

Call Centers and the Modern Individual

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This ethnographic study explored how working as a call center agent influenced the identity, shaped communicative styles, and affected the work ethics of an individual. The call center phenomenon was taken as a consequence of modernity in which individuals are subject to respond. Qualitative methods of research were used such as focus interviews and participant observation. Using macro and micro perspectives in analyzing the consequences of modernity, the study concludes that rather than seeing the individual as passive and restrained by the changes brought by modernity, the study presents an individual who is rational and goal-oriented; whose identity is dynamic, fluid and capable of adapting and adjusting.

Introduction

Market globalization of goods, labor, and other services, aided by the constant influx of information and communication technologies, brought changes in the work environment (Erez & Early, 1993; Featherstone, 1995). As a result, the outsourcing of call centers from the United States (US) to the Philippines is seen as a consequence of globalization.

As the Philippines opens its doors to the call center industry, one must not only look at the socio-economic impacts in terms of revenue and changes in the country's workforce. One must also consider that what constitute these call centers are individuals as communicators who, in the midst of their work practices, have to maintain their identity and relationships inside and outside the workplace.

This study focuses on individuals in a call center setting situated in the realm of modernity. How does working as a call center agent influence the identity, shape the communicative styles, and affect work ethics of the individual inside and outside the workplace? This study explores the domains of a call center setting and the adaptations call center agents make in this setting through their experiences and practices using qualitative methods of research.

The individual's identity (through his or her concept of self), communicative styles, and work attitude in a call center setting was presented as a manifestation of modernity.

Review of Related Literature

The call center phenomenon as a consequence of modern development in which individuals are subject to respond was perceived to affect the formation of identity, shaping of communicative styles, and ethical considerations of individuals. This perception prompted the researcher to consult studies on modernity, identity, socio-cultural communications, job satisfaction, and work attitude.

Modernity

Modernization refers to processes like technological advancement, globalization, industrialization, and secularization that have led to modernity. Modernity therefore is a state or condition brought by modernization in which the concept of modernism comes into play. Modernism, according to Fornas (1995), is a "movement that actively responds to the modern condition by expressing its problems and formulating possible routes of action" (59-60). Modernity also takes into account the processes that bring a society in the state of modernity. These processes can be technical, economic, political, or psychological (Fornas, 1995), and are characterized by irreversible dynamization, ambivalent rationalization, and differentiating universalization.

Modernity is irreversibly dynamic because even if the processes of change take different forms, they are intense and cannot be easily reversed. Modernity is an ambivalent rationalization because it supports both positive and negative values. It can be emancipatory and it can encourage creativity but it can also be oppressive and destructive (Fornas, 1995). Lastly, modernity is a differentiating universalization. It happens across the globe but not on the same level. Differences between regions, social strata, and subcultures are widened but certain features of life, culture, and society can be similar.

The outsourcing of call centers to the Philippines is a result of technological and economic advancements in modern society. The advancement of telecommunications infrastructure and information superhighway has paved the way for the outsourcing of call centers to the Philippines. Moreover, high costs of maintaining call centers, coupled with the high turnover rates (20% to 30% yearly) among call center agents in the US, has prompted the outsourcing of call centers to Asia (Bagnara, 2000). The demand for call centers has increased as more industries realize the significance of call centers to determine customer needs and improve their quality of service. This is seen as a welcome development for the Philippines as it generates more opportunities for our country's labor force (IBON, 2003; Lugo, 2002; Bagnara, 2000). This modern development in turn has given a new option for individuals who seek "better" jobs or new careers.

On modernity's impact to individuals in a society, Wagner (1994) stated that modernity promotes a form of liberation that translates into greater individualism and individuality because the gains of modernity allow the development of plurality and variety of individual lifestyles. In line with Fornas (1995) and Wagner's (1994) discussion, Lass (1990) argued that modernism may have tendencies to destabilize social structures as it introduces changes to existing institutions. However, such tendencies can still become instrumental because they perpetuate modern knowledge and modern power. Modern knowledge is anchored on human sciences

wherein objects like life, labor, and language are incorporated into human subjectivity. Modern power, on the other hand, individualizes, normativizes, and mobilizes social institutions like economy, politics, and family structures in order to become productive and efficient (Lash, 1990). Modern knowledge and modern power account for the plurality and immanence of instrumental reason that makes modernity operate positively (Lash, 1990). Moreover, modernism can also be characterized as a substantive rationality because it benefits the collective (social) as it benefits the individual (personal). As Lash (1990) argued, individuals satisfy their personal goals to satisfy their social goals in a modern society.

Meanwhile, as individuals become exposed to the changes occurring in the modern society, they turn out to be uncertain of what to become or what to do in life (Turner, 1994). In the state of modernity, a struggle between the individual's *will to certainty* and *will to know* exists. The individual's *will to certainty* chooses not to adapt to the changes that occur and remain to have a fixed identity while the *will to know* chooses to strive to be knowledgeable and be able to adapt to the changes brought by modernity, thus incurring a fluid identity (Tester, 1993). When individuals subject themselves to their *will to know*, they rise with a pluralist identity. They *will to know* more about the variety of lifestyles and values that are reinforced by the globalization of dominant cultural systems (Turner, 1994; Friedman, 1994). And as individuals respond to the processes of modernity, they undergo a "continuous process of accumulation of 'self' in the form of wealth, knowledge and experience" (Friedman, 1994: 91).

The emergence of call centers in the country as a consequence of modernity has introduced a new option for working individuals. Some individuals may choose to re-track their career paths and goals in life by choosing to work as a call center agent. To better understand how work/career decisions as well as experiences as a call center agent affected the individual's identity, the researcher consulted studies on identity formation in other

work settings as there were no studies found on identity formation in a call center environment during the time that this research was conducted.

Identity

Identity remains to be an interesting topic of study as there is always the possibility that an established, constructed, or shaped identity will be re-established, re-constructed (or deconstructed), or reshaped due to certain changes that may happen in the environment, in the group, or in the individual (Du Gay, et al., 2000).

In this paper, identity was analyzed in terms of how the individual viewed and understood the “self” and how working as a call center agent affected these views of the self. Studies consulted by the researcher discussed the concept of “self” as the totality of attitudes, judgment, and values of an individual in relation to his or her behavior, abilities and personal qualities that a person holds true for himself or herself. This concept of self affected the individual’s perception of his or her physical qualities and personal characteristics, career choices, and lifestyles, as well as how he or she perceives accomplishments and failures in life (Marcelo, 1981; De Gracias, 1985; Acosta, 2001).

Individual social interactions and how they adjust, cope with, and adapt to the culture of a new environment, as well as their learning experiences, are factors that shape their identity (Karunayake, 1980; Starr, 1984).

Identity is also achieved through social interactions that are re-facilitated by various communication processes. In verbal communication, for instance, the self can be contextualized in various interactions through the language used. The context in which a language is being used may manifest the overall cultural orientation of the speaker (Kashima & Kashima in Leung, et al., 1997).

Communicative Styles and Strategies

As call center agents were perceived to work in an environment that involves inter-cultural communication and customer relations wherein communication challenges arise, studies that discussed this subject were reviewed.

The individual as a call center agent communicates with foreign customers and is exposed to challenges of inter-cultural communications. Differences in cultural and linguistic approaches and divergent communicative patterns have been a source of conflict among inter-cultural communicators (Bailey, 2000). Such conflicts are resolved when communicators resort to accommodation and approximation of communicants' expectations.

Call center agents are also subject to time pressure in handling each call with a customer. In such communication situations where a conversation is done in urgency and needs to be terminated right away, politeness and efficiency matter so that the goals (that is to make messages understood by each other) of the communicators will be obtained. Politeness also matters so as not to offend the person they are talking with as they terminate the conversation (Kellerman & Park, 2001).

In customer-related situations, communication strategies such as using appropriate verbal cues and being well-groomed in a face-to-face customer interaction were found to be effective strategies (Simborio, 2002).

In selling products and services, rapport and relationship-building are essential and are achieved through direct interaction with potential customers in order to recognize their needs and wants (Regollo, 1998). Moreover, the presenter or demonstrator should have good communication skills and ample knowledge of the product or service in order to convince customers (Regollo, 1998).

However, studies on communication strategies have dealt with face-to-face communication. This study on call center agents,

on the other hand, explored the communication strategies in non-face-to-face setting where agents interact with (foreign) customers using the telephone as medium.

Work Attitudes and Ethical Considerations

This study on call center agents provides an analysis of informants' work attitudes and moral judgments in determining the ethical considerations involved in their work. In line with this, several studies on the practical aspects or the ethical practices of individuals with regard to their choice of career and attitudes towards their jobs were reviewed.

Ethical considerations were evaluated by observing the rational decision-making processes of an individual and by doing an in-depth analysis of their moral judgments in a particular situation (Wu, et al., 2001). What is considered ethical involves the social practices of the group, basing it on what is socially acceptable or not. These ethical considerations are anchored on one's values, principles, and loyalty to self and others. More often than not, conflicting loyalties between the "self" and the "other" lead to some ethical dilemmas (Estrada & Dallado, 1998).

Turning to work satisfaction, several researches have shown that employees who are satisfied with their jobs tend to have a positive work attitude. For example, there exists a good employee-employer relationship where, among others, the management keeps its employees informed and aware of the company's situation (Encarnacion, 1995). Employees also become satisfied with their jobs when they gain a good status in the company. It does not matter if they do not get high salaries as long as the pay is reasonable enough to meet their needs and the type of job corresponds with their skills and abilities. In addition, they are satisfied with their jobs because they get to practice what they have learned in college and because the work environment is conducive to higher learning (Alfaro, 1993).

Job satisfaction is instrumental in satisfying individuals' needs which is related to their work attitude and personality traits. These needs do not ultimately pertain to financial or material needs but their so-called higher needs (Maslow in Laguyo, 1986), like the need for autonomy and the need to realize their own potential. However, their need to realize their own potential may not just emanate from their personal set of values and personal understanding of the "self". Certain factors like socio-economic status can influence their decision in choosing a career or profession (Laguyo, 1986). This study took into account this understanding of the "self" and personal needs in relation to individuals' decision to choose to work as center agents, as well as their attitudes towards this type work.

Study Framework

The state or condition (modernity) brought by the processes of change (modernization) is characterized as irreversible dynamization, ambivalent rationalization, and differentiating universalization (Fornas, 1995). From a macro-level perspective, this study takes the call center workplace and its nature of work as a product of the technical, political, and economic processes of modernity where the individuals, as social actors, are part of.

According to Rapoport, et al. (in Rowan & Cooper, 1999: 96), plurality and fluidity are necessary to adapt to the extensive changes occurring in a modern society. They said that the individual should be flexible and adaptive to the dynamic and diverse consequences of modernity. To be able to adapt to the rapidly changing socio-economic environment, a pluralistic sense of self is hence required which then leads to a pluralist identity (Fornas, 1995; Rapoport, et al. in Rowan & Cooper, 1999).

From a micro-level perspective, individuals as call center agents are seen to adjust to the nature of the chosen job and adapt to its cultural practices through everyday job performances and experiences in the workplace. Their adaptations were attributed

to the patterns of practices that they execute inside and outside the workplace.

In the macro or micro levels of analysis, modernization is evaluated in terms of the three characteristics of modernity. The descriptions of the modern work and the modern individual are characterized as irreversible dynamization, ambivalent rationalization, and differentiating universalization of modernity. These descriptions are presented in Table 1.

As modernity connotes something that is recent, new, and evasive, the call center is deemed to fit the description. The thriving of the call center industry in the country invokes inevitable changes in the economy (as what the country is experiencing in this decade), society, and most importantly in the individual.

Consequently, individuals in a modern society are seen to have a pluralist identity: a dynamic and fluid identity that enables them to adapt to the changes brought by modernity and yet remain to be anchored to their concept of “self” which comprises attitudes, judgment, and values in relation to their behavior, abilities, and personal qualities.

The individuals’ identity through their sense of self in the realm of modernity manifests through the patterns of practices and performances in the workplace, thereby shaping communicative styles and affecting the work ethics of individuals situated in a call center environment (See Figure 1).

Methodology

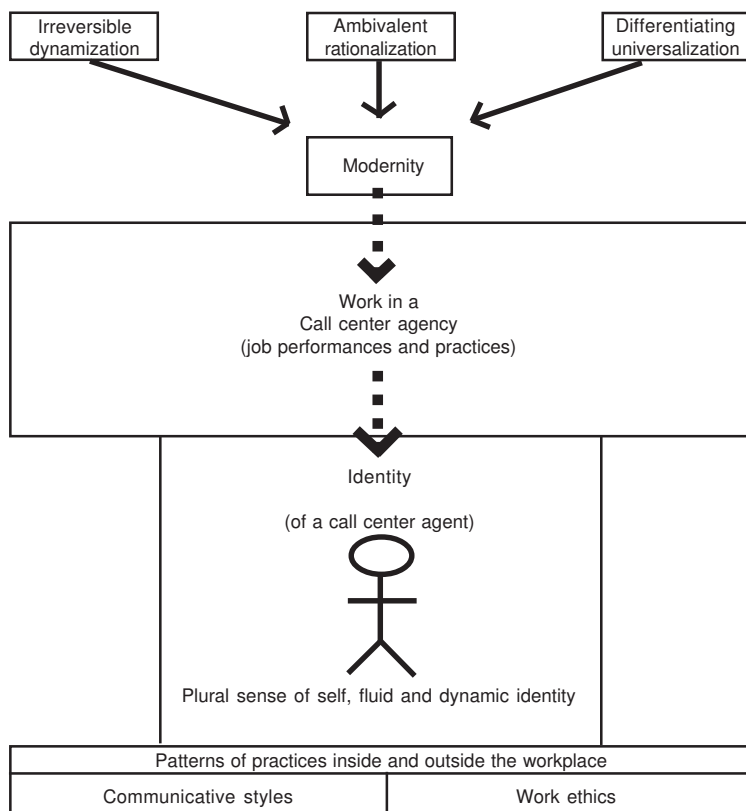
In an attempt to discover how identities, communicative styles, and work ethics of workers are influenced and/or shaped in this work environment, qualitative research methods were used in this study. It focused on the processes of interaction and communication involved in a call center environment as performed by the agents, referred to as social actors. An inductive approach was used to come up with a description of this phenomenon, give meanings to the experiences, and understand the processes of social actions involved.

Table 1. Characteristics of modernity in macro and micro levels

| Characteristics of Modernity | Macro-level (Kind/Nature of Work) | Micro-level (Identify/Individual) |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| Irreversible dynamization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes that have been made in the nature of work cannot be undone • the nature of work can still undergo changes due to levels of modernization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes that occur in the individual choices and actions cannot be reversed • more changes in the individual's preferences are expected as individuals adapt to the on-going changes in the modern society |
| Ambivalent rationalization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes in the labor and demands can bring more jobs for a particular group but may mean more jobs lost in another group • outsourcing labor and services can be a cost-effective means of production but at the expense of relatively low wages and human resource exploitation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be emancipating in the sense that natures of the job can increase morale and knowledge of its workers and offer good compensation • can also be repressive as individuals may experience job fixation and can be controlled by secularized systems • choices in life may be grounded on an individual interest but at the same time benefit the collective • goals in life can be instrumental and/or substantive |
| Differentiating universalization | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • changes in the nature of work are happening across the globe but operate in different contexts in the host societies • the nature of work can be similar but not at the same level or degree of intensity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • realizations of individuality, and how self is seen as different from the "other" • individuals differentiate in various life contexts – e.g., differentiation between self and others; and between self and work |

Source: Characteristics of modernity in macro and micro levels based on Fornas' Theory of Modernity (Fornas, 1995).

Figure 1. Operational framework: Identity of call center agents in the context of her or her work in the call center agency, in the realm of modernity



Source: Operational Framework of Study (Dagohoy, 2004). This is an integration of Fornas' (1995) Theory of Modernity and Rappoport, Baumgardner & Boone's (1999) Theory of Plural Self.

This study is exploratory in nature as it follows the hermeneutics and the phenomenological traditions. By adopting the ethnographic approach, it involved the *performance* of individual actors that are carried out from the *practice* sanctioned by a bigger social group. Hence, the performances of individuals as call center agents and the practices inside and outside the workplace were crucial in the analysis of the problem.

The observed performances were in the form of language, communication styles, and work attitudes that were elicited by using these two research methods:

- 1) Participant Observation – A leading call center agency in the Philippines was chosen to be the work setting, where social actors were observed as they performed their jobs as call center agents. The researcher herself took a part-time call center job to observe the social actors in their natural setting wherein their performances as call center agents and their interactions with co-workers were noted in a journal. This took place from September 13, 2003 to January 3, 2004.
- 2) Focus Interview – There were 14 key informants in this study from different call centers in Makati and Ortigas. Focus interviews were conducted, during which thoughts, feelings, and attitudes based on a common experience between the researcher/ethnographer and the informant as call center agents were shared.

The data gathered were presented in matrices and were categorized based on the following conceptual indicators: identity, communicative styles, and ethical considerations.

Results and Discussion

The call center was regarded in this study as a product of modernity that contributes to changing the labor force in the country as a manifestation of the emerging knowledge economy (Fornas, 1995; Graham, 1999). As modernity is characterized as dynamic, ambivalent, and universal, change is seen as global, inevitable, and irreversible. In the case of call centers, outsourcing to the Philippines brought dramatic changes in the country's labor force. It introduced a new career option for young professionals that has influenced their identity, shaped their communicative styles, and affected their ethical considerations and attitudes toward work.

How Identity is Influenced

The identity of call center agents is seen in terms of their concept of self. This includes the awareness of knowledge and abilities as an individual; belief and values that they hold; goals and aspirations in life; and how they respond to challenging situations related to their work. The self is further reflected in the agents' communicative actions inside the workplace; their actions and reactions to certain situations particularly when on a call and speaking with a customer; and his or her relationship with people inside (co-workers) and outside (family and friends) the workplace.

However, the individuals are willing to re-tool themselves to be able to take on a new job (being a call center agent) and is not restricted by their college degree. Instead, the individuals consider other factors that define the self like awareness of strengths and weaknesses, as well as beliefs and values in making decisions on what job to take for now in order to fulfill higher goals in the future, thus keeping their concept of "self" intact.

Informants said that they consider the call center as a learning environment where they can enhance their communication skills. Their job helps them broaden their knowledge because of crash courses on a particular product or industry that they get whenever there is a new account assigned to their team. The nature of the job also enhances their skills in dealing with people, as well as their analytical reasoning and problem solving abilities.

The expression of the self is also manifested in how the informants adapted to the change in their lifestyles brought about by timezone differences (as agents work at night), purchasing power (as agents relatively earn more than average white-collar employees), and the quality time spent with friends and families.

Individuals as call center agents – rather than subjecting to their *will to certainty* and not adapt to changes and remain to have a fixed identity – become subject to their *will to know* and choose to strive to be knowledgeable and adaptable to these

changes brought by modernity, thus rising with a pluralist identity (Tester, 1993; Rapoport, et al. in Rowan & Cooper, 1999).

The identities of the individuals in a call center setting serve as a manifestation of how individuals take part in a modern society. These identities are seen as dynamic and fluid as individuals welcome modern development as an opportunity to achieve certain goals in life that are anchored to their concept of self.

Communicative Styles

As having a dynamic and fluid identity enables the individuals to adapt to the changes brought by modernity, call center agents also tend to manifest such fluidity. A call center agent's communicative styles and techniques in conversing with a customer vary, depending on the type of caller. Moreover, each agent has a distinct type of approach in handling a call. Some would sound very professional and stiff, while some would sound very friendly and accommodating.

Communicative styles and techniques are shaped through the agent's day-to-day interaction in the workplace and on-the-job performances. However, there was no definite style or technique employed by the informants in dealing with customers as they have tried to adjust themselves to every situation or type of customer that they have handled. Nonetheless, how they interact with the customers served as an expression of the self such as being simple, aggressive, emotional, perky, cool, and all-business.

Experiences in the workplace have changed and improved the way agents communicated with customers and with other people outside the workplace. Informants said that they became more patient, understanding, and empathic in dealing with different kinds of people. Moreover, the experience of talking to usually irate or inquisitive foreign customers raised the level of confidence and positive regard towards the "self" as the informants realized the extent of their capabilities and discover certain aspects like the ability to persuade, convince, or appease customers.

The experiences in the workplace play a significant role in the emergence of an identity through the processes of interaction and communication (Du Gay, 1996). Manifestations of the self are seen in detail from the distinct approaches of agents in communicating with customers on the phone. The individual as a call center agent develops a style or technique in communicating with customers that is adaptive to the customers' concerns and needs. This allows them to adjust to the types of customers that vary with age, race, and gender in a multi-cultural context. The various styles and techniques that the call center agents employ in communicating with customers show a dynamic and fluid approach which are the main attributes of a pluralist identity that individuals imbibe in a modern society.

Ethical Considerations and Work Attitudes

The interviews and observations reveal how the co-agents interacted with each other in their respective workplaces. They gave moral support to their co-agents who were handling a difficult call or experiencing a bad day at work. They also boosted each other's self-confidence whenever they were feeling down, shared experiences from previously encountered customers, and laughed and told stories during their free time.

Working as a call center agent can be physically and mentally stressful; it can even sometimes be emotionally disturbing because of the pressures of attaining work goals like sales quota or low average handling time while at the same time trying to always render good quality service to customers. Despite feeling stressed and burned-out after long hours of work and tensions caused by irate customers, call center agents maintained their politeness and composure in addressing customer concerns.

Common rules among call center agencies revealed the informants' testimonies and the ethnographer's experiences. These include an all-English policy on the floor; strict schedule compliance; maintaining a professional atmosphere on the floor;

and keeping information confidential. Similar standards were also followed – e.g., giving quality customer service, maintaining low handling time, and attaining the team’s goal. Sales agents, meanwhile, needed to meet the required sales quota for the day. Customer service agents, on the other hand, needed to answer a particular number of calls assigned by their supervisors and maintain a low average handling time as much as possible.

Ethical considerations and some dilemmas were identified from the informants’ experiences during actual calls. More specifically, they had to make some actions and decisions in accordance with the rules and standards imposed by the company that were sometimes in conflict with their beliefs and values. Conflicts arose when the relationships of agents with friends or families were affected because of the nature of their job, especially for those who worked in night shifts. During days-off, agents preferred to rest and regain lost energy to be able to perform well in their job the next day. Because of this, less time was spent with families and close friends. Informants tried to resolve these conflicts by compromising their relationships with their significant others and accepting the situation since it was their choice to take on this job.

Call center agents found their work to be monotonous at times as they tended to handle almost the same conversations and deal with similar problems every day. Agents also saw their work as routinary as they placed or received calls and spoke with customers the whole day or night, every day of the week.

Despite the monotony and stress in the workplace, along with the values and beliefs that they had to compromise, agents took the entire situation as a challenge and a learning experience that would improve the “self”.

Conclusion

Fornas' (1995) theory of modernity provided a framework that analyzed the processes that characterize modernity, namely irreversible dynamization, ambivalent rationalization, and differentiating universalization. The framework was used in analyzing the macro perspective of modernity that takes work, particularly in a call center, as a product of modernity's processes. The same theoretical frame was used in analyzing the product of modernity at the individual level through its influence on identity, communicative styles, work ethics, and attitudes of call center agents.

From a broader perspective, the call center is seen as a manifestation of the characteristics of modernity as presented by Fornas (1995). The study took a closer look into the work setting of a call center agency and focused on the practices of social actors inside where these characteristics were further emphasized.

For instance, given the reports regarding the bright future of the call center industry in the country that promises jobs and revenues (Arce, 2002; Lugo, 2002; Damazo, 2002), it can be inferred that it is indeed here to stay not just as a trend but as a major player in the country's labor and knowledge economy. It can also be one of the most preferred, if not the preferred, job by competent, unemployed, young professionals in the labor force at present. The changes made by the emergence of this industry cannot be reversed and will continue to flourish.

On the surface, the country may see a bright future with this thriving of call centers. It may promote Filipino competence and encourage other call centers abroad to invest in the country. However, this can be at the expense of compromising our cultural and national identity as we cater to the global operations of call centers. Will we expect a society where majority of economists, biologists, artists, social scientists, are taking or making calls? Cases in point are the informants in this study. Informant 13 is a Marketing graduate who was already working in an IT company's

marketing department but who chose to work in a call center. Other examples were Informant 11 who felt overworked and underpaid in her previous job; and Informant 9 who is a Social Science major but worked not as a social scientist but as a call center agent.

Since the theme of modernity is characterized by a denaturalization of tradition in which change is constant, working as an agent is transient and not permanent. This is in accordance with the informants' statements that they have other plans and goals to pursue and working as an agent is only a means to attain those goals.

At the individual level, the conditions of modernity can be seen in the context of being a call center agent. What the self has become as the individual adapts to the changes set by modernity cannot be reversed and this can be beneficial or detrimental to the "self." Having a pluralist sense of self (which rises to a pluralist identity) entails ambivalent rationality over decisions or actions made by these individuals. An example of this is the attitude towards being a call center agent. For the informants, work is seen in many ways as stressful and routinary. Agents sometimes feel bored, estranged, and pressured by the standards that they should meet. They also feel distressed by conversations with mostly irate customers. Oftentimes, the work causes relationships with significant others to suffer. Agents therefore tend to miss other performative roles outside the workplace. In addition, changes in lifestyle have also brought anxiety and discomfort that they need to adjust to. However, they still choose to work and stay "in the meantime" as call center agents while waiting for the right opportunity to pursue their personal goals.

Given these circumstances, individuals' sense of self may be dislocated. Hence, call center agents have no choice but to do their job because they chose it, in the process alienating the individuals from their work. However, the call center agents in this study were able to undermine the "alienating" factors of their job through a process of rationalization. Moreover, they were

able to find ways to enjoy themselves while on the job by establishing new relationships in the workplace. The difficulties and stress which they felt were taken as challenges that they had to face. Being able to overcome these challenges gave them a sense of fulfillment.

The informants discovered that they could be persuasive, talkative, aggressive, and extroverted through their conversations with a complete and (perceived to be) intimidating stranger. Their discovery gave them the realization of the boundaries of the “self” and a sense that they were able to know their “self” better. Positive characteristics such as patience, responsibility, hard work, dedication, and being focused on the job were further enhanced because of the nature of their job. Agents treated customers not as mere customers but as peoples that they have to relate to and empathize with. Thus, performance in the workplace were taken as a learning experience that may eventually be useful as they strive for higher goals.

The self in the context of modernity is not exempted from its thematic changes. The individual sees the job as a call center agent as temporary because he or she will soon have to pursue other aspirations in life. In a call center environment, the self is seen as dynamic in performing the role as an agent by employing communicative styles and techniques that were deemed appropriate for a particular situation. The agents also tend to compromise, if not sacrifice, beliefs, values, and other social roles in order to adapt to the demands of the kind of work they have. In the process of adapting to such demands, individuals gain a learning experience that equip them with skills and knowledge as they strive for the identified goals in life.

The new trend in the labor force set by call centers and the nature of work in a call center agency gave rise to individuals with a pluralist sense of self and enable the individual to adjust and adapt to the differentiations, dynamics, and ambivalence of modernity.

Individuals choose to take a job as a call center agent and subject the self to the conditions set by the work environment as a response to the challenges of modernity. Individuals compromise their will to certainty and lean towards their will to know, thereby having a pluralist identity while still being anchored to their concept of self.

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