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Globalization and the Call Center Industry

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abstract: The call center industry is one of the most rapidly growing areas of work globally. Drawing upon a multidisciplinary and collaborative approach to studying call centers, the book and report reviewed here provide sociological insights on the process of globalization and the transformation of work and labor relations. Issues addressed include resource strategies, managers and management, jobs and job skills, women's careers in call centers, worker control and autonomy, and union organizing. The studies illuminate the need to rethink some of the logic that drives work organization in the call center industry and offer strategies for collective mobilization, including the role of unions in protecting the rights of workers within and across nations.

keywords: call centers ♦ globalization of services ♦ labor union organizing ♦ offshore outsourcing ♦ work organization

John Burgess and Julia Connell, eds, *Developments in the Call Centre Industry: Analysis, Changes and Challenges*, Routledge Studies in Business Organization and Networks. New York and London: Routledge, 2006, 205 pp., ISBN 0415357020 (hbk), 0203003004 (pbk), US\$125.00.

Centre for Education and Communication, Communication Workers of America, Jobs with Justice, New Trade Union Initiative, Young Professionals Collective, *Bi-National Perspective on Offshore Outsourcing: A Collaboration between Indian and US Labor*. October 2006, 100 pp. (pdf)
www.jwj.org/campaigns/global/indiacollaboration.html

Technological innovations in the last two decades have led to a restructuring and reorganization of work. The emergence of information and

technology-driven economies has expanded the service sector and redefined notions of time, space, distance, production, consumption and boundaries on the global stage. It has changed the social, economic, cultural and political environment and the nature of global interaction. Services once considered 'non-tradable' across international borders as they involve person-to-person contact are now taken for granted. New communications technologies and investment in telecommunications infrastructure have made the long-distance transfer of information realizable and inexpensive. Along with ongoing Taylorization of work processes, these changes have made possible the rapid globalization of services such that many services previously produced only locally are now outsourced or 'offshored'. These services include call centers, software development, financial services, stock market research and medical transcriptions.

The call center industry, in particular, is one of the most rapidly growing areas of work globally. It epitomizes some of the key contemporary issues concerning the shifting nature of work, labor relations, economic development and regulations. The breadth and complexity of issues that call centers represent have drawn attention from many disciplines resulting in a range of analytical frameworks and methodologies. Numerous media and scholarly articles, edited volumes, texts, reports and books are increasingly available clearly indicating the relevance and proliferation of call centers as a topic of study.

Although not specifically written by sociologists, the edited book and report reviewed here draw upon a multidisciplinary or collaborative approach to studying call centers. They raise important sociological questions and provide insights into the process of globalization and the transformation of work. Both the edited volume and report are easily accessible to a wide spectrum of readers. Although my primary focus will be on the edited book and the range of issues it covers, the bi-national report also reviewed here is valuable as it displays an important type of collaboration employed in the study of the call center industry by labor organizations and offers some recommendations from labor organizations on call center work in India and the US.

Edited by Burgess and Connell, *Developments in the Call Centre Industry: Analysis, Changes and Challenges* is a multidisciplinary volume that provides a valuable analysis of the past, present and future of the call center industry. Although this collection does address some of the issues that have already been discussed, it adds considerably more in the breadth and depth of issues, approaches, methods and countries covered by the various authors. It also complements three other important volumes that bring together research on call centers (Deery and Kinnie, 2004; Frenkel et al., 1999; Holtrewe et al., 2002).

The chapters in the book are organized according to the analysis employed. A meta-analysis is followed by national studies and the volume

ends with some micro-level studies. Covering topics such as human resource strategies, managers and management, jobs and job skills, women's careers in call centers, worker control and autonomy and union organizing, the chapters include both studies of countries where the call center industry has existed for a while (the UK, Australia) and countries where this is an emerging and rapidly growing sector (India, South Korea, Greece). Collectively these chapters address, albeit with diverse analytical frameworks and methodologies, key questions on the nature of work. Underlying these questions lie the broader implications for production, distribution of wealth, employment and consumption from the growth of this sector as well as an understanding of the kinds of tensions, pitfalls, contradictions and possibilities associated with this form of globalization.

Starting from a meta-analysis approach, Chapters 1, 2 and 3 lay out an overview of the developments and trends in the call center industry. Chapters 4 and 5 use large-scale survey data to focus on work organization and human resource management strategies in German call centers, and employment relations and labor issues in South Korean call centers respectively. With a qualitative approach, Chapters 6 and 7 focus on call center employees' skills and careers, with Australia and the UK as the sites of study. Chapter 7 addresses the important dimension of gender, specifically the skills and career prospects for women in call centers in the UK, while Chapter 8 highlights the issues of union organization in call centers from a trade organizer's point of view. Finally, Chapters 9, 10 and 11 focus upon managerial practices and work organization in call centers, using data collection methods that include extended unstructured interviews, semi-structured interviews, observation and participatory research.

Burgess and Connell's introductory chapter sets the tone for the book by laying out the contextual framework for the development of the call center industry: explaining the increasing academic interest in this topic and areas studied; summarizing the key findings of the chapters and concluding by suggesting some of the areas for future research. What comes out in this introductory essay is the magnitude and complexity of the call center phenomenon and its evolving, shifting and global reach. Three major causal factors are attributed to the phenomenal growth of call centers and the changes it has brought about in business delivery service, service sector work and the sites where service is being done. These three factors are (1) the expansion and range of information and communication technology (ICT); (2) the restructuring of organizations enabled by ICT; and (3) the use of ICT and restructuring of organizations to relocate employment sites of production and employment from consumption.

Drawing upon white papers, research studies and trade reports, Snigdha Srivastava and Nik Theodore's essay (Chapter 2) on offshoring call centers uses the lens from 'wall street' to identify key trends and issues related to

offshore outsourcing. While acknowledging the biases of using consultancy reports geared toward attracting corporations to offshore, they include these reports in their analysis as they play a critical role in framing the issues and the decision-making process in the US as to whether or not to offshore/outsource. Four principal motivations behind corporate decisions to offshore call center services are identified: (1) the increase and improvements in telecommunications technology coupled with a concomitant decrease in telecommunications costs; (2) the increased standardization of software platforms enabling homogeneity of employee skills across organizations; (3) an extensive English-speaking (as well as Spanish-, French- and German-speaking) population in parts of the developing world that provides a desirable workforce for multinational and domestic companies; and (4) the substantive wage cost differential between workers with the same skill set in the US and workers in low-wage countries. Although Srivastava and Theodore note (as do Taylor and Bain in Chapter 3) that this move to offshore is partially driven by shareholder expectations of increased share value and by consultants spinning optimistic narratives of the upside and inevitability of offshoring, they warn of the negative consequences from job loss for US workers, concerns of quality control for consumers and a backlash for the industry as a whole.

It appears that what ultimately determines the shift to offshoring is the win-win situation in terms of profitability from the wage differential as well as the safety of a large labor supply. In the end, corporations are able to capitalize on 'people-cost arbitrage' with workers in developing countries being perceived as more pliant, skilled, competent and hard-working. These workers receive higher wages in call centers as compared to comparable jobs offered in their home country, yet work at cheaper rates than comparable workers in the West. Thus, for corporations, offshoring solves both the problems of the high-cost wage factor and the related scarcity of labor in low-cost domestic locations within the US.

Taylor and Bain argue (Chapter 3) that though the globalization of service work and the concomitant emergence of a new international division of labor will continue, the 'context' in which call centers are situated is imperative for understanding what drives work organization and change at the workplace. Using the Indian context, the authors identify some of the key issues of work organization and employment relations and also provide a framework for comparing employment relationships in the UK and India. An examination of the recruitment, selection and training of Indian agents shows that despite both the availability of a large pool of English-speaking workers and rigorous recruitment, selection and training procedures (including accent training), problems in attaining the desired quality of interaction between Indian agents and western customers persist, due to linguistic and cultural differences. The nature of the

labor processes indicate that task performance of workers is generally standardized, routinized, highly monitored and includes concealing worker identity and location (Mirchandani, 2003) to prevent customer backlash. The labor process is determined by the interests of western corporations and their customers with negative consequences (psychological, physical and emotional strain) for a non-unionized Indian workforce as a result of the work patterns that are imposed. While Taylor and Bain effectively contradict the assumption that the transferring of call center services to India is unproblematic, their discussion of the problems of linguistic capability and cultural differences of Indian call center workers in customer interaction is perhaps overemphasized. That aside, this is an excellent essay, which argues well for using a contextual approach in understanding the globalization of service work and the nuances that shape work organization and labor processes in different countries.

This contextual approach is well demonstrated by Weinkopf's study of work organization and human resource management strategies in 18 German call centers as well as by Lee and Kang's overview of employment relations and labor issues in call centers in South Korea. Both of these studies show how national conditions and institutions, including social partnerships and protections, form the context that influences management and labor issues. Weinkopf indicates that the prevailing pessimism about work conditions may not be warranted in all cases of outsourcing. She argues that the national conditions and institutional framework afford possibilities for companies to improve work conditions without focusing solely on cost-cutting measures or on enforcing rigid controls and standardized work organization.

In the Korean case, however, the situational context is somewhat different. Since 2000, Korea has witnessed a rapid growth in the establishment of call centers that apply ICT to various industries. Despite the potential for the call centers to be a source of employment, particularly for women, Lee and Kang indicate that little interest has been shown by the Korean government to actively support the expansion of this industry. While these centers have become a source for employment and services, this sector relies heavily on outsourcing these call centers to subcontractors and employs a very high percentage of 'non-regular' (temporary) employees. The result is that Korean call centers are characterized by a non-union workplace with a predominance of temporarily employed, female customer service representatives with extremely limited possibilities for upward career mobility.

This gender component on call center work in Lee and Kang's essay fits well with Durbin's essay (Chapter 7). Based on fieldwork in four call centers that are a part of the UK's largest financial services organization, this study focuses on examining career opportunities for women, especially

management positions. While the call centers studied employ predominantly female workers, senior management is consistently male dominated. Culturally, there is a persistence of gender-based stereotypes on the part of male management regarding women's skills, explanations of why women work in call centers and the type of characteristics that make for an 'ideal' worker. These stereotypes shape recruitment practices and limit the opportunities for women's promotion. Structurally, corporate practices of creating flat organizational structures within call centers make it hard for women to make progress. Even in cases where there is some opportunity for upward mobility, women tend to be steered to people management roles requiring 'soft' skills reinforcing gender-based stereotypes that create a culturally and structurally defined glass ceiling. Other perceived barriers to women's advancement include a lack of role models in management positions, inadequate training, family commitments and an absence of support. What is highlighted in Chapters 5 and 7 is the gendering of call center work. Although call centers may be a source of increased employment, they are also likely to place women in a pool of temporary workers with few benefits. Even when there is full-time employment this does not necessarily translate into a good career trajectory for women within the industry. It appears, then, that the gendered division of labor within work organizations persists despite the emergence of a large and growing service work sector. One might ask, however, especially in the Lee and Kang study, why, despite the lack of career opportunities within call centers, do female workers see such employment itself as a source of empowerment? Does it increase women's purchasing power and provide higher salaries when compared to other job options. Do such jobs shape women's agency in wider cultural contexts?

One might also ask what are the commonalities or differences between information-service work in call centers and the industrial work model? Russell's essay (Chapter 6) engages in such a comparison in his discussion of Australian call centers. The author's findings come from a workforce survey conducted in four call centers and supplemented with field observation, sitting alongside call center agents. Russell argues that call center info-service work has similarities with mechanized assembly line work in that it can be repetitive, routinized and standardized; yet it differs in demanding more knowledge-based workers with a certain degree of non-linear, multi-task functionality, not usually required for assembly line work. The contradiction that emerges in info-service work (by contrast with assembly line work) is that while call centers employ 'knowledge' workers (educated, skilled), the work organization itself in call centers frequently does not allow employees the kind of scope and discretion in interactive communication that is found in other knowledge-based industries. Highly educated workers are recruited and then become dissatisfied and disempowered by their jobs because they are subjected to

task routinization, a lack of discretionary power, performance surveillance and the repetitive use of mundane skills. Thus work can potentially lose the promise of quality associated with knowledge-based work economies.

Context is also critical for understanding the similarities and differences in terms of managerial practices and work organization. Houlihan (Chapter 9), Koskina (Chapter 10) and Lindgren and Sederblad (Chapter 11), individually and together, provide a good argument for the importance of 'context' in understanding global issues with their focus on call center managers, managerial practices and work organization. Using two different British call centers and drawing upon a multi-method approach that includes interviews, observations and in the case of one center, full personal participation as a call center agent, Houlihan provides much needed insights into the experiences of front-line managers. His analysis supports Frenkel et al.'s (1999: 14) representation of the coexistence of two divergent 'images' of call centers: the regimented versus the empowered organization; but it also brings to bear some of the common tensions that managers experience, despite these different systems. Illustrating his findings with insightful quotes from managers, Houlihan effectively paints a picture of managers actively engaged in making choices and decisions, yet simultaneously experiencing considerable pressure, tensions from struggling with conflicting role requirements and contextual constraints that include the lack of much needed support.

Focusing on call center management approaches and the structure of work as the context to explain the experiences of call center work in Greece, Koskina questions the perspective that contingency is predominantly dependent on technology, and hence that Taylorism ultimately determines the nature of call center work. Based on her research on the structure, work organization and performance management of four non-unionized call centers in Greece, she argues that the national context in which these call centers are located play a much more pivotal role than does technology in shaping the character and efficacy of the call center labor process. In the Greek call centers studied, a common understanding and identification of key cultural values intertwined with a sense of the political history of the country, define work organization and performance management.

While the lack of unionization in call centers in Greece does not appear to impact worker empowerment significantly, the Lindgren and Sederblad study on workplace strategies in Swedish call centers indicates that the context of unionization of many call centers does, to some degree, influence the strategies that management use in the workplace. Based on an observation of three call centers, Lindgren and Sederblad examine the possibility of worker autonomy in call center work, and introduce the concept of 'flexible autonomy'. In the Swedish call centers studied, the work performance and the labor process were tightly controlled but the control was

creatively offset by a degree of freedom at work along with a workplace strategy of compensating workers through breaks, amenities and workers' space, work teams and even reductions in call quotas to guarantee labor retention and commitment.

While Lindgren and Sederblad's chapter addresses the notion of flexible autonomy in the context of the prevalence of unions in most Swedish call centers, it is Rainne and Drummond (Chapter 8) who really focus on union organization. More specifically, they focus on an organizer's experience in leading a successful campaign to unionize at a non-metropolitan Australian call center in Latrobe Valley (100 km east of Melbourne). The authors provide a much needed trade union organizer point of view in the call center literature. The chapter also showcases action research with the organizer as a participant in the process. They use transcribed interviews carried out over a two-year period as the campaign developed, field notes and the organizer's own record of the process. The context and the process of unionization laid out in this chapter show that applying a community-based model of union organization can lead to successful collective mobilization and unionization. The Latrobe Valley case shows how developing knowledge of community and connection with community life and issues can help in developing workplace union organization, and in turn, workplace union organization linked to the community can help build stronger communities. It is important to note, however, that the community-based union organizing model offers but one alternative to the traditional forms of union organizing.

Which leads us to the report *Bi-National Perspective on Offshore Outsourcing: A Collaboration between Indian and US Labor*. We know that offshore outsourcing is not a new phenomenon. It has been a major part of capitalist production and corporate restructuring first in manufacturing and, in the 1970s, in the service sector. Until the 1990s, however, outsourcing of service work usually occurred primarily in the country where the company was located, or in developed countries. More recently, multiple factors (as discussed earlier in this review) have led to the shift of outsourcing/offshoring from developed countries to developing countries. This shift is a cause of concern for labor unions as it has reduced the collective bargaining power of the labor in the industry of the country from which it was outsourced by allowing corporations to access non-unionized employees in developing countries. The rapid expansion of the service sector in India and the loss of these service jobs in developed countries such as the US have implications for labor in both societies. For unions in the US, the primary concern is about unionized jobs being outsourced, while for Indian unions, the primary concern is the lack of unions to protect the rights of workers in this burgeoning service industry. Vital questions are raised. Given the complexity of issues that have

emerged with the expansion of the service sector and the ongoing global restructuring and reorganization of work, how can unions in these countries address the global phenomenon of outsourcing, assess its impact on workers across nations and develop strategies for collective mobilization and for protecting the rights of workers?

The report *Bi-National Perspective on Offshore Outsourcing* represents a collaborative attempt to facilitate dialog and cooperation across borders. A joint project of Communication Workers of America (CWA) in the US, the Centre for Education and Communication (CEC) in India, Jobs with Justice (JwJ) in the US and India, the New Trade Union Initiative (NTUI) in India and the Young Professionals Collective (YPC), this study analyzes the effects of offshore outsourcing on workers in India and the US from a labor rights point of view. Although the study itself is limited in its comparative cross-national methodological approach and is primarily descriptive in nature, the report is sociologically pertinent and provides some valuable insights. Such reports point out the need for more sociological attention to comparative action research on labor and work organization issues at the local, national and global level.

The objectives of the labor organizations collaborating in this bi-national study can be defined as threefold: (1) to understand the nature of work, employment and labor relationships in call centers and their impact on workers in two countries, India and the US; (2) to identify existing and potentially shared interests among workers/unions and thereby challenge the view that workers and unions in developing and developed countries are divided; and (3) to ensure some common trade union demands for the industry.

The report describes the genesis of the study and the research methodology; provides an overview of outsourcing and offshoring globally, in the US and in India; discusses working conditions in the US customer servicing industry; and profiles three BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) firms in India. The report also presents findings from a survey done among workers in call centers in India; as well as labor's bi-national recommendations; together with brief organization profiles of the collaborating organizations participating in the bi-national response to offshore outsourcing.

In India, unions such as the NTUI and YPC are concerned that collective mobilization to protect labor rights is largely absent in the call center industry and emphasize the need to explore strategies for highlighting worker issues with the industry and government. In the US context, the fear of the status of employment relations and labor standards in the call center industry has led to exploratory organizational initiatives to remedy this situation in India.

While corporations through their public relations departments are attempting to put their outsourcing in as positive a light as possible, there has been some public backlash against the countries to which jobs are

being relocated. CWA, which has organized workers in the call center industry and is the largest American union of telecommunications workers, is concerned about jobs being outsourced, increasing unemployment and the implications of the loss of these jobs for workers and worker well-being in the US. They have organized public relations campaigns against outsourcing corporations and placed pressure on legislators to enact legal reforms. JwJ has worked with unions like the CWA to address outsourcing issues and its impact on workers/working-class communities as well as to prevent the xenophobia and anti-immigrant sentiment that emerged as an outcome of the way mainstream political parties dealt with the legitimate concerns of US workers impacted by outsourcing. Hence the coming together of these unions/organizations in India and the US is the basis for the study and its attempt to understand and assess the implications for workers, and jointly respond to the nature of work, employment and labor relationships in call centers.

Despite the noteworthiness of the attempt, a drawback of this report is its comparative methodological framework of analysis. Ideally, such an endeavor necessitates simultaneous field research or a comparable analysis of projects in both countries. However, the entire analysis used in the bi-national report to describe working conditions in the US is based on 'The USA Call Centre Industry 2004: National Benchmarking Report' by Rosemary Batt, Virginia Doellgast and Hyunn Kwon (Batt et al. 2005). An excellent study in itself, this benchmark report is written from the point of view of managers rather than from that of call center workers. The study examines management strategies, HR practices and performance measures drawn from a survey of general managers in a nationally representative sample of 470 establishments that cover a workforce of 206,725 in call centers servicing a spectrum of industries. The analysis of the Indian side for the bi-national report, on the other hand, profiles three companies: Wipro, Accenture and Convergys, and uses primary source survey data collected from call center employees. However, given the difficulty in accessing workers, the primary data collected is based on a non-representative sample survey of 249 call center employees (mostly center agents and a few team leaders and managers) from the three firms, with 85 of the 249 respondents drawn from an assortment of other firms. Methodological limitations aside, this bi-national report does offer some valuable comparative insights on working conditions as well as providing some direction through its recommendations and collaborative approach.

A comparative analysis of workplace structure and work conditions among US customer service workers and Indian call center workers shows some marked differences and explains the corporate rationale that drives multinational corporations to outsource to countries like India. The average worker in India is younger, unmarried, has more years of college

education, works longer hours to meet quota expectations, receives a sixth of the salary of a call center worker in the US and is more likely to be hired on a contractual basis with no job security. However, in terms of purchasing power parity, the Indian call center worker received a compensation equivalent to 75 percent of their American counterpart.

Work conditions in India appear to be much worse than in the US with more electronic monitoring and control of workers; intense pressure on workers to meet daily targets and efficiency goals; stress and burnout from working atypically long hours in night shifts; dealing with irate customers and experiencing cultural confusion from adopting western names in customer interaction. Twenty percent of the workers in the Indian study also endured severe health problems and behavioral disorders. Lack of upward mobility within the job and the monotony of the work were camouflaged by a management strategy of using feel-good, sound-good job titles. But there is very high labor turnover.

The US study found that union in-house jobs have the best trained employees and the highest worker retention while non-unionization was the norm and practice in Indian call centers. The Indian study found that a management strategy of individualism under the guise of teamwork coupled with technology-induced surveillance prevented collective action. That said, 38.15 percent of the workers were positive about unions. This indicates that though these call centers currently lack unions, there is the possibility of collective organization in the future. However, given the profile of employees, the nature of the work, the work organization, the corporate culture and management strategies in this service sector, unions may have to rethink their strategies for organizing and look beyond traditional types of union that defined industry previously.

The recommendations of the bi-national report offer a possible avenue to begin to address labor concerns and organize unions across international borders. The Indian organizers frame their recommendations by noting that a united global perspective for all workers must consider the interests of all sections of the global workforce. They emphasize that while the service sector is a growing industry and is creating much needed jobs in urban India, unions have worked to ensure that quality jobs and the developmental needs of the global South are prioritized over customer service. For Indian labor, work intensity rather than salary is seen as the key differentiator between employment conditions in India and the US. There are workers in this industry in India who feel the need to form associations to express their grievances and aspirations. Unions can play a role in building and aligning with non-union associations so as to enable workers to gradually accumulate the confidence for unionization. Unions and collective bargaining in the parent company operations in the US need to push for the right to form unions/collective association

in Indian operations. An important union objective should be to achieve parity in wages in terms of purchasing power. International laws need to be developed to regulate subcontracting and ensure accountability for labor standards across the globe.

US labor organizers recommend that steps be taken to prevent this important service being dominated by 'low road' employers, interested in paying bottom-line costs through subcontracting and ignoring the real needs of customer service; that measures of accountability be developed and that call center workers negotiate with their employers through collective bargaining to stop the subcontracting of their jobs; that US employers stop blocking workers who want to unionize and that existing laws be changed to allow for fair union representation; that organizing customer service workers in the global South be seen as a priority that requires unions in the global North to be more proactive in collaborating with organizations dedicated to organizing these workers.

Most importantly, the bi-national report recommends the need for corporations to take the 'high road' approach to call center work where the provision of quality work conditions and employment relations will enable employees to provide quality service and accountability to customers. It recommends that call center workers, irrespective of their location, must recognize that they are fighting against a common problem – employers with no other interest than maximizing profit at the expense of the customer service worker – and develop strategies to ensure that multinationals cannot pit workers against each other.

From the review of these two key publications, it is clear that call centers will continue to evolve in form and content as will the issues of the locations of call centers, country contexts of employment patterns, work skills, career opportunities, union organization and the nature of interactions between workers and customers. Much research has to be done. While there are important similarities between manufacturing and services outsourcing, it will take further tracking by researchers in the years to come to understand more fully the changing international division of labor in the globalized, technology-based service economy.

As a collection of articles, *Developments in the Call Centre Industry* delivers what it promises. It provides readers with a broad contextual analysis of the challenges and changes in the call center industry. Missing in this volume is a chapter devoted to public policy debates on call centers. This gap notwithstanding, a key contribution of the book and a common theme that emerges from each and every chapter (and particularly well framed by Taylor and Bain) is the need to draw upon a framework of analysis that weaves global trends in outsourcing with sociohistorical contexts of nations, institutions, communities and cultures within which call centers are situated. What also clearly comes out are some of the challenges in call

centers to meet the goal of achieving service-level targets without compromising service quality for customers or experiencing worker attrition from burnout. This volume not only illuminates the need to rethink some of the logic that drives work organization in the call center industry but also offers some suggestions for alternatives.

The Bi-National Perspective on Offshore Outsourcing, for its part, does highlight the need to organize across the globe, but its recommendations fall short of offering concrete strategies to engage in such an endeavor. One might also ask if it is realistically possible for workers to organize across international borders to jointly challenge the corporate search for an ever-lower waged workforce when these wages offered in the global South often far exceed salaries that workers might otherwise receive. Since capital is more mobile than workers, will workers inevitably succumb to divisions and competition-related animosities that prevent them from making a common cause? In the absence of world government, to what body could a united organization of workers effectively appeal for reform and redress of their grievances? While there are no simple answers, in the next few years, researchers will have to see whether this trend in globalization will lead to a level playing field for investors and workers in all countries or whether there will be further reinforcement of the large and growing global divide between the haves and have-nots in the accumulation of global capital.

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résumé: L'industrie des centrales d'appels est, d'un point de vue mondial, l'un des secteurs les plus en expansion. Se basant sur une approche pluridisciplinaire et collaborative afin d'étudier les centrales d'appels, le livre et le rapport dont j'écris ici exposent les aperçus sociologiques concernant le procédé de mondialisation et la transformation du travail et des relations dans ce domaine. Les conclusions données incluent les stratégies en ressources, le management et les managers, le travail et ses fonctions, la carrière féminine au sein de la centrale d'appels, le contrôle du salarié ainsi que son autonomie et les syndicats. L'étude met en exergue la nécessité de repenser certaines des logiques qui régissent l'organisation du travail dans une centrale d'appels et offre des stratégies d'une mobilisation collective, incluant le rôle des syndicats dans la protection des droits des salariés dans et parmi les nations.

resumen: La industria del *call centre* (central de llamada) es una de las áreas con más rápido crecimiento del trabajo global. Delineado el estudio de los call centres bajo un acercamiento multidisciplinario y un enfoque de colaboración, el libro y el informe aquí reseñados proporcionan visiones sociológicas en el proceso de globalización y la transformación del trabajo y de las relaciones laborales. Los asuntos tratados incluyen estrategias de recurso, gerentes y dirección, trabajos y habilidades del trabajo, las carreras de las mujeres en los call centres, control y autonomía del trabajador, y organización del sindicato. Los estudios indican la necesidad de repensar parte de la lógica que maneja la organización del trabajo en la industria del call centre y ofrece estrategias para la movilización colectiva, incluyendo el papel de los sindicatos en la protección de los derechos de los trabajadores dentro y a través de las naciones.

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