Re–framing gig work as piecework

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"Red Teaming"

- If something doesn't make sense, push on it
- Try to think of counter-arguments
- Can't get your comment in now? email/tweet/be creative

Framing

On-demand [contract] work — Awesome!

- Information work (e.g. Innocentive, Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT)) [4, 13, 18]
- Expansion from information work to other kinds of work (e.g. driving, cleaning, etc...) [9, 23]

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- This is happening in other kinds of gig work too [5, 8, 15]

Bringing it all together

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- What is the future of labor advocacy?
  Will workers find means for empowerment? How? [12, 21]

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- *More amazing questions here*
- *This presentation is going really well, isn't it?*

Making sense of new with old

Gig work as piecework?

Relevant for a few reasons; piecework...

- started in the home
- paid workers on a per–task basis
- placed workers in ambiguous statuses

If we map the timeline of piecework onto the gig work timeline,
a lot of what we've seen makes a lot of sense
(maybe it was even inevitable)

Overlaying timelines
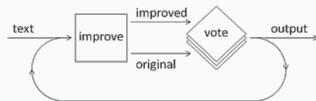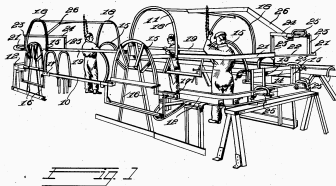
Research exploring how to improve the assembly line [6, 10] parallels research on crowd work–flows [e.g. 24]

Riis documenting pieceworkers [20]; crowdsourced documentation of "Turkers" [3]

Can we predict best and worst–case possibilities?

- think about the **best case** possibilities
  (and the prerequisites for this outcome)
- think about the **worst case** possibilities

Best case

We find ways to enable highly creative, perhaps even *complex*, teams to do difficult tasks.
Some of this is just now emerging, or in the pipeline [see 19, 22, also more of Niloufar's work].

Worst case

Low–quality work (e.g. [11]) becomes the **principle** form of work for on–demand workers.

Best case

Management becomes more transparent, diminishing the
need for tools like Turkopticon
Would require designing around rejection more carefully [17].

Worst case

Management becomes even more opaque; maybe workers get
pitted against each other in some kind of Panopticon [7].

Labor advocacy's future

Best case

Some form of labor advocacy emerges without the pitfalls of conventional labor unions (which eventually alienated more junior members by appearing somewhat ossified) [1].

Worst case

Workers never find lasting tools to counter exploitative labor markets
Would probably be the result of transient workers never being able to overcome the barriers McCallum discusses in [16].

This whole thing only works because you ask hard questions, or give me random input that may or may not be good.

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