Balancing stress and well-being: Telemarketing agents in Bangalore, India

Dr. Premilla D'Cruz

Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad
Email: premilla_dcruz@yahoo.com

Dr. Ernesto Noronha

Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad
Email: ernesto_noronha@yahoo.com

Balancing stress and well-being: Telemarketing agents in Bangalore, India

ABSTRACT

The human dimension of India's outsourcing sector is yet to receive adequate academic attention. To this end, a qualitative study (rooted in van Manen's hermeneutic phenomenology) exploring experiences of work among telemarketing call center agents in Bangalore, was conducted. Conversational interviews, conducted with 13 participants, were subject to thematic analysis. Sententious analysis revealed the core theme of staying on top. Participants sought to balance the stress and well-being emerging from their work such that stress never overshadowed well-being and ambivalence was minimized, with the overall attempt being to maintain control over their lives. Emotion-focussed coping and defence mechanisms facilitated this process. The findings of the study reflect the job demands-resources model and support the link between control and well-being.

KEYWORDS: *Telemarketing, stress, well-being, coping, ambivalence*

INTRODUCTION

A call center can be defined as a work environment in which the main business is mediated by computer and telephone based technologies that enable efficient distribution of incoming calls (or allocation of outgoing calls) to available staff, and permit customer employee interaction to occur simultaneously with use of display screen equipment and the instant access to, and inputting of, information (Holman 2003).

Call centers are organizations/departments that are specifically dedicated to contacting clients and customers. Inbound call centers mainly respond to incoming calls and deal with questions / complaints / requests that customers may have. Outbound call centers are mainly for contacts initiated by the organization, they are primarily for attempts to sell a product or a service. Call centers can harbour jobs of different levels of qualifications, ranging from unskilled people who provide standard information (sometimes reading from prescribed scripts) to frequently asked questions, to highly qualified personnel who deal with unique complex problems (e.g. technology help desks) (Dormann & Zijlstra, 2003).

Telemarketing call centers, as the name suggests, are outbound call centers where a product or service is to be sold through virtual mode. Such a job involves emotional labour and marketing skills, rendered complex by the absence of face to face interaction. In addition, performance in telemarketing jobs is measured essentially by the number of sales made in a

specified time period, besides other parameters such as quality of interaction, length of time per call, and so on.

The use of modern telephony and computer-automated equipment has radically altered the transportability of services (Miozzo and Ramirez, 2003). By switching customer contact from locations that were proximate to the customer to locations that consolidated service providers, organizations have been able to reduce the need for costly high street outlets and expensive branch networks. Moreover, the centralization of service pro-vision has enabled firms to rationalize the work process through the extensive use of information and communication technologies thereby maximizing the use of service workers' time. The standardization of service encounters with customers and the use of functionally equivalent and interchangeable service providers has also helped call centers to achieve great speed and efficiency in the delivery of their services (Gutek, 1995). Moreover, call centers require their employees to be skilled at interacting directly with customers while simultaneously working with sophisticated computer-based systems which dictate both the pace of their work and monitor its quality. At the same time, reliance on call centers can carry costs for organizations. An emphasis on service throughput to the detriment of service quality can erode customer loyalty and damage an organization's reputation for competence in service delivery. This is particularly the case where organizations have made the call center their principal source of interaction with the customer. The competing pressures of high productivity and customer service have often proved difficult to reconcile (Korczynski, 2002; Mulholland, 2002; Taylor et al., 2002). Nor has the related issue of managing the labour process been an easy task to execute. Tight control can deliver efficient task completion but it is unlikely to elicit high-quality performance from employees. Control workers too completely, as Fuller and Smith (1996, p. 76) observe and management will 'extinguish exactly those sparks of worker self-direction and spontaneity' that are so critical for service quality.

As workplaces, the literature on call centers presents a dualistic picture. One set of studies describe call centers `electronic sweatshops' (Garson, 1988), 'twentieth-century panopticons' (Fernie and Metcalf, 1998) and `assembly lines in the head' (Taylor and Bain, 1999). The jobs have been characterized as `dead-end' with low status, poor pay and few career prospects. Moreover, the research has shown that much of the work is closely monitored, tightly controlled and highly routinized. Computer technology plays a critical

part in this process; work can automatically be allocated to telephone operators to minimize waiting time, the speed of work and level of downtime can continuously be measured and the quality of the interaction between the service provider and the customer can be assessed remotely and at management's discretion (Macdonald and Sirianni, 1996). Other studies present a different image of call center work. Frenkel et al. (1998), for example, point to a greater diversity in call center work revealing environments where jobs provide challenge and interest and where the skills of front-line workers are acknowledged and valued. For instance, service work requires employees to exercise subjective interpretation and judgement and to exhibit customer care skills which influences the perceived quality of interaction (Ashforth and Humphrey, 1993). Tightly scripted dialogues and routinized responses can impair the service that is provided to the customer.

While organisations have benefited from call centres in terms of reducing the costs of existing functions and extending and improving customer service facilities (Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2003), Holman (2003) points out that the benefits for employees are less clear. Research on employee experiences of work in call centres demonstrates considerable diversity in their findings. There is evidence that some employees find this form of service work greatly rewarding and enjoy the social interaction and peer support that can exist in many call centres (Frenkel, Korczynski, Shire & Tam, 1998 & 1999; Korczynski, 2002). For others, the work is stressful and exhausting due to its routinised and centralized nature (Korzcynski, 2002). Clearly, the research findings present a dichotomy that deserves further attention. To explore and understand this dichotomy, the researchers opted for a qualitative research design. Qualitative methods provide well-grounded, rich and contextualized descriptions and explanations of experiences and processes (Bryman & Burgess, 1999). They allow for the preservation of complexity and chronology, the concomitant representation of contradiction as well as the assessment of causality. Serendipitous findings and new theoretical paradigms are likely to emerge (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which can be further studied and developed. Another significant purpose is to challenge the status quo and identify new paradigms or directions of inquiry (Morse, 1991). The researchers believed that such an approach was most appropriate to provide insights into the dynamics of call centre employees' experiences of work.

THE CALL CENTER INDUSTRY IN INDIA

The call center industry in India forms part of the IT enabled services (ITES)/ business process outsourcing (BPO) sector which has emerged as India's new sun-shine sector and the country is now one of the prominent electronic housekeepers to the world (Babu, 2004). Corporations in the ITES-BPO sector handle a host of back office work which includes responding to credit card enquiries, preparation of invoices, pay rolls, cheques, reconciliation of daily accounts, writing medical transcriptions, processing applications, billing and collections (Babu, 2004). Outsourcing is driven by cost-cutting motives. Companies around the world find that they can cut a sizeable portion of their costs by moving their work to destinations such as India due to the availability of skilled, English speaking labour whose wages work out to a fraction of the wages paid in the home country. The expansion of high speed telecommunication links, the growth of internet-based communications and the declining costs of computers and communications also vastly aided the outsourcing trend (Chithelen, 2004).

According to NASSCOM, there are over 200 companies participating in the ITES-BPO segment and the numbers are growing every year (NASSCOM, 2005). In value terms, the share of ITES is small in the domestic market (about 1.5 per cent of the domestic IT market) but it has grown rapidly by about 4000 per cent during 1997-2003 (NASSCOM data cited by Basant & Rani, 2004). During 2003-04, the ITES-BPO segment is estimated to have achieved a 54 percent growth in revenues as compared to the previous year (NASSCOM, 2005). The NASSCOM data also show a rapid rise in employment in IT enabled services as well. It increased from about 42,000 to 1,60,000 during 1999-2003 (NASSCOM data cited by Basant & Rani, 2004). By the year 2008, the segment is expected to employ over 1.1 million Indians, according to studies conducted by NASSCOM and leading business intelligence company, McKinsey (NASSCOM 2005).

The boom in BPO activities has prompted policy planners to view this sector as one of the potential avenues to absorb the growing mass of educated unemployed. Despite the growing attention on the employment potential of the booming sector, the conceptualization of its long-term implications is still in a nascent stage. This has been further supported by recent discussions in the mass media on the uncommon nature of issues confronted by the workers in the sector (Babu, 2004). In this context, this study was

undertaken in Bangalore, India, to provide insight into experiences of employees working in this sector.

METHODOLOGY

Design

Given the study's mandate of understanding participants' subjective experiences of work, a qualitative approach, embedded in the phenomenological tradition, was adopted. It was believed that such a strategy would allow the researcher to build a holistic and complex picture of the problematic while simultaneously capturing experience as it is lived (Creswell, 1998). Following van Manen's (1998) approach, the conversational interview was used to explore and gather experiential narrative material. Though unstructured, the process was disciplined by focusing on the fundamental question that prompted the research. Yet the clarity of the research question did not preclude exploring issues that emerged during the interview.

Process of data collection and selection of participants

As is the case in the phenomenological tradition, participants in the study should be people who have experienced the phenomenon. Potential participants were identified through snowball sampling and contacted via the telephone. Once the researchers introduced themselves and explained to the participants how they had come to know of them and their contact details, the purpose of the phone call and the study were explained. Potential participant questions were answered – these questions essentially related to the purpose of the study and the length of time for the interview. If they agreed to participate, a convenient time and place were set up. Permission to record the interviews was sought, and since participants were explained that recording the interview helped to maintain the accuracy of their accounts as compared to compiling field notes where accuracy could be compromised due to faulty recall later, they agreed. The interviews were later transcribed by the research assistant. Thirteen participants (8 male and 5 female) between 21 and 29 years were included in the study.

Data analysis

The treatment and analysis of data followed van Manen (1998). That is, thematic analysis was employed to grasp and make explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience. Themes were isolated using the sententious (where we attend to the text as a whole and

capture its fundamental meaning) and selective (where we repeatedly read/listen to the text and examine the meaning of statements which are particularly revealing) approaches. Through the sententious approach, the core theme of staying on top emerged. Using Miles and Huberman's (1984) concept of causal networks, the researcher developed a conceptual map which depicted the inter-relationships between the components of the core theme (Figure 1), capturing in the process the complexity of participants' experiences. Causal networks were initially developed for each transcript. Networks developed at the ideographic level were compared, and through the creation and use of uniform labels across networks and the subsuming under these labels of variables that dovetailed together, a nomothetic level was achieved across participants.

Methodological rigour was maintained through prolonged engagement (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and consensual validation (Eisner, 1991)/peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1999). Prolonged engagement led the researchers to spend a lot of time in the field, discussing emergent issues with experts in order to ensure that their observations and inferences were not spurious or subjective. Moreover, particular importance was given to rapport building with the respondents – it was opined that making the respondents feel comfortable and establishing their trust would play a critical role in helping them to share their stories. During the course of the interview, the researchers used probes and cross-checks to better their understanding of respondents' narratives. Immersion in the data during the process of analysis helped the researchers gain insight into respondent experiences and ensure the rigour of the findings. For peer debriefing and consensual validation, the researchers shared their analysis procedures and outcomes with academicians working in the area of qualitative research methods who reviewed the researchers' methods, interpretations and findings, providing critical evaluations, suggestions and feedback. Themes were examined, articulated, reinterpreted, added, omitted and reformulated. The attempt was to derive a common orientation to the experience and to help the researcher see limits in his/her present vision and to transcend them. The incorporation of these inputs strengthened the analysis.

FINDINGS

Participants' experiences of work are captured through the core theme of 'staying on top' (See Figure 1). For participants, work was associated with positive and negative experiences. Positive experiences, stemming from various aspects of work life such as

financial independence, organizational internal environment and facilities, skill and career advancement, and performance and achievement, were associated with personal growth, purpose in life, satisfaction and fulfillment and positive self-concept, all of which are attributes of well-being (See Ryffs and Keyes, 1995). Negative experiences, whose antecedents include   inability to adjust to shifts, inability to meet performance requirements, hours and intensity of work, and handling irate customers, were associated with physical and psychological distress and dissatisfaction, indicators of stress that participants sought to minimise. Owing to the coexistence of positive and negative experiences and of stress and well-being, participants displayed ambivalence towards work which itself reinforced distress and sought to be resolved.

Inherent in these experiences of work was the attempt to balance positive and negative experiences such that the former was never overshadowed by the latter and to minimise ambivalence. Various forms of coping were relied upon to ensure that the balance was successfully maintained, concomitantly keeping the degree of ambivalence in check. The decision to continue with their jobs/in this sector in spite of stress limited the problem-focussed coping strategies that participants could rely upon. At the most, they tried to alter various unpleasant aspects of the work environment to enhance the conduciveness or to search for long-term alternatives in keeping with their long-term goals. Under such circumstances, their coping essentially centerd around emotion-focussed strategies particularly the use of defence mechanisms. Strategies included reliance on social support and leisure activities while defence mechanisms comprised compartmentalization, intellectualization, rationalization, affective blunting and reaction formation. These strategies altered their perceptions, cognitions and feelings about their circumstances facilitating acceptance of their predicament and keeping in check the experience of stress through the cognitive elimination of negative experiences. Engaging in various forms of resistance also facilitated coping, though this was not without risk of being caught and perhaps even terminated.

That participants perceived either their employment as part of a larger individual/family plan that they valued or the job mobility that they enjoyed as a source of control, enhanced their coping and added to their sense of well-being, indirectly contributing to the maintenance of the equilibrium.

Overall, the attempt to stay on top was not confined to just ensuring that well-being outweighed stress and that ambivalence was kept in check, but that participants could maintain a sense of control over their lives.

DISCUSSION

Through its phenomenological approach to the study of how call center employees experience work, the present inquiry has been able to capture both complexity and holism. While earlier studies by and large focussed on particular aspects/issues such as control, stress, work-life balance and emotional labour, this inquiry has extended our understanding through its more comprehensive standpoint, highlighting the dynamic and complicated linkages between stress, well-being, coping, ambivalence and sense of control through the core theme of 'staying on top'.

While the experience of distress in response to sources of negativity in the workplace resembles Selye's conceptualisation of stress as a response, the core theme of staying on top embodies Lazarus's conceptualisation of stress as a transaction between the individual and his/her environment in which primary appraisal, secondary appraisal and reappraisal and coping efforts are relevant (Lyon, 2000). That participants did not quit their jobs but attempted to cope within the constraints of their situation limited the alternatives from among, and efficacy of, problem focussed coping strategies, setting the stage for emotion focussed coping strategies to gain prominence. This lends credence to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) claim that emotion focussed coping is more common when events are not changeable.

The emphasis on maximising well-being and the overall goal of striving for control over one's life finds support in Ryff and Keyes's (1995) conceptualisation of well-being as comprising six dimensions. These dimensions are: (1) Self-acceptance: a positive evaluation of oneself and one's past life; (2) Environmental mastery: the capacity to effectively manage one's life and the surrounding world; (3) Autonomy: a sense of self-determination and the ability to resist social pressures to think and act in certain ways; (4) Positive relations with others, expressed by, for instance, a genuine concern about the welfare of others; (5) Personal growth: the sense of continued growth and development as a person as well as openness to new experiences; and (6) Purpose in life: the belief that one's life is purposeful and meaningful and that one has something to live for.

Weigert and Franks (1989) describe the twentieth century as the age of ambivalence where approach-avoidance tendencies overlap. According to them, one of the ways to resolve ambivalence is to accentuate the positive aspects, and in the context of work, this means developing strong commitment to work. In other words, commitment facilitates resolution of doubts and dissonance (Pratt, 1994). Other means of resolving ambivalence include accentuating negative aspects through criticism, sarcasm, derogatory comments, and humour which allow anger and frustration to be expressed while simultaneously maintaining the link with the source of negative experiences as well as engaging in psychological escapist behaviours which allow for ignoring or avoiding the source of distress such that a sense of distance emerges between the person and the stressor (Pratt & Doucet, 2000). An examination of the coping strategies employed by the participants support Pratt and Doucet's (2000) observation that a combination of all these strategies is relied upon, demonstrating vacillation.

The study findings underscore the relevance of control and its link with well-being, stress and ambivalence. Though sense of control has been variously defined, it essentially refers to one's perception of one's ability to alter a situation, response, or outcome related to a stimulus or all three (Ruiz-Bueno, 2000). Rotter (1966) is credited with proposing locus of control which refers to the extent to which people believe that they have the ability to affect outcomes through their own actions. Some people believe that they have substantial influence over their lives and that their actions influence particular outcomes. These people are said to have internal locus of control. Others who believe that that they are relatively powerless and have little influence over outcomes are said to have an external control. Internal control is associated with greater well-being since the individual believes that he/she can direct situations and events that impact his/her life (Ruiz-Bueno, 2000). Personal control refers to the perception of the self as a source of causation. Typologies of personal control such as those of Averill (1973) and Thompson (1981) include forms such as behavioural control, cognitive control and decisional control which parallel coping strategies. Personal control is seen as a robust predictor of well-being (Skinner, 1995). Lack of control is associated with heightened stress (Steptoe & Wardle, 2001).

The results of the study are in keeping with prominent theories that have linked perceptions of control in various forms to employee well-being. Hackman and Oldham (1976)

considered autonomy to be a major cause of job satisfaction and positive adjustment to work. In Karasek's (1979) demands-control stress model, the hypothesis is that control at work buffers the impact of job stressors on well-being. Spector's (1986) meta-analysis showed that perceived autonomy and participation at work were related to job satisfaction and other measures of well-being. According to Lawler et al (1995), management approaches that empower employees by giving them more control have been advocated as both effective and humane. Likewise, internal locus of control at the workplace (i.e., the belief that one has control at work) has likewise been linked to employee well-being (Spector & O'Connell, 1994). Spector et al's (2002) research of 24 culturally diverse countries across 5 continents supports the hypothesis that the salutary effects of perceived control on well-being are cultural universals because relations of work locus of control with well-being at work were similar in almost all the sampled areas.

The notion that a job may be simultaneously demanding and rewarding is captured by the job demands-resources (JDR) model. Job demands refer to those physical, social and organizational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort on the part of the employee and are therefore associated with certain physiological and/or psychological costs. Job resources refer to those physical, psychological, social or organizational aspects of the job that either/or reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, are functional in achieving work goals and stimulate personal growth, learning and development (Demerouti et al, 2001). Bakker et al (2003) used the JDR model to examine how job demands and job resources are related to absenteeism and turnover intentions among call center employees. Their study revealed two different processes at play. The first process involves energy depletion starting with high job demands such as work overload, changes in tasks, emotional demands, which lead to health problems, and consequently, to longer periods of absence. The second process is motivational in nature whereby call center employees who can draw upon job resources such as social support from colleagues, supervisory coaching and performance feedback, feel more dedicated to their work and more committed to their organization, and consequently, are less inclined to leave the organization. Clearly, a dual process is operational, as the present study findings highlight.

References

Ashforth, B. and R. Humphrey (1993) 'Emotional labor in service roles: the influence of identity', *Academy of Management Journal*, 18, pp. 88-115.

Averill, J.R. (1973). 'Personal control over aversive stimuli and its relationship to stress'. Psychological Bulletin, 50, 296-303.

Babu, R. (2004). Cybercoolies. *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 31

Bakker, A.B., Demerouti, E., & Schaufeli, W.B. (2003). Dual processes at work in a call center: An application of the job demands-resources model. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology,* 12, 393-417

Basant, R. and Rani, U (2004) 'Labour Market Deepening in India's IT: An exploratory analysis', *Economic and Political weekly*, 39 (50), pp. 5317-5326.

Bryman, A., & Burgess, R.G. (1999). Qualitative research methodology: A review. In A. Bryman & R.G. Burgess (Eds.), *Qualitative research*, Volume I (pp. ix-xlvi). London: Sage

Chithelen, I (2004) 'Ourtsourcing to India: Causes, Reaction and Prospects', *Economic and Political weekly,* 39 (10), pp. 1022-1024.

Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* California: Sage.

Demerouti, E., Bakker, A.B., Nachreiner, F., & Schaufeli, W.B. (2000). The job demands-resources model of burnout. *Journal of Applied Psychology,* 86, 499-512

Dormann, C., & Zijlstra, F. (2003). Call centers: High on technology, high on emotions. *European Journal of Work and Organisational Psychology,* 12, 305-310

Eisner, E.W. (1991). *The enlightened eye.* New York: Macmillan.

Fernie, S. and D. Metcalf (1998). (*Not) Hanging on the Telephone: Payment Systems in the New Sweatshops.* London: Centre for Economic Performance, London School of Economics.

Frenkel, S., M. Korczynski, K. Shire and M. Tam (1998) 'Beyond Bureaucracy? Work organization in call centres', *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 9(6), pp. 957-79.

Frenkel, S., Korczynski, M., Shire, K., & Tam, M. (1999). *On the front line*: Organisation *of work in the information economy.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Fuller, L. and V. Smith (1996) 'Consumers' reports: management by customers in a changing economy', in C. L. Macdonald and C. Sirianni (eds), *Working in the Service Society*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Garson, B. (1988) *The Electronic Sweatshop: How Computers are Transforming the office of the future into the factory of the past,* NewYork: Simon & Schuster.

Gutek, B. (1995) *The Dynamics of Service: Reflections on the Changing Nature of Customer/Provider Interactions*, San Francisco Jossey-Bass.

Hackman, J.R., & Oldham, G.R. (1976). Motivation through design of work: Test of a theory. *Organisational behaviour and human performance,* 16, 250-279

Holman, D.J. (2003). Call centres. In D.J. Holman, T.W. Wall, C.W. Glegg, P. Sparrow & A. Howard (Eds.), *The new workplace.* Chichester: Wiley

Karasek, R. A. (1979) Job demands, job decision latitude and mental strain: Implications for job redesign. *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 24, 285-307

Korczynski, M. (2002) *Human Resource Management in Service Work: The Fragile Social Order*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Lawler, E.E., Mohrman, S.A., & Ledford, G.E. (1995). *Creating high performance organizations.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass

Lazarus, R.S., & Folkman, S. (1984). *Psychological Stress and the coping process*. New York: Springer.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. California: Sage.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. (1999). Establishing trustworthiness. In A. Bryman & R.G. Burgess (Eds.), *Qualitative research,* Volume 3. California: Sage.

Lyon, B.L. (2000). 'Stress, Coping, and Health- A Conceptual Overview'. In Virginia Hill Rice (Ed.), Handbook of Stress, Coping and Health. Sage Publications Inc. New Delhi. 3-18.

Macdonald, C. L. and C. Sirianni (eds) (1996) *Working in the Service Society*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Miles & Huberman (1984). *Qualitative data analysis.* California: Sage

Miozzo, M. and M. Ramirez (2003) 'Services innovation and the transformation of work: the case of UK telecommunications', *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 18(1), pp. 62-79.

Morse, J. (1991). Strategies for sampling. In In J.M. Morse (Ed.), *Qualitative nursing research* (pp. 127-145).California: Sage.

NASSCOM (2005). Executive summary. Retrieved 25th May 2005 from www.bpo.nasscom.org/artdisplay.aspx?cat_id=619

Pratt, M.G. & Doucet, L. (2000). 'Ambivalent Feelings in Organizational Relationships'. In Fineman, S. (Ed.), Emotions in Organizations. Sage Publications Inc. New Delhi. 204-224.

Pratt, M.G. (1994). 'The happiest, most dissatisfied people on earth: ambivalence and commitment among Amway distributors'. PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (University of Microfilms).

Rotter, J.B. (1966). 'Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement'. Psychological Monographs: General and Applied, 80, 1-26.

Ruiz-Bueno, J.B. (2000). 'Locus of control, Perceived control, and Learned Helplessness'. In Virginia Hill Rice (Ed.), Handbook of Stress, Coping and Health. Sage Publications Inc. New Delhi. 461-478.

Ryff, C.D. & Keyes, C.L.M. (1995). 'The structure of psychological well-being revisited'. Journal of Personal and Social Psychology. 69, 719-727.

Selye, H. (1977). Introduction. In D. Wheately (Ed.), Stress and heart. New York: Raven Press.

Spector, P. E. (1986) Perceived control by employees. *Human Relations,* 39, 1005-1016

Spector, P.E., & O'Connell, B.J.(1994). The contribution of personality traits, negative affectivity, locus of control and Type A to the subsequent reports of job stressors and job strains. *Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology,* 67, 1-11

Spector, P. E., Cooper, C.L., Sanchez, J.I., O'Driscoll, M., & Sparks, K. (2002). Locus of control and well-being at work: How generalisable are Western findings? *Academy of Management Journal,* 45, 453-466

Steptoe, A.& Wardle, J. (2001). 'Locus of control and health behaviour revisited: A multivariate analysis of young adults from 18 countries'. British Journal of Psychology.

Sturdy, A. and S. Fineman (2001) 'Struggles for the control of affect – resistance as politics and emotion', in A. Sturdy, A. Gruglis and H. Willmott (eds), *Customer Service,* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Taylor, P. and P. Bain (1999) "An assembly line in the head": Work and employment relations in the call centre', *Industrial Relations Journal*, 30(2),

Taylor, P., G. Mulvey, J. Hyman and P. Bain (2002). 'Work organization, control and the experience of work in call centres', *Work, Employment and Society,* 16(1), pp. 133–50.

Thompson, S.C. (1981). 'Will it hurt less if I can control it? A complex answer to a simple question'. Psychological Bulletin, 90, 89-101.

Weigert, A. and Franks, D. (1989). 'Ambivalence: a touchstone of the modern temper', in D. Frank and E. McCarthy (eds), The sociology of emotions: Essays and Research Papers, Greenwich, CT: JAI Press. 205-27

Van Manen, M. (1998). *Researching lived experience.* Canada: Althouse

Figure 1: Staying on top

Ambivalence

Wellbeing

Stress

Striving for
control over
one's life

Coping
strategies

Link between
current
employment
and individual/
family plans

Job
mobility
which
provides
sense of
control