate the involvement of state authority to steer platform operations toward more ethical operations. *Socio-Autonomous PSR* is the second classification of necessary CSR in the access economy. It is further right on the voluntary spectrum and is applicable to free agents in and outside of the platform. It can be facilitated or enhanced by internal morals and the ethical leadership of platform owners. T&D would fall under this category of platform responsibility as it involves a type of guided self-regulation in that platforms leaders should work to establish a positive work culture/brand image that trickles down to workers and gently guides how they behave. Autonomous entities, as used in this PSR classification, are self-governing, yet the way the governing principles are established or adapted is dependent upon social concerns about its operations. Worker incentives or tiered benefits packages might be offered to platform users as part of a socio-autonomous PSR initiative. This could bridge the gap between conventional work practices and the current

operations of the access economy. I label the third category as *Socio-Economic PSR*. It emphasizes responsibility for reducing wage disparity and it is most likely to be involuntary. The focus here would be on balancing the financial gains between platform companies, individual workers, and the collective community. This type of PSR would incorporate a living wage, worker benefits and/or other incentives that would maintain the wellbeing of platform users and the communities being served. Although not thoroughly reviewed in this study, the fourth and final classification is *Socio-Technical PSR*. This is the area of platform responsibility that has received attention from multiple fields of study. It involves understanding the intersection and interdependence of technology and complex human behaviors. Technological PSR would require platform companies to be more transparent about their pay models, tracking algorithms, and data storage. It might entail a company refusing to sell the digital data of its consumers to third-parties or implementing more stringent protocols for how third-party entities can use the data it sells. Implementing this type of platform responsibility might reduce incidents of data breaches or exploitation of user data. Technological PSR might be the most difficult to monitor and yet, it is one of the most important types of responsibility. Drawing from many of the existing CSR domains, the developed typology is situated within complexity theory and it is adaptable to emerging constructs and changes in economic demands or social standards. Each of these PSR domains cover a very general area of CSR

Contributions to HRD Research

As an exploratory study guided by pragmatism and notions of complexity, this research can serve as part of the growing body of HRD literature that encourages holistic research that pushes the boundary of what is traditionally accepted as worthy of attention from the field (Callahan, 2012, 2013; Gold et al., 2011; Hamlin, 2015; Jayanti, 2011). This study was holistic in that it examined the individual and collective perceptions of CSR in the access economy while attempting to gauge the appropriateness of T&D. This study attempts to push the focus of HRD “from reductionist to integral, from superficial changes in behavior to profound changes in awareness, from a paradigm of simplification to that of complexity (Baek & Kim; p. 501).” Deviating from the more common positivist perspectives that are often seen in HRD research, the form of knowledge in this study is arguably most useful those identify with the criticisms and concerns of platform users. Working to get the big picture of a phenomenon might be more useful than knowledge focusing solely on understanding the iterative processes associated with work in the access economy. Due to the extreme complexity of access economy sub-systems, the presence of various industries, each with different governing laws and social expectations, it might “be impractical for the HRD practitioner to learn the hands-on details of each of the many job functions that he or she may come in contact with (Jayanti, 2011, p. 439),” but to learn about, and understand some of the nuanced expectations we have in this study should surely provide clarity on where to go from here.

Implications for HRD

HRD should aim to approach platform companies from the perspective of complexity. This is particularly important since access economy processes are interdependent and “one part of the system cannot expand indefinitely while the other parts do not grow: in the end, the whole system will collapse (Ardichvili, 2012, p. 879).” Aspects of HRD practices are bound to address the influence of organizational culture, which is an important component missing from current CSR frameworks. Platform responsibility will only work if individual stakeholders embrace and accept an ethical responsibility to others as well as the natural environment (Ardichvili, 2013). HRD can, and should be the driving force behind this effort. The field might also focus on developing self-regulating T&D strategies to help improve the long-term success of platform workers. To do so would require more focus on ethics and economic theories, as each of these are predominant business perspectives. There is no one size fits all approach and PSR initiatives should be adapted to fit specific needs, which supports the idea of a CSR continuum (Chaudhri, 2006).

Violating labor laws is generally considered unethical but the bigger issue facing many access economy business models is the amount of confusion over how to specify, regulate, and maintain stable business practices. The field of HRD does not necessarily specialize in employment law, but HRD practitioners are usually well equipped to provide guidance on how to comply with such laws. As the access economy expands and independent workers become predominant, HR(D) needs “... to reimagine its own function, including the possibility that most HR workers will become the contractors

themselves coming in from the talent platform (Relevian, 2016).” Likewise, the field of needs to “embrace the new economy and step up to the leadership challenge as experts, architects, engineers and the orchestrators of the ‘boundary-less global workplace’ (Tavis, 2016).” It will be important for HR professionals from all areas (e.g. HRD, HRM, HRIR) to collectively address the complexity of the access economy workforce.

Recommendations

As agents for human development, HRD has the capacity to influence and guide perceptions toward sustainability. Future regulations in the USA might include licensing requirements, permits for workers, adaptation of imposed taxes, and mandates for liability insurance (Wearing & Lyons, 2016). HRD strategies can be used to develop a distributed leadership system as a way to help platform companies step up to the task of development for a contingent workforce.

Future Research

This study sought to increase understanding of a relatively new phenomenon for the field of HRD and there are several areas where future research is warranted. While this study included several attitudinal constructs, it would be helpful to understand the impact of other desires and expectations that push people toward independent work. One thing that emerged through the literature review and was further supported by the qualitative findings is that the access economy provides flexibility and autonomy for workers. This is something that must be considered when developing new plans for training and development initiatives in digital business. It would be useful if future studies pay special

attention to how desire for work flexibility interacts with desire for autonomy and so forth. Developing a more thorough and synthesized review of the literature would be of great value as well. Like all philosophical and theoretical applications, the interpretations in this study represent only a plausible metaphor that can explain the behavior of stakeholders in the access economy. Emerging themes used to develop the typology of PSR may require further studies to confirm the ideas expressed in this research.

Although this study employed various methods to obtain exploratory, descriptive, and empirical information about the access economy, I was somewhat shocked to see little mention of the need for data transparency in the literature as well as throughout the textual responses obtained in this study. This is perhaps more suitable for HR management, but it might be relevant for HRD scholar-practitioners who are concerned with the use (or misuse) of machine learning technologies. It could be that the structure of the questions guided responses that were more focused on training rather than general concerns about platform companies. However, concern over companies' use of stakeholders' digital data deserves much more attention in the social science literature outside of data science and information technology journals. Some respondents mentioned a need for more clarity on how consumer information is being used, but those remarks appeared more as an afterthought to issues concerning worker protections, benefits, and T&D. As such, I feel confident in stating that the access economy can greatly benefit from HRD.

Limitations

It should be noted that the data obtained from this study did not yield a large sample of access economy workers and of the sample obtained, less than 10% identified as part of the home rental industry. As such, the findings in this study may be more indicative of perceptions held by consumers of products and services offered by platform companies, rather than the workers providing such services. Also, while only 6% of access economy workers reported having been trained on safety and ethics, it is possible that platform orientation and onboarding may have included the other forms of training listed as possible responses on the survey. For example, an onboarding program may include small snippets of ethics and safety, tips on how to maximize service performance, and general guidelines on how to operate the platform. Moreover, the terms ethics and safety are context specific with several caveats according to certain industries and actions. Therefore, no specific definitions or examples were provided on the survey and items that referenced ethics and safety were largely based on participants' thoughts on what counted as ethical or safe behavior for whatever type of platform they were thinking about while taking the survey. Indeed, it would have been useful to ask participants beforehand to think about a specific platform company and have them answer all items with that particular company or industry in mind. Future research would do well to conduct such a study.

Threats to Validity

One possible threat to the external validity of the data obtained in this study is the idea of generalizability. Since data was obtained using various social media and online

platforms, the sample may be slightly skewed toward a certain user base. For example, it has possible that Reddit users may have their own language and communication styles based on their selected Reddit communities. In the future, one way to combat this issue would be to replicate this study using an equal sample size from various social media platforms. This was not possible during the current study because of the dissertation timeframe and the use of anonymous survey links provided by the Qualtrics platform, which did not record the specific websites from which users were taking the survey. Also, one assumption of utilizing an online survey is that it's unlikely for those who are not comfortable taking an online survey to be active in the access economy. Therefore, there would not be a strong need to create a paper version of this survey in future research.

Lastly, the wording of two quantitative accountability items contained slightly different language. The rank-ordered item asked participants who they perceived as most accountable for ethical and socially acceptable business practices, whereas the second point-allocated accountability item asked respondents who they perceived as most accountable for the outcomes of business operations. While the intention of providing two scoring options for accountability was to cross examine responses, the difference in wording was an unintended oversight and it may have contributed to different dimensions of accountability perceptions. Despite this, the study was able to provide a sound understanding of how people may perceive accountability in the access economy. Also, the CStR scale developed by El Akremi et al. (2018) included three additional subscales that were not utilized in this study. It may be that excluding some of the subscales from the

CStR scale reduced its strength as a superordinate measure for stakeholder perceptions of CSR.

Critical Reflections & Concluding Remarks

One of the great things about the format of the survey utilized in this study is that participants were given free range in how they chose to respond to the open-ended items. There were no limitations on the length of responses. The scenario-based questions guided the thought process, but the wording allowed for simple Yes/No responses with the option to give as much or as little detail as possible; and seeing how most respondents provided a great amount of detail to support their choice, it can be stated that this is a topic that people care about, but may not have given any real thought to it until presented with this survey. Corporate reactions to COVID-19 have highlighted the benefits of platform companies, while showing that these types of companies can do more to protect their workers, they can do more to ensure quality service, and they can do more to control how social interactions between workers and consumers occur. After the stress from COVID-19 diminishes and life slowly shifts to a new normal, it is unlikely that platform companies will revert back to the shadows of unregulated virtual business. Ultimately, the global pandemic has shown that platform companies are fully capable of adapting to new demands and can take on more traditional forms of social responsibility. Despite insistence from platform leaders that these companies should not be responsible for the actions or safety of the workers, or the quality of the services rendered from utilizing their platforms, the world now knows that what was once stated as impossible, is in fact possible. One reason for the quick

response of platform companies could be due to self-serving behaviors, in which an opportunity presented itself and the companies decided to capitalize on the free market opening. However, it is unlikely that these companies will be able to reverse their role as responsible parties, even if the pandemic slows down. If anything, this pandemic has highlighted the need for more stringent requirements for how workers are classified and the protections they are offered. While several multinational corporations were implementing policies that allowed their employees to receive paid time off, take sick leave, and receive health care assistance, gig workers were left fighting for their respective platform companies to come to their aid. Realistically, there needs to be community-wide effort to improve the access economy. For this effort to happen within HRD, there has to exist safe and open spaces to take risks with the research agenda, make mistakes, and evolve as scholars and practitioners.

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Appendix A: List of Popular USA Platform Companies

<i>Platform Companies</i>	<i>Type/ Industry Classification</i>
Uber Technologies, Inc. (2009) formerly Ubercab IPO in 2019	Peer-to-peer ride sharing, Industry: Transportation/ Taxi Dynamic Pricing Model based on Supply & Demand
Lyft (2012)	Peer-to-peer ride sharing, Industry: Transportation/ Taxi
Turo, formerly RelayRides (2010) Privately Owned	Car-Sharing Industry: Car Rental
AirBnb (2008) Privately Owned	Home Sharing, Rentals, whole home or single room Industry: Lodging
Amazon, Inc. (1994)	Multinational technology E-Commerce Marketplace
eBay (1995) Formerly AuctionWeb	Multinational Auction style E-Commerce Marketplace, Trading Platform
Etsy (2005) B-Corp Status IPO in 2015	E-Commerce Marketplace, popular as a side-business
DoorDash (2013) Privately Owned	On-demand delivery, food courier, Logistics
Grubhub (2004) Formerly Grubhub Seamless IPO in 2013	Food ordering & delivery
Instacart (2012) Private	Same-day grocery delivery
Rover.com (2011) Private	Dog Walking Online Marketplace Operates as a Broker that takes a percentage of workers' earnings

Appendix B: Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT

You must be at least 18 years of age to take this survey. The following information is provided to help you decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You retain the right to refuse participation in this study. Should you choose to take the survey, you may withdraw from this study at any time without consequence.

Purpose & Procedure

This research is intended to examine relationships among perspectives on accountability, stakeholder values, and perceptions of corporate social responsibility (CSR). You will be asked to complete a survey about your opinions on CSR within companies that operate via a technology or online platform (e.g. Uber, Airbnb, DoorDash, wish.com, etc.). The survey will take approximately 15-30 minutes to complete and all responses are anonymous. We ask that you take the survey at a time when you can complete it in its entirety; however, you may exit the survey at any time by closing your browser.

Confidentiality & Withdrawal

Responses are anonymous, and no identifiable information will be recorded. You may withdraw your consent to participate in this survey study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study before completing the survey, any responses you provided may still be used for research.

Questions about Participation

If you have any questions about this research, you may direct them to the:
Student Investigator, Tasha S. Hart-Mrema, by email: hartm492@umn.edu
Faculty Advisor, Dr. Joshua Collins, by email: collinsj@umn.edu
University of Minnesota Institutional Review Board, by email: irb@umn.edu

Consent

I have read the above information and I agree to take part in this survey study as a voluntary participant. By entering this survey, I am implying my consent.

- I am 18 years of age or older AND by entering this survey, I am implying my consent.
- I do not meet the above criteria or I do not consent to take this survey.

Appendix C: Recruitment Scripts

Email

Dear (University of Minnesota Contacts)

I hope all is well! I am writing because I am working on my dissertation research and I have finally reached the data collection phase. I am conducting an anonymous survey on perceptions of corporate social responsibility for companies that operate primarily online. You are invited to share your opinions by clicking on the link below. Participation is voluntary and survey completion will take 10-15 minutes if taken on a computer, and approximately 15 minutes if taken on a phone or tablet. Feel free to share the link with others via email or social media. I am hoping to get a large and diverse group of people to complete the survey. All persons who are 18 years or older are welcomed to share their opinions. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks!

Follow this link to the Survey:

[Perceptions of CSR in the Access Economy](https://umn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eeSjvJ7tOUzjPP7)

Or copy and paste the URL below into your internet browser:

https://umn.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_eeSjvJ7tOUzjPP7

Social Media Adaptations

1. Hello, I am a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota. I am conducting an anonymous survey on perceptions of corporate social responsibility for companies that operate primarily online. If you are 18 or older, you are invited to share your opinions. If you would like to participate in the research, please follow the link below. This research study has been reviewed by the Institutional Review Board at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities.

Thank You!

2. I am conducting an anonymous survey for my research about perceptions of social responsibility for online and app-based companies. I need quite a few more people (18 or older) to complete the survey before I can move forward in my degree program. If you have not already done so, please share your thoughts on who do you think should be held accountable when transactions go wrong? I will take your (anonymous or confidential) survey in return if you post a screenshot showing that you completed my survey. There is a link for survey swap at the end.

3. I am a doctoral student at the University of Minnesota and I am conducting an anonymous survey on perceptions of corporate social responsibility for companies that operate primarily online. If you are 18 or older, you are invited to share your opinions. If you would like to participate in the research, please follow the link below. Also, feel

free to share the link because I am hoping to get a large and diverse group of people to complete the survey.

4. Do you think online or app-based companies have an advantage over traditional Brick & Mortar businesses? Who do you think should be held responsible when things go wrong? Please share your thoughts by taking an anonymous survey and feel free to share the link to others. You must be 18 years or older and I will be happy to take your survey
5. I need at least (x number) more completed survey responses (Must be 18 or older). Who do you think should be held responsible when things go wrong with online or app-based business transactions? Share your thoughts. I will take your (anonymous or confidential) survey in return if you post a screenshot showing that you completed my survey. I have several incomplete responses which makes data analysis difficult. There is a link for survey swap at the end. Please help!

Appendix D: Social Groups & Forums for Survey

LinkedIn

1. Network of Organizational Change Managers
2. Industrial and Organizational Psychology Professionals
3. Environment + Energy Leader Network
4. University of Tennessee, Knoxville
5. APSU I-O Psychology Master's Students, Alumni, & Faculty
6. Survey Exchange – Find participants for research studies (for dissertation, thesis, market research)
7. Business Psychology at Work: Enhance your Professional Skills through the Science of the Human Mind

Reddit Sub Forums (Posted under the Reddit name “u/The_Student_1784)

1. r/lostgeneration
2. r/economy
3. r/takemysurvey
4. r/assistance
5. r/SampleSize
6. r/GradSchool

Private Facebook Groups

1. Student Survey Exchange
2. Dissertation Survey Exchange Thesis Survey Sharing, Find participant, Swap*
3. Research Participation - Dissertation, Thesis, PhD, Survey Sharing

Public Facebook Groups

4. Dissertation Survey Exchange
5. Dissertation Survey Exchange – Share Your Research Study, Find Participants
6. The Research Survey Exchange Group
7. Survey Exchange / Survey Group / Survey Participants - Dissertation, Thesis
8. Doctoral Research Forum
9. Black Research Central
10. CSR - Corporate & Social Responsibility: Economic and Social Development
11. Gig Economy APEX Nationwide
12. The Human Resources Group
13. Human Resources

Appendix E: Survey Items

Demographic Items

1. Please select your race.
2. Please select your gender.
3. Please select your age range.
4. Sexual Orientation

5. If you are currently or have previously been an independent contractor or part-time worker for an app-based company, did you have to go through any formal training before working? Response options... Yes, No, Unsure, Have never worked for online or app-based company.
 - If yes, was the content of the training geared toward:
 - Orientation or onboarding
 - Achieving maximum service performance
 - Ethics & Safety
 - Other

6. As a consumer, how frequently do you use on-demand delivery services, participate with ride sharing, home-sharing, or use other services provided by an intermediary online platform or app-based company?
 - Multiple times a week
 - Multiple times a month
 - A few times a year
 - Never

7. If you have previously or are currently working for a ride-sharing company or on-demand delivery service, how much time do you dedicate to working each week?
 - Have never worked for ride-sharing or on-demand delivery service
 - 10 hours or less a week
 - 10-20 hours a week
 - 21-31 hours a week
 - Full time (32 or more hours)
 - Seasonal (10-20 hours)

8. Please select which sector(s) of the access economy you have previously or are currently working for.
 - Ride or Car Sharing
 - Home Sharing
 - On-demand delivery services
 - Other app-based, peer-to-peer, or on-demand service: Please specify.

9. Are you currently employed?
 - If Yes... How many hours per week do you work for pay?
 - Part time (15-32)
 - Full time (32 or more hours)
 - Prefer not to respond

Consumers Ethically Based-Distrust of Online Retailers (CEDOR)

(Likert 1-7). Please indicate your agreement that app-based and intermediary companies DO the following:

Online platform and app-based companies....

1. Exaggerate the benefits and characteristics of their offerings
2. Attempt to persuade you to buy things that you do not need
3. Use misleading tactics to convince consumers to buy their products
4. Take advantage of less experienced consumers to make them purchase

Corporate Stakeholder Responsibility (CStR)

I believe intermediary and app-based companies...

Natural environment-oriented CSR

1. Take action to reduce pollution related to its activities (e.g., choice of materials, eco-design, and dematerialization).^a
2. Contribute toward saving resources and energy (e.g., recycling, waste management).
3. Makes investments to improve the ecological quality of its products and services.
4. Respect and promote the protection of biodiversity (i.e., the variety and diversity of species).
5. Measure the impact of its activities on the natural environment (e.g., carbon audit, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, global warming).
6. Invest in clean technologies and renewable energies.
7. Encourage its members to adopt eco-friendly behavior (sort trash, save water and electricity) to protect the natural environment.

Employee-oriented CSR

1. Implement policies that improve the well-being of workers or independent contractors while they are working.
 2. Promote the safety and health of workers or independent contractors
 3. Avoid all forms of discrimination (age, sex, handicap, ethnic or religious origin) in recruitment and promotion policies.
 4. Support equal opportunities at work (e.g., gender equality policies).
-

-
5. Encourage workers' diversity.
 6. Help workers or independent contractors in case of hardship (e.g., medical care, social assistance).
 7. Support workers' or independent contractors' work and life balance (e.g., flextime, part-time work, flexible working arrangements).

Supplier-oriented CSR

The wording of the items below were adapted for applicability to the access economy in general. The phrase "workers or independent contractors" was used to replace the words "suppliers (and subcontractors)"

1. Aim to ensure that all workers or independent contractors, wherever they may be, respect and apply current labor laws.
2. Make sure that workers or independent contractors respect justice rules in their own workplaces.
3. Care that labor laws are applied by all its workers or independent contractors, wherever they may be.
4. Would not continue to deal with a worker or independent contractor who failed to respect labor laws.
5. Help workers or independent contractors to improve their own working conditions (e.g., safe working environment, etc.)*

Customer-oriented CSR

1. Check the quality of goods and/or services provided to customers.
2. Are helpful to customers and advises them about their products and/or services.
3. Respect their commitments to customers.
4. Invest in innovations which are to the advantage of customers.
5. Ensure that their products and/or services are accessible for all their customers.

*denotes items that were adapted in such a way that may have changed its meaning

Psychosocial CSR

I believe online companies... (Likert 1-7)

1. Should participate in activities that aim to protect and improve the quality of the natural environment
 2. Should target sustainable growth that considers future generations
 3. Should support nongovernmental organizations working in problematic areas
 4. Should contribute to campaigns and projects that promote the well-being of society
 5. Should contribute to the enhancement of our community
 6. Should have policies that encourage workers to develop their skills and careers
 7. Should respect consumer rights beyond the legal requirements
 8. Should cooperate with institutions in social responsibility projects
-

Ethical Beliefs

On a scale of 1-7, with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree, please indicate your agreement with the following statements.

Ethical Idealism

1. The existence of potential harm to others is always wrong, irrespective of the benefits to be gained.
2. If an action may harm an innocent other, then it should not be done.
3. One should not perform an action which might in any way threaten the dignity and welfare of another individual.

Ethical Relativism

1. What is ethical varies from one situation and society to another.
2. Moral standards should be seen as being individualistic; what one person considers to be moral may be judged to be immoral by another person.
3. Ethical considerations in interpersonal relations are so complex that individuals should be allowed to formulate their own individual codes.

Risk Aversion

1. I tend to avoid talking to strangers
 2. I prefer a routine way of life to an unpredictable one full of change
 3. I would not describe myself as a risk-taker
 4. I do not like taking too many chances to avoid making a mistake
-

Rank-Order & Open-Ended Items

Please rank the following items according to what is most important to you. 1= Most important and 5=Least important

- Access to products or services
- Speed of service
- Affordability
- Quality of product or service
- Usefulness of product or service

Please rank the following according to who you believe is most accountable for ensuring app-based and intermediary companies follow ethical and socially acceptable business operations. 1= Most Accountable and 4=Least Accountable

- Independent Workers
- The Customers
- The Company
- Government Entities

Please allocate 100 points across the following items according to who you perceive as most accountable for the outcomes of business operations. If you believe an item holds no accountability it is okay to allocate zero (0) points to it.

- Independent Workers
- The Customers
- The Company
- Government Entities

Please rank the following items according to level of importance when deciding to buy from or work for an app-based or online platform company. 1= Most important and 4=Least important

- Online Reviews
- Endorsement by a well-known social figure
- Frequent sightings, mentions, or likes on social media
- Company Reputation

Open-Ended Questions

1. If a company operates online & does not come into contact with its workers, is it responsible for training workers, independent contractors, or hosts on safety and ethics?
 - You selected "It Depends." Please explain.
 - Selected Yes... What kinds of training do you think should be implemented?
 2. If you owned an intermediary platform or app-based company (ride-sharing, on-demand delivery, online retail), would you assume the responsibility of ensuring the mental stability of contracted workers or hosts? Please explain.
 3. If you owned an intermediary platform or app-based company, who would be responsible for establishing and ensuring that your company is environmentally friendly? Please explain.
 4. If you were working as an independent contractor (not an employee) or host, for an online or app-based company, what benefits would you expect the company to provide?
 5. How do you suggest intermediary platform and app-based companies prepare and train contracted workers?
 6. How can online companies improve their workforce?
 7. What type of laws, policies, or trainings do you think would help improve the access economy?
-

Appendix F: Conceptual Map of HRD-CSR linked to AE as a CAS

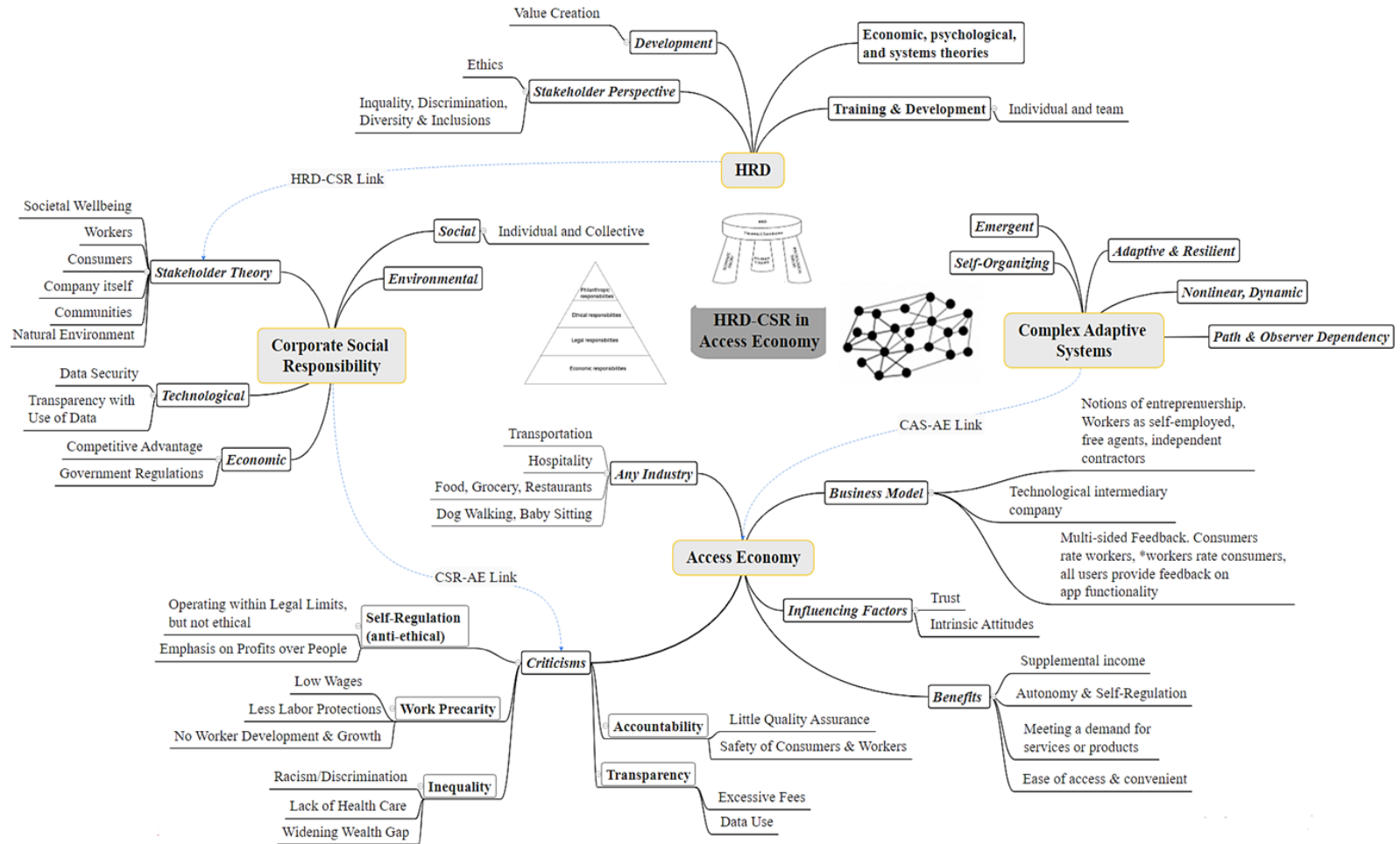


Figure 10: Conceptual Map of HRD-CSR Linked to AE as a CAS