

Transnational Lifestyle and Social Identity Formation Among Night-Shift Outsourced Workers

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 05 December 2024

Revised 13 December 2024

Accepted 19 December 2024

Key words:

Transnational lifestyle,
Outsourcing workers,
Identity work,
Night shift,
Accent adaptation,
Consumer culture,
Virtual migration

ABSTRACT

Transnational outsourcing work exposes young employees to linguistic, temporal, and consumer practices that connect locally situated labour with distant markets. This article examines how Western pseudonyms, foreign accent adaptation, night-shift schedules, and global consumption practices contribute to the construction of new social identities among young outsourcing workers. An integrative literature review synthesizes scholarship on transnational service work, identity work, aesthetic labour, virtual migration, and middle-class consumption. The synthesis shows that Western names create professional personas, accent modification generates linguistic capital, and night work synchronizes workers' bodily routines with foreign economic time. Consumption of global products and participation in internationally oriented leisure spaces further provide material expressions of occupational mobility and emerging class aspirations. These practices do not simply replace local identities. Workers may separate workplace personas from private selves, selectively adopt particular practices, or combine local and global elements into hybrid identities. Transnational lifestyle formation is therefore best understood as a negotiated process shaped by organizational discipline, consumer aspiration, social mobility, and workers' capacity to reinterpret the cultural demands embedded in outsourced service work.

INTRODUCTION

The growth of the service outsourcing industry has shaped work patterns that connect workers with customers, companies, and lifestyles far removed from their physical locations. Customer service centers and business process outsourcing enable work to be performed locally while economic interactions take place across national borders (Drahokoupil & Fabo, 2019). Taylor and Bain (2005) demonstrate that the outsourcing of voice services to call centers in Asia has resulted in a form of work organization heavily influenced by the needs of international clients, performance monitoring, and global communication standards. Young workers in this industry face experiences distinct from those of conventional office jobs, as work hours, language, communication styles, and the nature of interactions are tailored to the markets they serve. Night work, therefore, carries social significance that extends beyond mere scheduling issues. It simultaneously connects workers to local life during the day and to transnational service spaces at night, allowing

work routines to become a space where new social identities are formed (Raghuram, 2013).

These changes are clearly evident in identity management practices within transnational service centers. Poster (2007) demonstrates that companies can implement national identity management by asking workers to present an identity considered closer to that of foreign customers. These practices include adjusting names, language, cultural knowledge, and the manner of self-presentation during service interactions. In such contexts, a Western name is not merely a personal choice, as it can serve as a professional tool that helps workers create an impression of closeness with customers. A new name signifies a shift from personal identity to a service persona designed by the organization. As Taylor and Bain (2005) note in their comparative study of offshore call centers, the adoption of pseudonyms is a foundational mechanism of emotional labor that allows workers to construct a culturally proximate interface for distant clientele. In the early stages, this persona can be understood as part of professional conduct.

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Repeated use every night opens up the possibility that the work name acquires new meaning as a marker of connection to the global world, professionalism, class mobility, and the experience of being part of an industry that serves consumers across national borders (Rajan-Rankin, 2016).

Accent is the second element that reveals how workers' bodies and voices are situated within transnational flows. Accent training aims to reduce communication barriers, but this practice simultaneously imposes standards regarding voices that are considered professional, easy to understand, and in line with consumer expectations (Rajan-Rankin, 2018). Cowie (2007) found that the term "neutral accent" in the call center industry does not have a single meaning. Some trainers interpret it as a variation of English considered to be that of an educated person, while others align it more closely with an American accent. This linguistic reshaping aligns with what Piller (2001) defines as commodified multilingualism, where accents and languages are stripped of their localized heritage and transformed into technical skills tailored to market demands. This demonstrates that the voice serves as a space for negotiation between local languages, global standards, and professional aspirations. A foreign accent need not be understood as a loss of one's original identity. It can function as linguistic capital that provides access to employment and serves as a symbol of competence, while fostering an awareness that the ability to modify one's voice holds both economic and social value within a transnational work environment.

The temporal dimension reinforces this identity formation. Workers who serve customers in countries with different time zones often perform their work while their home communities are resting. Mankekar and Gupta (2017) describe BPO workers as a group that spends their nights interacting with customers in various countries and experiences complex relationships between work, aspirations, mobility, and uncertainty within global capitalism. Night shifts create a disconnect between professional and family life. Mealtimes, sleep schedules, transportation, recreation, and social interactions follow a different rhythm from that of the surrounding community. Furthermore, as Mirchandani (2004) highlights in her extensive research on transnational call centers, this temporal inversion forces workers to inhabit "placeless" spaces, where their biological and social clocks are completely re-engineered to service foreign geographies. These changes make globalization a part of everyday bodily experience. Workers do not

physically move to another country, but their work schedules draw them into the social rhythms of foreign markets. Transnational identity is thus formed through the organization of time as well as through language and names.

Global product consumption is the next dimension linking income, lifestyle, and social identity. Income from outsourced work gives some young workers the ability to access shopping malls, branded products, international cuisine, technology, entertainment, and recreational venues associated with the global middle class (Afzali et al., 2023). Murphy (2011) found that service center workers tend to adopt the values and lifestyles of the transnational middle class, although their consumption patterns are not uniform and are partly directed toward major purchases such as vehicles or homes. Consumption in this context is not merely a result of rising income. Products and consumption spaces provide symbols that workers can use to demonstrate social mobility, modernity, and a departure from the lifestyle of previous generations. International fast food during work hours, digital devices, fashion, and global entertainment can become part of a routine that fosters a sense of connection to a transnational professional culture.

The relationship between work and consumption does not result in a uniform identity. Workers may adopt some global practices while maintaining local customs in other aspects of their lives. The social identity that emerges is best understood as the result of negotiation rather than the complete replacement of old identities (Marques, 2010). Workers may use a Western name when interacting with customers, revert to their personal name at home, adjust their accent depending on the audience, and choose global products without abandoning family ties or social values they consider meaningful. This pattern forms a layered identity. Work provides a set of performative skills that can be activated according to the social context. As noted by Nixon (2009) in examinations of mediated service identities, the tactical deployment of cultural markers enables workers to straddle divergent socio-cultural spheres without experiencing total identity dislocation. The boundary between work identity and non-work identity may remain distinct for some individuals, while for others, elements of the work persona may seep into their speech patterns, consumption preferences, and outlook on the future. These variations explain why transnational lifestyles need to be analyzed as processes of

identity formation, rather than as a mechanical adoption of global culture.

Scientific issues arise because the practices of Western names, foreign accents, night work, and global consumption are often discussed separately. The literature on service centers largely examines the management of national identity and emotional labor, while research on the new middle class highlights consumption and aspirations. The relationship between these four elements still requires interpretation as a single social process unfolding within the daily routines of young workers. Names and accents relate to professional performance; night shifts alter experiences of space and time; and consumption gives material form to aspirations and class identification. Bridging these analytical silos requires addressing what Binnie et al. (2006) describe as the fragmented treatment of cosmopolitanism and everyday labor within globalized economic geographies. When all these practices are brought together, questions arise regarding how outsourced work produces subjectivities situated between physical locality and global engagement. This analysis must take into account workers' ability to accept, negotiate, limit, or alter organizational demands so as not to reduce them to passive recipients of corporate culture.

This study aims to articulate the construction of a transnational lifestyle among young night-shift outsourced workers through a comprehensive analysis of the interrelationships between work personas, accent adaptation, temporal rhythms, and patterns of consumption of global commodities. Theoretically, identity is positioned as a dynamic entity that is continually shaped through work practices and daily routines. From an academic perspective, this synthesis brings together various fields of study, ranging from transnational labor, identity work, and aesthetic labor to middle-class consumption and the temporality of night work. Practically, this analysis provides a deep understanding that organizational regulations regarding language standards, service personas, scheduling, and work culture have broad social implications that extend beyond the boundaries of a company's operational performance. Based on this orientation, this study focuses on one main research question: how do the processes of adapting Western names, modifying foreign accents, regulating the rhythm of night work, and patterns of consumption of global products collectively shape a transnational lifestyle while constructing new social identities for young outsourced workers?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs an integrative literature review to synthesize the relationship between transnational labor, identity management, language, temporality, and consumption. Whittemore and Knafl (2005) assert that an integrative review allows for a balance between empirically and conceptually grounded studies with different methodological specifications, thereby expanding our comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. The search focused on scientific journals and academic books using the keywords "transnational call center work," "outsourced workers," "night shift," "identity work," "Western names," "accent training," "aesthetic labor," "virtual migration," "consumer culture," and "global middle class." Inclusion criteria encompassed sources directly relevant to the dynamics of transnational outsourced workers, particularly regarding language transition, persona, work hours, lifestyle, and social reidentification. Conversely, publications focusing solely on industry performance or popular writings lacking an articulation of social dimensions were excluded from the primary body of the study.

Literature review is conducted through a series of systematic steps, including searching, evaluating relevance, thematic grouping, comparison, and interpretive synthesis. Based on Snyder's (2019) framework, a literature review serves as an independent research method to consolidate scattered knowledge into a new conceptual synthesis. In line with the framework proposed by Grant and Booth (2009), the processes of search, assessment, synthesis, and analysis are applied to ensure the quality and contribution of the review. All selected sources are mapped into four key themes: persona, name, and location; accent adaptation; the temporality of night work; and consumption and lifestyle. Further analysis correlates these four focal points with the formation of work identity, non-work dynamics, social mobility, forms of resistance, and the emergence of hybrid identities. A meta-analysis approach was not applied, given that the characteristics of the data reviewed are based on qualitative and ethnographic studies and conceptual frameworks.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The transnational lifestyle of outsourced workers stems from the nature of their work, which requires them to maintain a social presence in the client's space without physically relocating (Tanas, 2022). Mirchandani (2004) describes transnational practices in service centers through scripting,

synchronicity, and locational masking. These three elements enable workers to align their communication, timing, and representation of location with the markets they serve. Transnational work, therefore, is not merely a flow of services across national borders. It requires changes in the way workers speak, manage their time, and articulate their presence. Workers learn to create symbolic closeness with customers who are geographically very distant. As emphasized by Upadhyia (2007) in her analysis of India's global IT and enabled services, this compression of space and time fosters new corporate cultures that re-map local subjectivities onto global economic imperatives. A new social identity begins to take shape when these skills are no longer perceived merely as technical procedures but as the ability to navigate between different cultural codes (Tovar, 2020). This ability can foster a sense of belonging to a global professional environment while simultaneously affirming differences from social environments that do not experience a similar work rhythm.

The use of Western names is one of the most tangible forms of identity work. Raghuram (2013) shows that call center agents use Western names, foreign accents, and scripts that convey a sense of geographical proximity as part of impression management. Agents' responses to these practices are not uniform. Some separate their work identity from their non-work identity, while others incorporate elements of their work persona into their personal lives, forming a hybrid identity. A work name can initially be understood as a tool to simplify interactions with customers. Repeated use, however, gives these names their own relational history as they are employed in interactions, the achievement of targets, workplace friendships, and emotional experiences. At a certain point, employees may come to feel that this persona is part of who they are, even though it does not replace their original name. This blurring of boundaries echoes McDowell's (2009) research on the commodification of identity, where embodied performances in service workplaces seep into workers' private self-perceptions. A new social identity emerges through the coexistence of multiple versions of the self, which are activated depending on the audience and the context of interaction (Rajan-Rankin, 2018).

The practice of using Western names also reveals the role of power in the process of identity formation. The choice of a name does not always stem from the worker's free preference, as

companies may incorporate it into their service design (Weekly & Picucci-Huang, 2024). Nath (2011) demonstrates that the use of Western pseudonyms, modified accents, and disguised locations are part of the management of national identity a practice that can help achieve service goals but simultaneously causes stress, role ambiguity, and workplace alienation. This experience highlights two concurrent functions of the persona. The persona provides professional capital by helping workers meet organizational standards, but it can also create a gap between the displayed identity and the felt identity. As explored by Rolfe and D'Cruz (2013) in their studies of offshore outsourcing, institutional control over communicative styles often produces profound emotional dissonance among employees. This gap does not always lead to rejection. Some workers may view their work identity as a source of skills and flexibility, while others see it as a form of pressure to conceal their national or cultural origins.

A foreign accent functions as a form of linguistic discipline that holds economic value. Workers learn to adjust word stress, rhythm, pronunciation, intonation, and choice of expressions so that customers can understand them more easily. Mirchandani (2012) demonstrates that communication training for transnational service workers involves learning about emotional labor and the racial hierarchies embedded in global service relationships. Accents are therefore not socially neutral. Certain standards may be associated with professionalism, class, education, or proximity to the customer's country. When workers successfully master these patterns, they acquire linguistic capital that can boost their self-confidence and enhance their standing in the workplace. At the same time, negative judgments about one's native accent can lead to the realization that certain forms of language are valued more highly in the global economy. This dynamic reflects Bourdieu's principles of linguistic market economics, wherein standardized foreign speech forms operate as institutional currency (see Thompson, 2011). Transnational identity is formed through the process of learning to navigate these hierarchies while negotiating their meaning for oneself (Rahman, 2009).

The ability to switch accents can develop into a practice of code-switching that links identity to social situations. Workers do not always carry their "service" accent into all aspects of their lives. They may use it when answering calls, revert to a local

variation when speaking with colleagues, and use yet another form within their families. Such switching demonstrates the capacity to manage multiple linguistic repertoires (Ramjattan, 2024). This fosters an awareness that identity can be performative and situational. Workers learn to read their audience and adjust their voice to elicit a specific response. In social life, these skills can be applied to job interviews, friendships, or consumer settings where English is valued as a symbol of class. As noted by Bhatt (2008) in explorations of World Englishes and identity, the strategic deployment of linguistic codes allows multilingual speakers to navigate complex socioeconomic hierarchies and construct fluid subjectivities. A foreign accent then evolves from a corporate tool into a form of social capital that workers can use beyond formal duties, although acceptance of this practice varies from person to person.

Night work reinforces this transformation through temporal shifts. Rajan-Rankin (2018) found that work in transnational service centers involves bodily discipline, including posture, attire, voice modulation, and night shifts aligned with global customers. At the locations studied, work schedules can run from around 8:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. Workers physically reside in one region but follow the economic hours of another. Sleep patterns, eating habits, commuting, and family interactions change to accommodate work demands. This disruption of natural circadian rhythms underscores what Barnes and Watson (2009) describe as the intensive somatic colonization required by 24-hour service economies. The night is no longer a time for rest but rather a productive space that connects workers to global economic hubs. This routine can foster its own social community as workers share late-night transportation, eat together in the early hours of the morning, and have leisure time that differs from that of friends outside the industry.

The timing of night work also creates a symbolic distance from local social life. Workers may be sleeping while their families are active and working while social events are taking place. This distance intensifies friendship networks within the workplace because coworkers share similar schedules (Arlinghaus & Nachreiner, 2016). Social relationships are then organized according to the company's rhythm. Workers eat, rest, communicate, and socialize with groups that understand this nocturnal lifestyle. These insular micro-cultures align with Korczynski's (2003) analysis of customer-oriented bureaucracies, where the shared experience of coping with emotional

labor and demanding schedules fosters strong occupational solidarity. These conditions shape a work subculture with its own language, humor, consumption patterns, and experiences distinct from those of peers working regular hours. Transnational identity is thus shaped not only by contact with foreign customers but also by local communities formed through synchronization with global time.

The concept of virtual migration helps explain the experience of living between two social rhythms. A study of call center workers shows that real-time contact with overseas customers results in social displacement without geographical displacement, while night shifts create a distance from daily life in their home communities. Workers repeatedly enter the symbolic environment of another country through conversations, knowledge of the weather, locations, television shows, consumption habits, and linguistic expressions. They then return to their family environment once their work shift ends. This repetition fosters an experience of existing between two worlds without requiring exclusive loyalty to either. As Aneesh (2006) elaborates in his conceptualization of "virtual migration," technological infrastructure allows workers to bypass physical borders and become structurally incorporated into foreign labor markets while remaining physically anchored at home. The resulting identity is transnational in nature, as sources of social meaning are drawn from more than one cultural space, while the body remains anchored to a physical locality (Tanas, 2022).

Consumption gives material form to these experiences. Bhatia (2017) links the lives of call center workers to accent training, consumption, public spaces such as bars and pubs, and the formation of a new middle-class subjectivity. Income and work culture can expand young workers' access to products and spaces that were previously out of reach. The consumption of branded coffee, international cuisine, gadgets, fashion, private transportation, and entertainment can serve as a way to demonstrate professional success and membership in a new professional class. The use of global products during late-night hours also serves a practical function, as the workspaces and services available at those times are often linked to commercial industries that cater to night workers. These products then function both as symbols and as part of daily routines. Through consumption, transnational identity is not only heard through accents or seen through job

titles, but is also experienced through everyday choices (MacQuarie, 2023).

Nevertheless, global consumption does not always signify the imitation of foreign culture. Workers may choose global products because of their quality, convenience, status, or compatibility with their work schedules. Their meaning is shaped by the workers' own social positions (Zhang, 2017). An international brand can be a symbol of class mobility for one worker, a practical tool for another, or simply a routine part of urban life. The same applies to clothing and appearance. Rajan-Rankin (2018) shows that transnational workers engage in embodied identity work, while other research on service work describes how workers shape their appearance to adapt to a middle-class professional environment. Consumption must be interpreted through the process of meaning-making, not through the assumption that every purchase of a global product indicates Westernization.

A new identity also involves a tension between aspirations and alienation. Language proficiency, income, and access to consumer goods can enhance a sense of independence, but the demands of maintaining one's identity can lead to exhaustion (McAreevey, 2017). Workers must maintain their tone of voice, emotions, persona, and cultural knowledge during interactions that are evaluated through performance metrics. When customers respond with stereotypes or discrimination, the global persona constructed by the organization may clash with workers' awareness of their unequal position within the international division of labor. Nath (2011) demonstrates that the management of national identity can be linked to experiences of stigma and racial abuse. Transnational identity is therefore ambivalent in nature. It offers social capital, income, and a sense of modernity, but it is shaped within economic relationships that still contain hierarchies between service providers and global consumers.

Workers respond to these tensions through segmentation, adaptation, and hybridization. Some maintain a clear boundary between their professional persona and their personal life so that workplace demands do not encroach on their non-work space (Weiss & Ortlieb, 2024). Others carry language, preferences, or consumption practices from the workplace into their daily lives. Still others actively blend global elements with local identities, creating ways of life that are not easily classified as either Western or local (Sivunen et al., 2023). This process demonstrates workers' agency. While they do not fully determine the structure of work, they

still have the space to assign meaning, accept certain practices, reject others, and transform them into new sources of identification. The resulting social identity is the product of interactions between organizational rules, class aspirations, family relationships, social networks, and experiences in transnational service work.

The adoption of Western names, foreign accents, night work, and the consumption of global products shape a transnational lifestyle through mutually reinforcing processes. Names create professional personas, accents provide linguistic capital, night schedules synchronize workers' lives with foreign economies, while consumption gives material form to mobility and aspirations. The interplay of these four elements produces a social identity that is layered, performative, and hybrid. Workers may separate their work identity from their personal life or blend elements of both. Transnational identity is not the result of the erasure of local identities, but rather the ability to navigate various cultural, temporal, linguistic, and consumer codes. This process simultaneously offers opportunities for social mobility and carries the risk of alienation, as it is shaped within a global labor structure that demands constant adaptation.

CONCLUSION

Young night-shift contract workers construct a transnational lifestyle through the intersection of organizational demands and everyday practices. Western names serve as professional personas that can evolve into an element of professional identity. Foreign accents become linguistic capital that helps workers navigate different audiences. Night work alters bodily rhythms and social relationships as daily life is synchronized with overseas markets. The consumption of global products gives material form to aspirations, income, and membership in a new professional class. These four elements do not result in uniform Westernization. Workers can limit, combine, or reinterpret the practices acquired through their work. The resulting identity is hybrid in nature because it connects physical locality with global social experiences. This process demonstrates that contract work is an arena for the production of identity as well as an arena for the production of services.

Theoretically, the findings of this synthesis indicate that transnational identity must be understood through the interplay of language work, identity work, temporality, and consumption. This approach broadens the analysis of the outsourcing industry from issues of work

organization to the formation of young workers' subjectivity. Academically, transnational lifestyle can serve as a concept to explain how globalization is experienced through highly concrete routines, such as the name used when answering calls, trained voices, altered sleep schedules, and the products consumed. From an organizational perspective, these findings indicate that demands regarding persona and accent have psychosocial consequences that must be considered alongside service targets. Companies can develop language policies and training programs focused on communication skills without treating workers' original identities as something that must be concealed. Schedule management must also take into account the sustainability of workers' social relationships and non-work lives.

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