

# Independent Workers Weigh- in on the Issue of Portable Benefits

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# Agenda

- ◆ The Team
- ◆ The Study
- ◆ Defining This Community
- ◆ Additional Context - UBER
- ◆ Social Media and Research Participation
- ◆ Research and Publishing Plan/Future Studies



# The Team

## ◆ Nicolina Weaver

- Former student
- Southern Methodist University – MBA
- Recently applied to several doctoral programs

## ◆ Erik Thorsteinsson

- From Iceland
- Texas State University – Senior
- Department of Mathematics

## ◆ Dr. Emily Summers

- Associate Professor – College of Education
- Curriculum and Instruction



# The Study

- ◆ The discussion of portable benefits continues to be advanced by private institutes, state legislatures, local municipalities, and labor unions
- ◆ The interest in portable benefits stems from the assumed misclassification of many workers in the sharing or “gig” economy



# The Study

- ◆ Groups such as the Aspen Institute and the Brookings Institute's Hamilton Project propose the addition of a third classification: the independent worker (IW)
- ◆ As defined by these groups, IWs utilize a go-between digital platform to connect them with customers



# The Study

- ◆ This is exploratory research intended to:
  - inform development of future research questions; and
  - determine the best research design and data collection method for a more involved study
- ◆ Our study is intended to fill the gap between what is proposed by benefits advocates and the opinions and needs of independent workers in the sharing economy



# The Study

- ◆ Is there a desire among independent workers (IWs) for portable benefits? If so, which benefits are most desired?
- ◆ Who should fund these benefits?
- ◆ How should such programs be administered?



# The Study

- ◆ Utilized rideshare drivers as our study population
- ◆ Reached this population through the use of industry-specific, closed Facebook groups
- ◆ Rideshare Drivers International
- ◆ 5,074 members
- ◆ Qualtrics survey consisting of 31 items





# Defining This Community

- ◆ 401 respondents
- ◆ 77% white/63% male/37% female
- ◆ 78% aged 31-60; median age range of 41 to 50
- ◆ 86% have attended college
- ◆ 44% are wage earning employees
- ◆ 60% part-time/40% full-time ICs
- ◆ 76%-IC not chosen career path



# Defining This Community

- ◆ 47% work as an IC for two companies (only 29% of respondents work for one company; 13% for three companies; 11% for four or more companies)
- ◆ 81% are not between full-time jobs
- ◆ 58% always intend to supplement their income as a IC



# Defining This Community

- ◆ 81% have health insurance
- ◆ 55% are very interested in portable benefits – of these:
  - Retirement – 55%
  - Healthcare – 59%
  - Workers' compensation – 55%
  - Paid sick leave – 55%
  - Vehicle insurance – 59%
  - Disability insurance – 55%
  - Vacation – 58%
  - Unemployment – 48%
  - Tax withholding – 50%



# Defining This Community

- ◆ 53% believe companies, along with workers, should fund these benefits
- ◆ 37% believe there should be mandatory participation by companies with a worker opt-in/opt-out
- ◆ 45% believe government should not provide these benefits
- ◆ 56% believe government (at any level) should not administer these benefits



# Additional Context: Uber – All U.S. Drivers – January 2015 to March 2017

	All	Men	Women
Weekly earnings	\$376.38	\$397.68	\$268.18
Hourly earnings	\$21.07	\$21.28	\$20.04
Hours per week	17.06	17.98	12.82
Trips per week	29.83	31.52	21.83
6 month attrition rate	68.1%	65.0%	76.5%
Number of drivers	1,873,474	1,361,289	512,185
Number of Uber trips	740,627,707	646,965,269	93,662,438



# Social Media and Research Participation

## ◆ Advantages

- Potentially shorter recruitment periods
- Reduced costs
- Potentially large samples
- Reach

## ◆ Challenges

- IRB
- Citation and reference
- Execution control
- Terms of use
- Trust
- Time zones



# Research and Publishing Plan/Future Studies

## ◆ Target journals:

- Compensation and Benefits Review
- Human Resource Management Journal
- Human Resource Management
- International Journal of Human Resource Management

## ◆ SAGE Publishing:

- Research Methods Cases - Facebook as a Research Tool – submission due May 18



# Research and Publishing Plan/Future Studies

- ◆ Basic sharing economy activities:
  - Rentals
  - Sales
  - Contract services (IWGs)
- ◆ Expand upon this study by employing our qualitative findings
- ◆ Replication of study to include other IWGs to provide a more holistic view of this issue

