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The Demand for Aesthetic Skills in Interactive Service Work:
The implications of this demand upon unemployed
job seekers' access to this work

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Abstract

It is suggested that one of the forces of social exclusion is the decline in manual employment and the shift to a service economy in the UK. Moreover, the growth of employment opportunities in interactive service work occurring alongside high economic inactivity and unemployment rates, in cities such as Glasgow. are a cause for concern. More specifically, the demand for aesthetic skills in much interactive service work is impacting upon unemployed job seekers access to this work. Although employers' demand for aesthetic skills has received attention in the literature there is a need for research to examine the impact of the demand for aesthetic skills in relation to exclusion from or access to this work. Therefore this thesis presents an examination of the impact of the demand for aesthetic skills upon unemployed job seekers access to this work.

The theoretical framework for this study utilises three related strands of literature, namely: developments in the UK labour market, focusing on the shift to a service economy; employers' skills demands in interactive service work; and the concepts of social exclusion and employability. Utilising these three strands of literature allows an examination of the main impacts and implications resulting from the change in the nature of much work, with particular attention given to access to work.

Utilising the focus group and interview methods this thesis develops a qualitative analysis of employers' skills demands in the interactive service sector and an examination of the effectiveness and appropriateness of training provision for the unemployed for interactive service work. Moreover, it also offers an examination of the views of unemployed job seekers regarding work that involves aesthetic skills. The main findings of this thesis suggest that there are substantive reasons why the unemployed are not accessing work in the interactive service sector. including employer discrimination, the lack of effective and appropriate training provision and unemployed job seekers' negative perceptions of work that requires interaction with customers and view of this employment as being poor quality. This thesis therefore offers a valuable contribution to ongoing debates surrounding the changing nature of work and employment, employability and access to work.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Focus and aim of the thesis

The focus of this thesis is the growth of service work in the UK, resulting skills demands in this work and exclusion from this employment. More specifically, the thesis explores the demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work and the implications this has regarding unemployed job seekers' access to this work. It has been suggested that exclusion in the UK today is a result of the changing nature of work and the shift to services that have occurred as a result of the shift to a post-industrial society (Byrne, 1999). More specifically, Littlewood and Herkommer (1999) suggest that one of the several forces of social exclusion is the decline in manual employment and the increase in white-collar employment. With specific reference to Glasgow Danson and Mooney (1998) suggest that the shift to a service economy and urban regeneration has transformed Glasgow into a post-industrial city. Yet they argue that within this society poverty and social exclusion are apparent with distinct groups of people not benefiting from this transformation. They further argue that this exclusion is due in part to the employability of some of the population, with skills mismatches between employment opportunities and employers skills demand and the skills of some of the population apparent. Furthermore Glasgow Economic Forum (2003) highlight that the shift to a service economy has created new job opportunities in Glasgow, yet the high economic inactivity rates suggests that there are a number of individuals who have not gained access to these opportunities.

The issue of social exclusion, and in particular exclusion from employment, and the associated problems for society and the individual are of great concern to the UK government. However, there is a tendency for both government and policy-makers to focus on the impact of employment upon social exclusion and therefore equate inclusion with employment and exclusion with unemployment. The policy focus on

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access to employment as a route to overcoming social exclusion is apparent in the government's adoption of an 'active' welfare system where individuals are expected to include themselves in society through gaining employment and overcoming difficulties regarding access to employment. Moreover, it is suggested that access to employment for the unemployed is improved by enhancing an individual's employability, and therefore current policy focuses on skills training in order to enhance the employability of the unemployed.

However, the shift to a service economy and resulting skills demands may not be the only factors important in determining access to work and employability levels. As an ILO (2005) report suggests, it is important to not only focus upon skills and skills training to overcome barriers to employment but also to examine issues such as discrimination and the outcomes of rapid economic change as these issues also impact upon employability. Moreover, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) argue that although individual factors, such as the skills individuals possess, impact upon employability, personal circumstances and external factors, such as the quality of work and recruitment and selection practices, are also important in enhancing employability.

Therefore there are clearly a number of factors that impact upon access to employment in the ever-expanding service sector. However, the central concern of this thesis is that despite the growth of interactive service work and ongoing high unemployment and inactivity rates for some sections of the population there is a relative lack of empirical research examining the issue of access to this work for unemployed job seekers. This thesis attempts to address this lack of research.

1.2 Context and background to the research

The research locale for this study is Glasgow, a city that has undergone a huge structural shift to a service based economy. In particular. Glasgow has seen significant growth in retail, hospitality and call centre employment. It is clear that the

growth of job opportunities in the service sector may be viewed as a valuable resource that could positively impact upon unemployment levels. However. Shuttleworth and McKinstry (2001) highlight that despite the growth of service work and a buoyant labour market several urban areas suffer from high unemployment levels while also experiencing difficulties regarding the recruitment and retention of employees for the service sector. Moreover, as pointed out above, despite the growth of job opportunities in the service sector in Glasgow distinct groups of people are not benefiting from this growth by gaining access to employment in this work, with the city still suffering from high inactivity rates (Danson and Mooney, 1998; Glasgow Economic Forum, 2003). This problematic situation underlines that Glasgow is an apposite locale to study the impacts of the shift to service work, along with the changing demand for skills by employers, and the impacts these changes have upon potential employees such as unemployed job seekers.

At a more personal level, as a Glaswegian, I have noticed the huge changes that the city has undergone in recent years while working in the expanding service sector at the same time as studying at University. I was also part of a research team, working as a research assistant, from the Universities of Glasgow and Strathclyde that undertook a pilot research project to examine the nature and significance of aesthetic labour in Glasgow in 1997-1998. Therefore it is a combination of personal experiences of work and living in Glasgow along with academic experience researching aesthetic labour that ultimately led to the development of this thesis. While developing the aesthetic labour research it was recognised by the research team that the changing demand for skills might impact negatively upon much of the population, resulting in exclusion from interactive service sector work. It is this possible disadvantage for some individuals caused by the demand for interactive service sector skills that is the focus of this thesis.

One outcome of the pilot study examining aesthetic labour was joint working between the research team and the Wise Group, resulting in the development of an aesthetic skills training course that was offered to clients of the Wise Group for several months in 2000. The Wise Group is a charitable organisation that has

operated in Glasgow since 1987 and has now expanded across Scotland and into England. The organisation are pioneers of Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) training with their remit being to act as a bridge to employment for unemployed people through offering training, work experience and personal development. As an organisation they are very successful in moving unemployed clients into employment while also contributing to the welfare of local areas by providing a high quality of services, such as landscaping, that positively impacts upon local residents lives (Social Exclusion Unit, 1998)

This doctoral research is an ESRC CASE studentship with the Wise Group partnering the University of Strathclyde in supporting this work. Like the aesthetic labour research team the Wise Group were similarly interested in the impacts of the changing economy and changing skills demands upon sections of the population, most notably their clients, that is, unemployed job seekers. Thus a research bargain was established with the Wise Group that enabled the researcher to gain access to their clients and employees in order to aid and inform the research. In terms of outcomes for the Wise Group several reports were produced on subjects of joint interest between the researcher and the organisation. However, as is often the case in research within and involving organisations, several changes occurred at the Wise Group that meant that changes had to be made to the original research plan.

Originally it had been the aim of the Wise Group to further develop the pilot aesthetic labour training course and to then offer this course to clients recruited specifically due to an interest in pursuing interactive service work, with the training course running continuously and with provision expanding across the country. It was hoped that the course would be ongoing and as such both the researcher and the Wise Group were keen that the course be monitored and evaluated in order to assess the extent to which such training can develop aesthetic skills in potential employees, in other words, the extent to which these skills can be learned and transferred to those lacking them. Moreover, it was also hoped that the researcher would examine the outcomes for clients who had undertaken this training in terms of their recruitment and selection experiences, their job tenure upon completion of the course and

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assessment of their career trajectories. Examination of these issues would offer insight into the employability and employment sustainability of the individuals who had undertaken the training.

However, the direction of the research involving the Wise Group, their employees and their clients had to be altered within the first year of the research. Firstly, staffing changes occurred at the Wise Group that resulted in the member of staff who had instigated the joint working with the research team and who was to be the researcher's supervisor during the period of collaboration moving to employment outwith the Wise Group. With the departure of the initial contact in the Wise Group much of the impetus for developing the aesthetic labour training and commitment to this training was reduced. Secondly, impacting further on these staffing changes, the aesthetic labour training course received very negative media coverage from a national newspaper. The front-page report titled: *'You're Too Grubby To Get A Job!: Glasgow unemployed told to wash'*, included a scathing review of the aesthetic labour training course. One senior Wise Group employee later informed the researcher that this negative media coverage had an impact on the organisation's subsequent decision not to proceed with the development of the aesthetic labour training. As there was now no aesthetic labour training course to monitor and evaluate, and no clients who had completed the course to assess regarding the impact of the training, the direction of the research had to be altered. In conjunction with the newly appointed successor to the researcher's original supervisor at the Wise Group a new programme of research that interested and benefited both the researcher and the organisations was agreed. One original aim of the research, to determine employers' skills demands in interactive service sector work, remained valuable to both the researcher and the Wise Group and thus remained part of the research, while two new areas of enquiry were developed, specifically, an examination of the extent and efficacy of training for the unemployed for interactive service work, in particular retail and hospitality work, and an examination of unemployed jobs seekers' perceptions of this work.

1.3 Theoretical framework and aim and objectives

The three interrelated strands of empirical research that are addressed in this thesis are informed and supported by a theoretical framework developed from three interconnected strands of literature. Firstly, work examining the changes in employment patterns in the labour market in the UK, specifically the growth of service work highlights that that this change has been accompanied by other changes such as: the growth of part time work; the closing of the gender gap regarding labour market participation rates; reduced unemployment levels; and increasing economic inactivity levels. Therefore the outcomes of the shift to a service economy are not all positive, with, in particular, males suffering from the occupational change that has occurred since the 1990s. Alongside this literature concerning the growth of the service economy in the UK is a related strand of literature concerning the resultant change in the nature of work and conceptualisations of skill that has occurred due to the shift to a service economy. From this literature it is clear that the concept of skill is the focus of much attention, not least due to the link between employability and skills, but also because of much debate regarding what it means to be skilled for work in the service economy. This literature is important in informing the empirical research reported in this thesis. Finally, it is considered important that leading on from the skills literature it is vital to utilise the literature concerning social exclusion, and in particular exclusion from employment and the concept of employability. It is clear that the government's strategy to enhance access to employment for the unemployed, by increasing employability via skills training, may be limited in the context of the developing service economy and the demand for soft skills, including aesthetic skills. Incorporating these strands in this doctoral thesis allows an informed examination of the issues pertinent to the three main actors in the skills, training and employability debate, that is, employers, training providers and unemployed job seekers.

The literature identifies that there are clearly a number of factors that impact upon access to employment in the ever-expanding service sector. However, as argued above, despite the growth of interactive service work and ongoing high

unemployment and inactivity rates for some sections of the population there is a relative lack of empirical research examining the issues of skills for interactive service work, employability and pre-employment training for the unemployed for this work. Therefore, it is argued, there is a need for further research in specific areas, which this thesis aims to provide.

An emerging area of research concerns the demand for and utilisation of aesthetic skills in much interactive service work. Research surrounding the utilisation of skills related to appearance and corporeality is relatively new with the core authors in the field of aesthetic labour being Nickson, Warhurst and Witz. The work of Warhurst, Nickson, Witz and Cullen (2000) and Nickson, Warhurst, Witz and Cullen (2001) first of all highlighted the nature of aesthetic labour and the demand for aesthetic skills by employers in the style labour market in Glasgow. Moreover, while Witz, Warhurst and Nickson (2003) conceptually unpacked the concept of aesthetic labour further work has examined the extent of aesthetic labour and highlights how widespread the demands for aesthetic skills are (Nickson, Warhurst and Dutton, 2004; ScER, 2004; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). However, as Nickson et al. (2004) suggest the extent of demand and utilisation of employees' aesthetic skills is overlooked in much literature. Firstly, therefore, this thesis addresses the call for improved understandings of employers' skills demands (Keep and Mayhew, 1999) and the skills important in work today (Ashton, Davies, Felstead and Green, 1999). As stated, the aim of the thesis is to examine the impact of employers' demand for aesthetic skills upon unemployed job seekers' access to employment in the interactive service sector, therefore the research draws heavily on research examining aesthetic labour and the utility of aesthetic skills in much service sector employment. It is important to note, however, that although the demand for aesthetic labour is commented on in the research literature much of this work involves comments on or reference to the original aesthetic labour research (c.f. Korczynski). Therefore aside from a few authors who have conducted research in this area (c.f. Hancock and Tyler, 2000; Pettinger, 2003) the researcher draws mainly on the work of Warhurst, Nickson and Witz throughout the discussions and analysis of aesthetic labour and aesthetic skills in this thesis. Moreover, while this lack of research is addressed by

ScER (2004), utilising the survey method, the qualitative research carried out for this thesis offers valuable qualitative data regarding the ongoing demand for and utilisation of employees' aesthetic skills, that adds to the ScER survey data. Moreover, alongside the lack of research examining the demand for aesthetic skills for interactive service work, existing research concerning this demand is not conceptualised adequately in terms of access to this work, or exclusion from this work. As Keep and Mayhew (1999) and Warhurst and Nickson (2007) have pointed out, the possession of aesthetic skills may be related to social class. Therefore it is important to underline the implications of the ongoing demand for aesthetic skills on those who are perceived to lack them, namely the unemployed, and this research addresses this important issue.

Secondly, this thesis addresses gaps in the literature concerning the quality of pre-employment training for the unemployed. As the literature highlights, although the growth of the service industry in the UK may offer opportunities for employment for the unemployed it is important to note that the nature of work and therefore the demand for skills in service work is quite different to other forms of work. Therefore it is vital that the nature of service work and the resultant demand for skills is understood in order that skills training, particularly training aimed at the unemployed, is apposite and meets employers' demands. Worryingly TERU (1999) suggest that training providers for the unemployed may not be addressing the appropriate skills for employment in service sector work. Moreover, as Belt and Richardson (2005) suggest, despite the existence of some pre-employment training for the unemployed for service work there is a lack of research examining the effectiveness of these initiatives. Belt and Richardson partly address this gap by examining the outcomes of call centre training for the unemployed and this doctoral research further addresses this gap by examining the extent and efficacy of training for other interactive services, namely retail and hospitality work, and in particular the outcomes of a training course aimed at developing aesthetic skills.

Thirdly, it is argued that there is a need to investigate the practical and attitudinal barriers to employment experienced by many job seekers (Lindsay and McQuaid,

2004) and to assess the impact of changes in the labour market, such as the change in the nature of work and skills demands, that may influence unemployed job seekers' attitudes towards and perceptions of work (Helms and Cumbers, 2004). Lindsay and McQuaid (ibid) suggest that there is little research examining how negative views of service work may impact upon the job search strategies of unemployed job seekers, and also little evidence of unemployed job seekers' perceptions of specific areas of employment within the service sector. They address this lack of research by examining unemployed job seekers' views of retail, call centre and hospitality work specifically. This thesis seeks to extend the understanding offered by Lindsay and McQuaid by also examining unemployed job seekers' views towards work in the style labour market.

Therefore this thesis addresses the lack of research outlined above by reporting the findings of three interrelated strands of research concerning employer's skills demands for interactive service work, the extent and efficacy of training for this work and unemployed jobs seekers' perceptions of this work. The data, gathered mostly using various qualitative methods, including interviews and focus groups, examines pertinent issues concerning the three main actors involved in the training, employability and skills debates, namely employers, training providers and unemployed job seekers. It is also important to underline that the research focuses specifically upon employment and skills in the retail and hospitality industries in Glasgow. As TERU (1999) suggest, with the shift to a service economy in Glasgow, the call centre, retail and hospitality sectors are growth industries that create job opportunities for the population. Although there has been research regarding the growth of call centre work and its impact on employees there has been less research concerned with examining the growth of opportunities in retail and hospitality work and implications of this growth. Moreover, retail and hospitality work is particularly apparent in Glasgow with the retail and hospitality industries providing 20 per cent of all jobs in Glasgow (Glasgow Economic Monitor, 2005). In addition, it is important to note that the importance of appearance, or looking good and sounding right, is emerging as a key issue regarding access to employment. For example, part of a two week course designed to get long term unemployed lone parents back into

work includes participants being offered haircuts and the opportunity to purchase appropriate interview wear. The course, provided by Jobcentre Plus, records a success rate between 30 and 40 per cent, and it is argued that the content of the course benefits the confidence of participants (Williams, 2007). Clearly, the importance of individuals' corporeality, regarding access to employment, is now recognised amongst policy makers, and as such deserves further academic attention.

As stated the focus of this thesis is the growth of service work, skills demands and exclusion from employment. More specifically the aim of the research is to examine the impact of the demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work upon unemployed job seekers' access to this work. The objectives and main research questions developed in order to achieve the aim of the research are illustrated in Diagram 1 below.

Diagram 1: The aim and objectives of the research, key research questions and subsidiary research questions
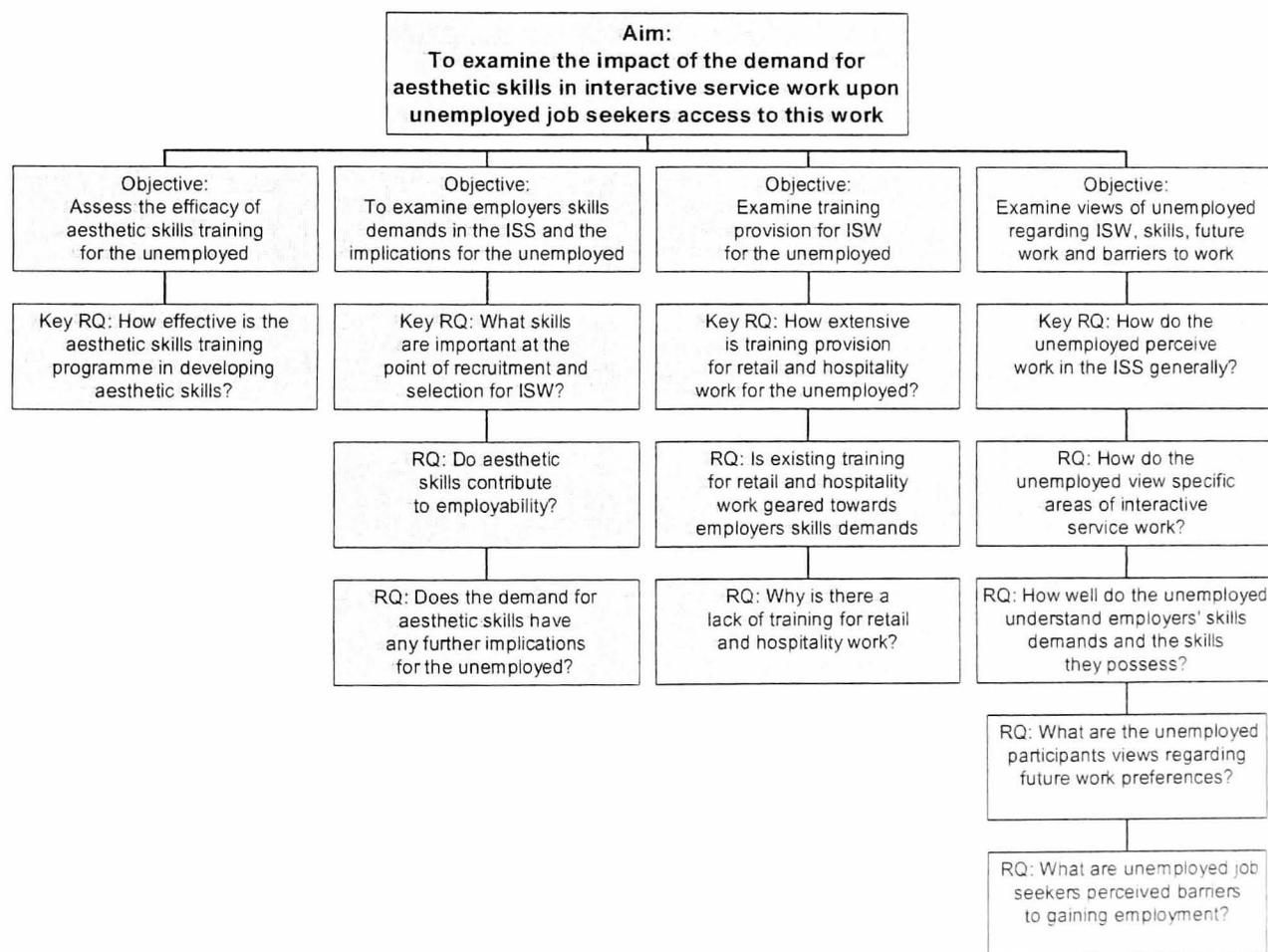
The aim of the research, then, is to examine the impact of the demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work upon a section of the population considered to be lacking in these skills, that is, unemployed job seekers and their access to this work. In order to fulfil this aim there are several objectives, as detailed in Diagram 1 above, which this research addresses. Thus, this thesis provides:

- An assessment of the efficacy of aesthetic skills training for the unemployed.
- An examination of training provision for interactive service work for the unemployed.
- An examination of employers' skills demands in the interactive service sector and the implications for the unemployed.
- An examination of the views of the unemployed regarding interactive service work, skills, future work and barriers to work.

These objectives in themselves raise numerous issues relevant to the focus of the thesis. For each research objective a key research question was developed and following these key questions several subsidiary research questions were developed from the key research questions for three of the four objectives. The objectives, key research questions and subsidiary research questions are identified in Diagram 1. With regard the first objective, assessing the efficacy of the aesthetic skills training for the unemployed, the research question to be answered is straightforward:

- How effective is the aesthetic skills training programme in developing aesthetic skills?

The related objective, regarding examining training provision for interactive service work for the unemployed, suggests several research questions, with two subsidiary research questions developed from the key research question:

- How extensive is training provision for retail and hospitality work for the unemployed?

- To what degree is existing training for retail and hospitality work geared towards employers' skills demands?
- Why is there a lack of training for retail and hospitality work?

In order to examine employers' skills demands in the interactive service sector and the implications for the unemployed one key research question and two subsidiary questions emerged:

- What skills are important at the point of recruitment and selection for interactive service work?
- Do aesthetic skills contribute to employability?
- Does the demand for aesthetic skills have any further implications for the unemployed?

And finally, in order to examine the views of the unemployed regarding interactive service work, skills, future work preferences and perceived barriers to work one key research question and several subsidiary research questions were considered pertinent:

- How do the unemployed perceive work in the interactive service sector generally?
- How do the unemployed view specific areas of interactive service work?
- How well do the unemployed understand employers' skills demands and the skill they possess?
- What are the unemployed participants views regarding future work preferences?
- What are the perceived barriers to gaining employment?

The empirical research, guided by the objectives and research questions, allows an examination of the impact of the demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work upon unemployed job seekers access to this work. In answering these research questions it is intended that this thesis makes a contribution to current debates

regarding the changing nature of work, skills demands and access to work. Although the growth of interactive service work and the demand for aesthetic skills has been discussed in the literature the impact these changes in the nature of work and skills demands has on the unemployed remains underdeveloped. In a new area of research, such as the research surrounding the demand for aesthetic skills, it is important to confirm existing research and add to this research, which this research aims to achieve.

1.4 A directory to the thesis

It is now important to provide an overview of the work presented in this thesis. The flow of this thesis is presented in Diagram 2 below:

Diagram 2: Map of the thesis

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                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │   Chapter 1     │
                    │  Introduction   │
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         ┌────────────┬──────┴──────┬─────────────┐
  ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐
  │  Chapter 2   │ │ Chapter 3│ │  Chapter 4   │ │  Chapter 5   │
  │ Developments │ │ Skills:  │ │Aesthetic     │ │   Social     │
  │  in the UK   │ │Conceptual│ │Skills:       │ │ Exclusion and│
  │   Labour     │ │and       │ │Demand and    │ │ Employability│
  │   Market     │ │Practical │ │Implications  │ │              │
  │              │ │Issues    │ │              │ │              │
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                    │   Chapter 6     │
                    │  Methodology    │
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  │  Chapter 7   │  │  Chapter 8   │  │  Chapter 9   │
  │ The Skills   │  │   Training   │  │ Unemployed   │
  │ Requirements │  │  Provision   │  │ Job Seekers  │
  │ of Employers │  │for Interactive│ │ Perceptions  │
  │in the        │  │Service Work  │  │of Interactive│
  │Interactive   │  │for the       │  │Service Work, │
  │Service Sector│  │Unemployed    │  │Skills,       │
  │in Glasgow    │  │in Glasgow    │  │Employment and│
  │              │  │              │  │Training      │
  └──────┬───────┘  └──────┬───────┘  └──────┬───────┘
         └─────────────────┼──────────────────┘
                    ┌─────────────────┐
                    │   Chapter 10    │
                    │  Evaluation     │
                    │     and         │
                    │  Discussion     │
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                    │   Chapter 11    │
                    │  Conclusions    │
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As illustrated in Diagram 2, following this introductory chapter the subsequent four chapters present the literature used to inform this research. The literature review ranges over three areas, namely: developments in the UK labour market: skills utilised in work, particularly in interactive service work; and social exclusion and employability. More specifically, Chapter 2 is concerned with the impact of the growth of service work in the UK and identifies changes that have occurred in the labour market alongside this shift to service work. In particular, the chapter also highlights key characteristics of the labour market in Glasgow, underlining the regeneration of the city, the growth of service work, and the paradoxical situation of a buoyant labour market occurring alongside high economic inactivity levels and the existence of areas of deprivation in Glasgow. Having underlined that the shift to a service economy may not be unproblematic it is important to then look at service work more closely, and in particular examine the skills required to access and carry out this work. Chapter 3 therefore focuses on the issue of skill and is concerned with how skill is defined, formed and measured. Moreover, the importance of skills to the UK government is discussed. The rest of the chapter is then dedicated to an examination of skill in the context of interactive service work, and highlights the importance of soft skills in this work. Following the examination of soft skills Chapter 4 offers an examination of the importance of particular soft skills, that is aesthetic skills, in interactive service work. The demand for aesthetic skills, the resulting implications of this demand and unemployed job seekers' perceptions of work that requires aesthetic skills are the focus of this chapter. Chapter 5 is concerned with the impact of the growth of service work and the demand for aesthetic skills with regard to exclusion from work and employability. The UK policy of overcoming exclusion by enhancing employability through skills training is discussed. Moreover it is argued that adopting a broad definition of employability is more useful as this allows the inclusion of both supply and demand factors in the employability equation.

Following the literature review Chapter 6 outlines the methodological considerations concerning this research. It sets out the philosophical approach adopted in this research and emphasises the benefits of adopting a qualitative method with regard to

the research topic. There then follows a detailed discussion of the various methods used to gather the empirical data and a review of the field research concerning each of the participant groups involved in the study. The procedures for analysis of the qualitative data obtained are then outlined and finally attention is given to validity, reliability, generalisability and ethical considerations important in social research and in particular in this thesis.

The findings of the empirical research conducted for this thesis are presented in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. Chapter 7 examines in detail employers skills demands in the interactive service sectors and briefly considers employers views on training for soft skills and issues they have regarding the availability of suitable employees. Following this analysis Chapter 8 assesses the availability of apposite training for interactive service work for unemployed job seekers and reveals several interesting findings. Moreover in this chapter there is a review of the efficacy of a training programme for unemployed job seekers aimed at developing an appreciation and awareness of the utility of aesthetic skills in much interactive service work. Chapter 9 then offers an in-depth examination of unemployed job seekers' perceptions of interactive service work and their understandings regarding employers' skills demands and their own skills. The findings of the three empirical chapters are then revisited in Chapter 10 which sets out to evaluate the findings of the research in the context of the literature discussed in Chapters 2 - 5, making links across the data and with existing research and identifying the gaps in knowledge that are addressed by this new research and thus underlining the contribution this thesis makes to the literature. Finally the concluding chapter, Chapter 11, summarises the thesis, detailing the findings of the research, highlighting the relevance and usefulness of the research findings and outlines some policy implications regarding the growth of service work, and in particular the demand for aesthetic skills. Finally the strengths and limitations of the research and issues for future research are considered and some concluding remarks offered.

In conclusion then, this thesis aims to examine the impact of the demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work upon unemployed job seekers' access to this work.

This thesis will demonstrate that there are substantive reasons why the unemployed are not accessing this work and highlights, as Keep and Mayhew (1999) suggest, the importance of ongoing research in this field.

Chapter 2

Developments in the UK Labour Market: the Shift to a Service Economy and Changes in the City of Glasgow

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews a range of literature on labour markets, identifying initially what comprises a labour market and what issues are pertinent in the study of labour markets. The chapter initially highlights the complexity of labour markets. There then follows an examination of the key characteristics of the labour market in the UK and in Scotland. This discussion underlines the main developments in the labour market including: a decrease in unemployment levels occurring alongside an increase in economic inactivity levels; a structural shift from a manufacturing economy to a service based one; the growth of part-time employment and the decline in full-time employment; the closing of the gender gap in labour market participation rates; shifts in employment patterns at an occupational level; and the development of an hourglass economy.

The chapter also identifies characteristics of the labour market in Glasgow. The review of the literature emphasises that the labour market in Glasgow is similar to that of the UK. It becomes clear that the shift to a service economy in Glasgow is not unproblematic. It is apparent that Glasgow, despite experiencing an economic turnaround and a buoyant labour market, suffers from high economic inactivity levels for males, and there are significant 'pockets' of deprivation. These areas and populations have not benefited from the regeneration of Glasgow. Indeed it is apparent that the shift to service economy has resulted in disadvantage for sections of the population.

This thesis is concerned with the expansion of the service sector in Glasgow and how this development may impact upon access to employment opportunities. In order to

provide some context for the empirical research component of this thesis it is important to begin with an examination of the labour market and assess the current condition of the labour market in the UK generally and then more specifically in Glasgow.

2.2 What is a labour market?

The term labour market describes 'the point where socio-economic supply and demand are brought face to face' (ASCETT, 1996: 2). This 'market place' may not be as visible now as it once was when labour supply and demand was negotiated at, for example, work fairs, indeed the term labour market may now imply an 'abstract concept', yet:

> ...its usage remains most apt since it describes a volatile and dynamic exchange process without which employment per se would stagnate and the development of new skills to match technological innovation would become an impossible task. (ibid: 2)

However, it is confusing to think of one labour market when in fact there are many different labour markets with differences between markets determined by factors such as occupation, industry, region and gender. Yet what each labour market has in common is the importance of the demand and supply of labour. The supply of labour is typically provided by the country's population[1], and the demand for labour is made by employers. Warhurst and Lockyer (2001) make the important point that the employment relationship varies depending on supply and demand levels. So for example, there are differences across sectors and regions of the country and across occupations depending on the demand for certain types of labour and the supply of labour.

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[1] In the UK labour is typically supplied by the working age population, that is, men aged between 16-65 and women aged 16-60.

Furthermore, it is important to note that employers and employees place importance on different aspects of the labour market. For employers the work produced by employees is important because their aim is to meet required outputs, whereas employees may place importance on wages, conditions of work and job satisfaction, among other things. The contradictory areas of importance for employers and employees regarding the demand and supply of labour means that issues such as wage levels, conditions of work and employment, job security and access to work, become important issues, not only for employers and employees but also government and policy-makers (Warhurst and Lockyer, 2001).

Yet, clearly, the labour market does not operate in a vacuum, with no impact from outside forces, indeed Warhurst and Lockyer (2001) point to several social and political factors that affect the operation of the labour market:

- The government and their impact on jobs
- The impact of skills and training
- Processes and problems associated with access to employment
- Employer recruitment and selection processes

This is not an exhaustive list of all forces that impact upon the labour market, however, with regard to social exclusion, unemployment and training to overcome barriers to employment – some of the main concerns of this thesis - these four elements are particularly relevant and therefore are addressed in turn below.

As Warhurst and Lockyer (2001) note, the UK the government attempts to influence the labour market by focusing on the issue of employment, and more specifically they highlight the importance of the skills and qualifications of the individual. Furthermore, policy-makers appear to be concerned not only with the number of jobs available in the labour market but also the quality of these jobs. In order to positively impact upon the economy successive governments have focused on attaining 'full employment' as there remains a belief that achieving employment is the best way to overcome poverty and deprivation. A high level of employment is also desirable for

the government due to the perceived positive effects for the national economy associated with job creation and inward investment. However, developments in the economy impact upon the labour market and often call for intervention in the labour being supplied (Warhurst and Lockyer, 2001).

Warhurst and Lockyer (2001) go on to highlight that when government intervenes in the labour market it often attempts to influence the supply side of the equation and improve the supply of labour. Due to the intangible nature of labour, proxies of skill and qualification are commonly used as tools to measure the quality and type of labour. The UK government is currently concerned about skill levels in the population and have focused much attention and resources on skills, training and education for work. However, within their skills agenda they concentrate in particular on increasing skills levels in individuals and as such are pursuing a process of upskilling. As will be discussed in Chapter 3 there is significant debate surrounding upskilling and evidence seems to point to a situation of skills polarisation in the UK over the last decade.

Nevertheless, it is a continuing focus of government policy to increase the skill levels of individuals. This government strategy has led to an increase in the number of graduates completing higher education and an increase in VET training for non-graduates. So there are attempts to influence the labour market by intervening in the area of skills and training. For example, in pursuing a 'knowledge economy' the government aims to increase the qualification levels of people such that this increase in supply of skills and qualifications will stimulate demand for better work and employment. The goal of this strategy is that 'boosting the supply of skilled and educated employees will, of itself, act as a catalyst for economic change and enhanced productivity and competitiveness' (Keep and Mayhew, 1999: 9).

However, Keep and Mayhew point out that such assumptions, often made by policy-makers in the UK, are problematic. For example, pursuing a knowledge economy overlooks the fact that according to Reich's (1991) occupational typology, only a small percentage of the workforce are expected to be employed in the knowledge

economy, with the majority of the workforce being employed in low pay, low status service work. Importantly, the skills required for work in this latter type of work vary vastly from those being utilised in the knowledge economy. In addition, the heterogeneity of service work must be acknowledged, as knowledge work is also service work. Yet, knowledge work may represent the 'top end' of service work, where high-skill and high pay is typical, while hospitality and retail work represent the 'bottom end' typically involving low-skill and low pay work.

Another area where the government attempts to impact upon the labour market is through increasing access to employment for those perceived to be suffering from disadvantage in terms of access (Warhurst and Lockyer, 2001). Due to the complexity of the labour market, many individuals suffer from a lack of understanding regarding the realties of the labour market. Government therefore intervenes in terms of offering information regarding jobs and training opportunities to enhance skills. Indeed, Futureskills Scotland, which was formed in 2002, provides information on the labour market in Scotland, works with Careers Scotland to offer better information for clients regarding the realities of the labour market, and aims to inform policy making.   However, another barrier to employment exists, discrimination, which can take the form of race/ethnicity, sex/gender, age, class, sexual orientation, religious and ability/disability discrimination. While legislation making discrimination illegal exists, both direct and indirect discrimination still occur and are problematic in the UK. (Noon and Blyton, 2002)

Finally, the processes utilised by employers to recruit and select employees also affect the operation of the labour market (Warhurst and Lockyer, 2001). Employers use tools such as qualifications, recommendations and references as a measure for the quality or efficacy of labour in the recruitment and selection processes. Such methods will aid some individuals and enhance their access to employment but will disadvantage others, those with no qualifications, source of references or immediate links to employment (ibid, 2001).   Additionally many employers prefer to use internal labour markets, as it is a cheaper and quicker method of recruitment. Again utilisation of internal labour markets and informal recruitment policies can

negatively impact upon the unemployed as they are distanced from the labour market (ibid, 2001).

In examining these four areas which impact upon the working of the labour market it is clear that the labour market is not an economic process that is impervious to influence. Rather, the labour market is both complex and dynamic and is influenced by economic, political and social forces. However, it is important to accept that gaining information regarding the labour market is beneficial for those attempting to influence it. As such, there is much valuable information on the current state of the labour market in the UK. Utilising some of this information allows an examination of the current condition of the labour market in the UK and the chapter now turns to this issue.

2.3 Key characteristics of the labour market in the UK and in Scotland

The focus of this section of the thesis is to identify the key characteristics of the labour market in the UK and particularly in Scotland. This is achieved by firstly offering a general overview of economic activity related statistics. Following this the key developments in the labour market regarding employment restructuring over the last few decades are highlighted, with an examination of the sectoral shifts, occupational shifts and the development of an hourglass economy and changes to the distribution of employment (full-time and part-time working and male and female employment rates) that have occurred.

2.3.1 Overview of economic activity and inactivity

The study of labour markets is generally concerned with paid employment. However, the labour force is considered to comprise several categories. Diagram 3 below indicates clearly the different categories, including the economically active and inactive, that typically comprise the labour force in Scotland.

Diagram 3: Schematic plan of the labour force in Scotland
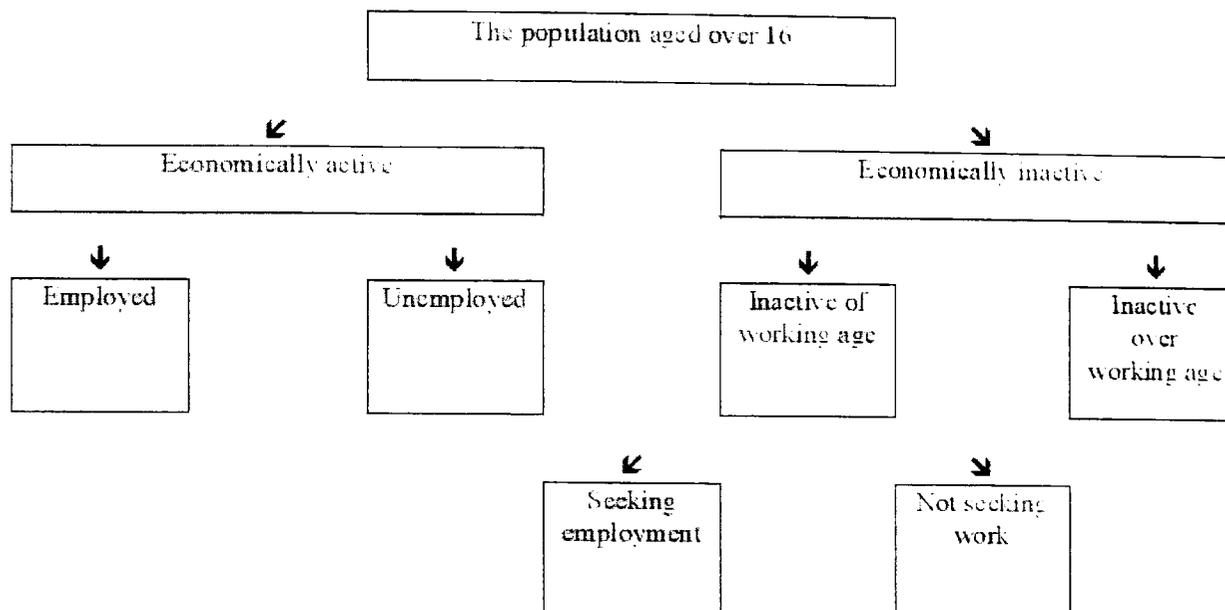
Source: Warhurst and Lockyer (2001: 10)

The strong condition of the labour market is reflected by labour market data that suggests that the UK has one of the highest employment rates in the EU, both for men and for women. Generally, despite a few small increases, unemployment rates have fallen over the last decade in the UK. The relative strength of the labour market may be due to economic growth experienced by the UK, as unemployment levels inevitably reflect economic cycles of growth and recession (Social Trends, 2004). Yet it is important to note that unemployment rates vary across the UK and across different groups. There are variations according to age and gender for unemployment rates. More men than women are unemployed and a greater number of young people than older people are unemployed in the UK. Moreover, duration of unemployment is influenced by age and gender. Women remain unemployed for a shorter period than males and younger males spend less time unemployed than older males. For example, in 2003 one tenth of men aged 30-39 and one-fifth of men aged 50-64 had experienced unemployment of three years or more (Social Trends, 2004).

Reflecting the worrying unemployment statistics for older men, the situation for males less than 30 years is also of some concern. Youth unemployment (age 15-24 years) is believed to be damaging, for both the economy and the individual, as patterns of employment or unemployment established early in life can influence later labour market participation. As such it is important to note that while over the last decade youth unemployment has been reduced in the majority of countries across the EU, the rate in the UK has not decreased and has in fact increased slightly from a rate of 10.1 per cent in 1990 to 10.5 per cent in 2001 (ILO, 2003).

It is also significant to note that a major indicator in employment participation is possession of qualifications with those in possession of qualifications being more likely to be employed than those who do not possess any qualifications at all. For example, in 2003 85 per cent of women who possessed a degree were in employment compared to a rate of 44 per cent for those who did not hold any qualifications. Similarly, for men in 2003, 90 per cent who possessed a degree were in employment compared to a rate of only 57 per cent in employment for those who did not have any qualifications (Social Trends, 2004).

Moreover, although statistics underline that unemployment rates have decreased over the last decade there has been a significant increase in the number of people becoming economically inactive and placing them outside the labour market completely. Table 1 below highlights that although male unemployment has decreased over the last decade, and their employment level has been constant their economic inactivity has increased quite significantly. While female unemployment has also declined over the same period their economic inactivity rate has remained steady and there has been an increase in the number of females who are economically active. Yet while males appear to be worse off in terms of unemployment levels it is important to point out that much female employment is part time employment and part time employment is more likely to be unstable, require low skills levels and provided low pay. The issue of female part time work is discussed more fully later in this chapter.

Table 1: Population by employment status (thousands)

| | Males aged 16-64 | | Females aged 16-59 | |
	1990	2000	1990	2000
Total	18,312	19,020	16,706	17.292
Economically active	16,175	16,034	11,912	12.534
In employment	15,027	15,049	11,122	11,916
Unemployed (ILO def)	1,148	984	790	618
Economically inactive	2,136	2,987	4,794	4,758

Source: Adapted from Edwards (2003: 3)

This increase in the level of economic inactivity impacts upon measures of unemployment. Nolan and Slater (2003: 70) highlight Morgan's (1996) point that 'over one-quarter of the improvement in the unemployment record was due to rising rates of economic inactivity among the working-age population in the 1990s'. Nolan and Slater argue that this effect is ongoing. Indeed, economic inactivity rates for men have grown from 400,000 to two million over the last twenty five years with long-term sickness being the main reason for this increase (Nolan and Slater, 2003).

While it clearly important for the UK government to develop a macro or national strategy to address the needs of the labour market, it is vitally important to understand that labour markets vary according to location. The labour market in Scotland may possess different characteristics from the UK labour market, and even within Scotland the labour market will have regional variations and therefore regional or local problems. Consequently it is important to now turn attention to the Scottish labour market and specifically to figures for employment status.

Figure 1: Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity rates, 1984 to 2002
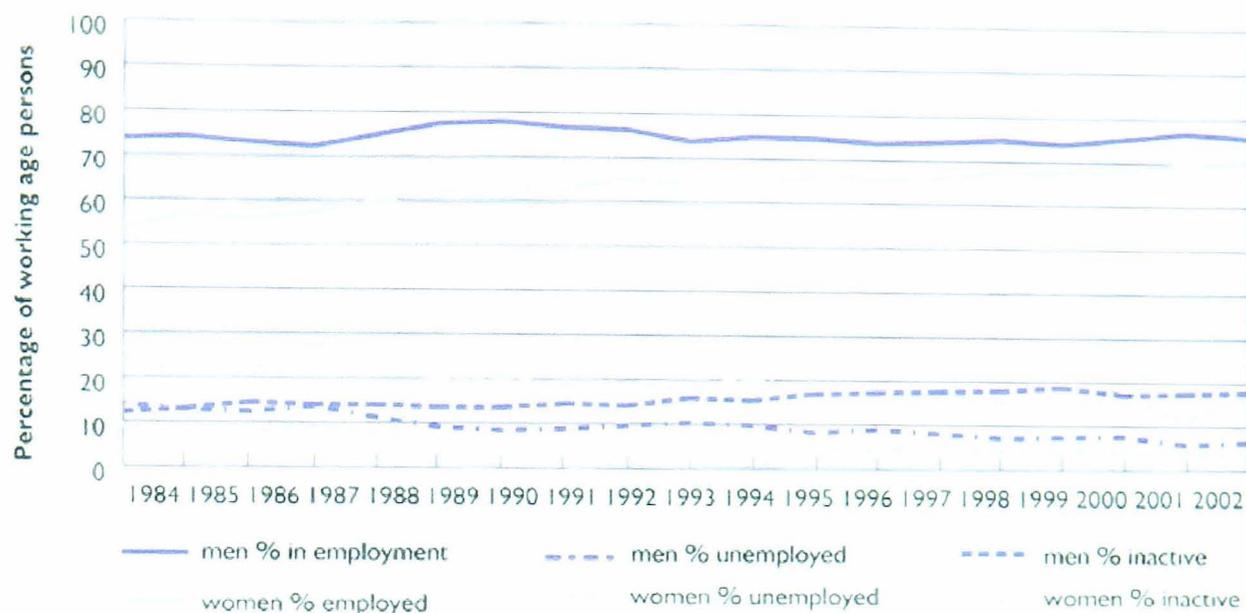
Source: Scottish Executive, Scottish Economic Statistics (2003: 117)

Figure 1 above highlights that in Scotland since 1984 employment levels for men have remained steady, unemployment has fallen slightly and economic inactivity has increased significantly. Over the same period for women the statistics show that employment levels have increased greatly, unemployment has declined steadily and economic inactivity has fluctuated, peaking in the late 1980s, but generally falling over the last decade. These statistics largely reflect the UK statistics (from 1990 onwards as seen in Table 1). Therefore again, as in the UK generally, in Scotland males suffer from a greater increase in inactivity levels than women.

Although throughout the last two decades Scotland has experienced higher unemployment rates than the UK as a whole, the gap lessened in the 1990s due to an increase in unemployment elsewhere in the UK caused by an economic downturn. While the UK and Scottish unemployment rates were similar in 1995, despite a reduction in unemployment in Scotland since, the Scottish unemployment rate is greater than the UK rate once again. The unemployment figure for Scotland in 1985 stood at 13.7 per cent and in 2002 it was only 6.8 per cent. However, this latter figure

is significantly greater than the UK rate in 2002 of 5.1 per cent. (Scottish Executive, 2003)

Reflecting the UK government's strategy, the Scottish Executive is keen to increase employment as a route to overcoming social exclusion and poverty. The Executive highlights the importance of skills training and gaining qualifications to increase employability. The focus on skills and qualifications has paid off in Scotland in some ways as labour market data suggests that the labour force in Scotland is more highly qualified than the rest of the UK labour force (Warhurst and Lockyer, 2001). Nonetheless, the Scottish Executive, like central government, pursues a strategy to increase skills and qualifications in the workforce in order to impact upon the economy and to benefit the unemployed. This could be due in part to continuing evidence that Scotland is experiencing skill shortages. The CBI and Scottish Chamber Surveys report an increase in skill shortages in Scotland (Warhurst and Lockyer, 2001). If the reasoning that increasing skill levels, most usually measured as gaining qualifications, will positively impact upon employment the situation in Scotland where there exists a more highly qualified workforce should impact positively upon employment levels. However, Scotland may be experiencing skills shortages, not due to a lack of skills, but due to a mismatch between the skills required for work and those possessed by the population. Any mismatch between the supply and demand of skills is obviously problematic and indeed Futureskills Scotland (2003b) reports that Scotland suffers from skills gaps rather than skills shortages.

Further, it is important to recognise that there are regional variations in employment, unemployment and inactivity levels in Scotland. These variations will be discussed with reference to how Glasgow compares with other cities on Scotland later in this chapter. However, alongside regional variations in employment status there are also regional variations in Scotland regarding employment by sector or industry. This point is clearly demonstrated by the example of the Borders region, which has higher than average employment in agriculture and lower than average employment in both manufacturing and services (Warhurst and Lockyer, 2001).

Finally it is apparent that Scotland has an ageing population, an effect that will have implications for the future labour market. Although demographic change is apparent throughout the UK population these changes are more obvious in Scotland (Brown and Danson, 2003).[2]

While understanding the labour market requires information regarding employment status and any changes in activity and inactivity rates it is important to identify some of the mechanisms of this change. Labour force statistics are impacted upon by changes in the economy, not least in the UK by the employment restructuring resulting from the structural shift towards a service based economy.

2.3.2 The shift to a service economy

Reflecting the patterns of employment in many countries there has been a huge structural shift in the UK economy over the last few decades, with the dominance of the economy by manufacturing being overtaken by a burgeoning service based economy. However, this growth is not a recent phenomenon. Although employment in service industries has increased in recent years in the UK McQuaid (2002) makes the point that the growth of employment in services has been occurring since the 1850s. The number employed in services at that time was the same as agriculture at around 20 percent each, but the main employment sector was manufacturing, construction and industries, with around 40 percent of the share of employment. While employment in agriculture declined from this time to the current level, and manufacturing, construction and industries remained constant until the 1970s (where it halved to around 20 percent of employment share) employment in services has showed continued growth from the 1850s to the present day. Therefore, it must be noted that the growth in service employment is not a recent phenomenon. However, what is important is the dominance of service employment over manufacturing,

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[2] In 2001 half of the population in Scotland were 38 years and over and currently ten per cent are aged over 71 years (Brown and Danson, 2003). These figures represent an aging of the population and these changes will obviously impact upon the labour market and as such demand attention from policy-makers.

construction and industries employment, an area responsible for a larger share of employment than services until the 1970s when this pattern was reversed.

Figure 2: Workforce jobs by industry, UK 1978-1999
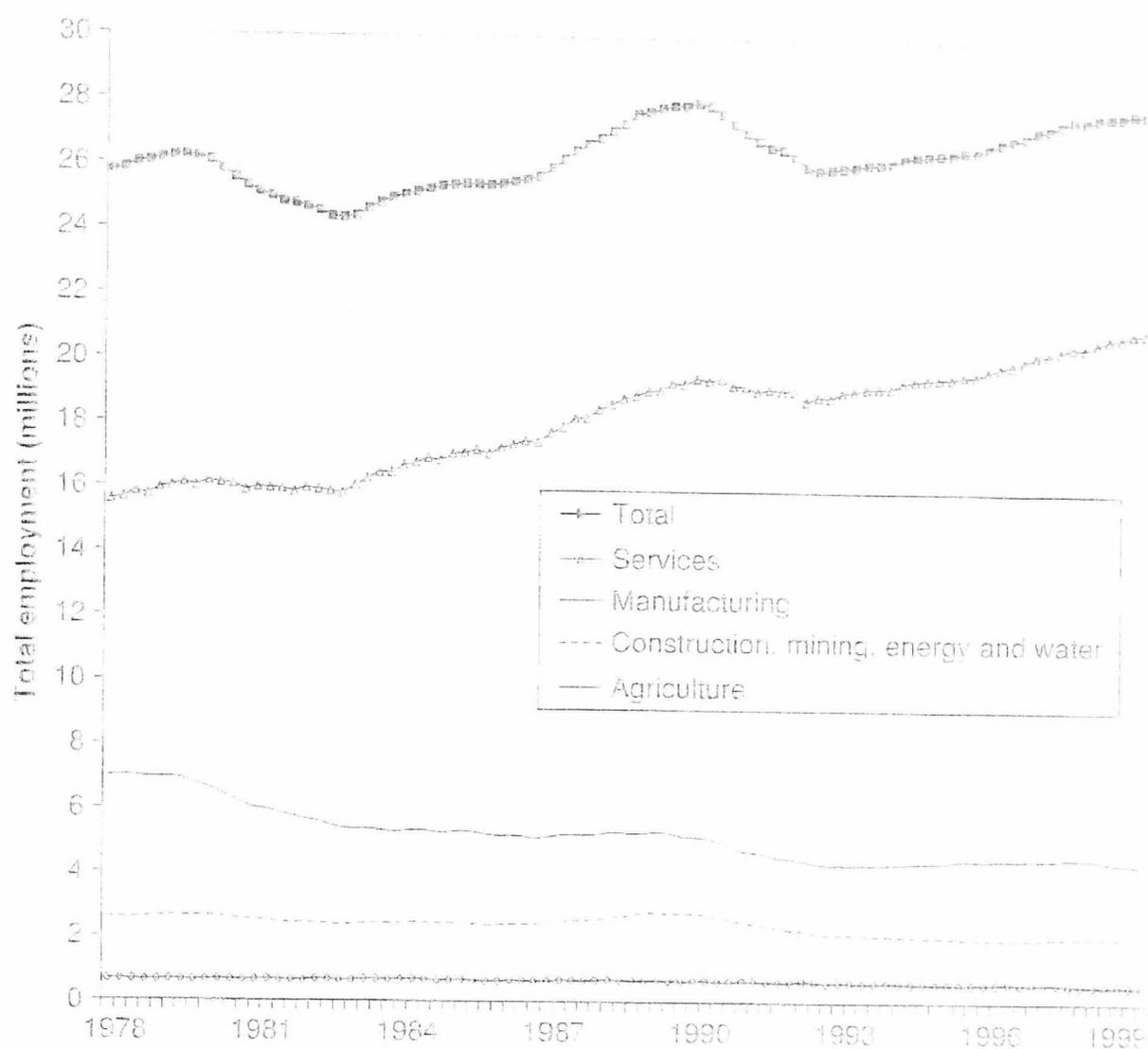
Source: Nolan and Slater (2003: 62)

Figure 2 above outlines the changes that have occurred since 1978 in the number of workforce jobs across industries in the UK. It is apparent that the total number of jobs has increased in this period, with a peak in 1990. The figures for service work jobs have increased steadily from just under 16 million in 1978 to over 20 million in 1999. The number of manufacturing jobs has declined over the same period from around seven million to just over four million. Agriculture declined prior to 1970s but has remained fairly constant since, and construction has levelled out over the last

few decades. It is important to note that most change has occurred in services and in manufacturing.

More specifically over the last two decades the greatest growth area for jobs for both men and women has been in the area of financial and business services, with this sector accounting for a fifth of jobs in 2003. Also in 2003 the areas of 'distribution, hotels, catering and repairs' and 'other services' [3] are the two industry sectors which employ the largest number of people, with 22 per cent of all employed males and 26 per cent of all employed females being employed in the former, and 20 percent of all employed males and 42 per cent of all employed females being employed in the latter. (Social Trends, 2004)

The growth in the service sector (and an increase in part-time employment) has occurred alongside a significant number of people moving out-with the labour market and becoming economically inactive. Importantly there is a geographic dimension to these statistics; with higher male inactivity rates recorded in areas previously regarded as industrial regions. In short, Nolan and Slater (2003: 71) argue: 'These patterns reflect the erosion of the UK's industrial base in the 1980s, and the failure of the service sector to provide alternative employment in the areas most in need.' This link between the growth of services, particularly in geographic areas previously dominated by manufacturing or heavy industry, and increasing inactivity rates for males in these areas is vitally important. The city of Glasgow could be viewed as exemplifying this situation.

As discussed above it is clear that there has been a sectoral shift in employment in the UK. Reflecting the situation in the UK Scotland has seen significant shifts in employment and work when measured as sectoral change and as a change in occupations.

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[3] Other services refers to public administration, education, health and other community, social and personal service activities (Social Trends, 2004)

Table 2: Scotland: industry section of people in employment aged 16 or older 1981-2001
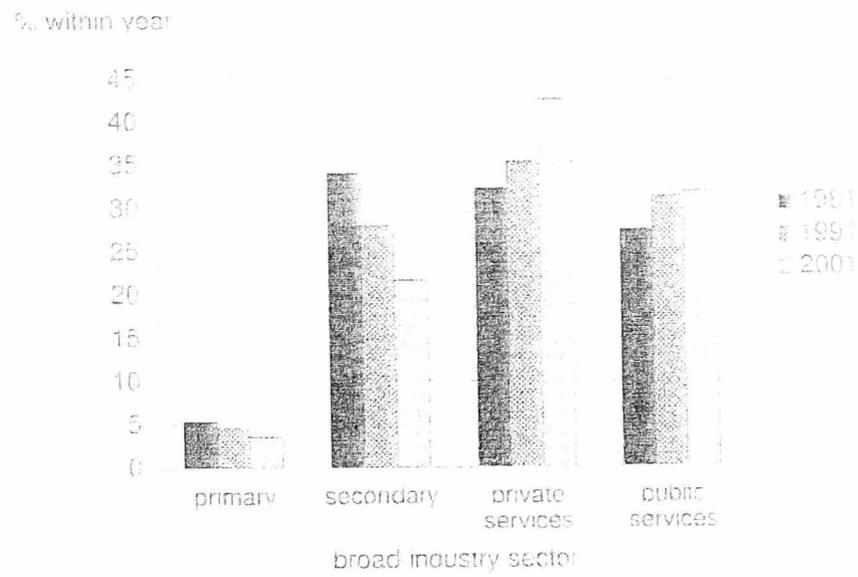
Source: Paterson, Bechhofer and McCrone (2004: 47)

Figure 3: Scotland: Broad industrial sector of people in employment, 1981-2001

Industry section[1], of people in employment aged 16 or older[2], 1981-2001

% in columns		Year	
Section	1981	1991	2001
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	2.9	2.5	2.1
Fishing	0.4	0.5	0.3
Mining, quarrying	2.1	1.7	1.2
Manufacturing	24.1	18.5	13.2
Electricity, gas and water supply	1.4	1.2	1.0
Construction	8.6	8.2	7.5
Wholesale, retail and motor trade	14.5	14.6	14.4
Hotels and restaurants	4.5	4.5	5.7
Transport, storage and communication	6.9	6.6	6.7
Financial intermediation	2.7	3.5	4.6
Real estate, renting and business activity	3.7	6.2	11.2
Public administration and defence	7.0	7.9	7.0
Education	7.2	7.6	7.3
Health and social work	9.5	11.5	12.4
Other community, social and personal	3.8	4.4	5.2
Private households with employees	0.4	0.4	0.1
Outside UK	0.3	0.2	0.0

Source: Registrar General for Scotland (1983b: Table 9); Registrar General for Scotland (1994b: Table 8); Census 2001(Table UV34).

[1]*Standard Industrial Classification 1992; for 1981 and 1991, the 1980 classification has been converted to the 1992 classification by means of an approximation derived using the table on p. 37 of volume 5 of the user guide for the Labour Force Survey of June-August 2002.*

[2] *16 or older in 1981 and 1901 censuses; 16-74 in 2001 census; March-May 2001 Labour Force Survey shows very similar pattern for 16 or older.*

Source: Paterson, Bechhofer and McCrone (2004: 47)

As Table 2 and Figure 3 highlight there is evidence of an overall fall, though relatively small, for primary sector employment, a fall also for secondary sector employment, a small increase in public service employment levels and a bigger increase in private service sector employment over the last two decades. However, these shifts are not indicative of all sections of employment in these broad industry

sectors; there are differences between sectors. For example, with regard the broad sectoral changes that have occurred it is clear there has been a decline in employment in both primary and secondary industrial sectors. The former, which comprises among others, agriculture, fishing and mining, has been in decline since the middle of the last century and the level of decline is now lessening. The latter, which includes manufacturing and construction, has seen a more recent decline over the last two decades. However, the decline has mostly been seen in the manufacturing sector with construction falling only slightly (Paterson et al., 2004). This decline in primary and secondary industries has occurred alongside a growth in employment over the last two decades in the private services sector. For example, the areas of finance and business and property management are experiencing high growth levels. Differences within broad sectors is also highlighted by the differences within the public service sector, with public administration and education employment showing little change while social work and health service employment increasing by around one third (Paterson et al., 2004). Service sector employment is clearly growing in Scotland; indeed the 'distribution, hotel and catering and repairs' sector was the largest employer in Scotland in 2002. However, the largest growth over the period 1996-2002 was experienced in the 'banking, finance and insurance' sector with an increase of 29 per cent in employment levels (Scottish Executive, 2003). Advances in technology have not only impacted upon 'old' forms of work but have also resulted in an increase in employment in areas of work associated with IT and communications. In Scotland this has led to a significant increase in call centre jobs in recent years. Until recently there were very few examples of this type of work in Scotland (and the rest of the UK for that matter) yet it was estimated that there were around 46,000 call centre jobs in Scotland in the year 2000 (Warhurst and Lockyer, 2001).

The industries that employ the greatest numbers in Scotland include health and social work, local and central government, education and retailing. Underlining the importance of retail work Warhurst and Lockyer (2001) draw attention to the fact that one in ten jobs in Scotland are in a shop. While in terms of future growth areas, Warhurst and Lockyer (ibid) point out that in Scotland business services and

personal and protective services are expected to provide most growth. Moreover, data from Futureskills Scotland highlights that replacement demand (that is, the number of employees needed to replace existing employees expected to withdraw from the labour market) will be greatest across the service industries and lowest for the manufacturing and primary industries. With regard expansion demand (the number of new jobs due to expansion) there are again expected decreases in manufacturing and constructions employment and increases in financial and real estate and 'other service and private households' industries, while projections suggest the total number of jobs will remain steady for the majority of remaining jobs, for example jobs in wholesale and retail, hotels and restaurants and health and social work (Futureskills Scotland, 2003a).

The above discussion points to the manner in which there has been a shift in the structure of employment in Scotland, a shift away from manufacturing to services alongside an increase in non-manual forms of work. Yet, Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) note that the move to a service economy in the UK is not unproblematic. They propose that for policy-makers the growth of the service sector, and in particular low to medium skilled, labour intensive work, is a development which can impact upon the employment prospects of much of the population providing, 'an important opportunity for large scale employment creation' (ibid: 302). Thus, they argue that the increase in this type of work is viewed opportunistically by development agencies whose remit includes encouraging inward investment while at the same time enhancing the employment prospects of the population. Despite policy-makers' view that an increase in employment opportunities in the service sector will impact upon unemployment levels in a positive way, Lindsay and McQuaid (ibid: 302) suggest: 'many…urban areas continue to report both pockets of high unemployment *and* recruitment and retention problems in the service sector.' (italics in original)

So despite the availability of service jobs and the resulting demand for employees, there are areas in the UK where there still exist high levels of unemployment. Scotland, along with some areas in the north of England, it is argued, contains such

areas where the 'fragility of local labour demand' results in decreasing employment rates and increasing labour force inactivity rates (Lindsay and McQuaid, ibid: 302). As stated previously there is a link between the shift to a service economy and increased economic inactivity rates for males. This is also occurring in a geographic area where 'pockets' of high unemployment are occurring alongside labour market recruitment and retention difficulties. The city of Glasgow may be suffering from this set of circumstances, and this issue will be examined fully later in this chapter.

2.3.3 The growth of part-time work alongside the decline in full-time work and the closing of the gender gap in labour market participation rates

Along with, and linked to, sectoral changes there have also been changes in the UK and Scotland with regard the numbers of people employed in full-time and part-time employment, and moreover, there has been an increasing numbers of females participating in the workforce. With regard the former issue there has been a huge growth in part-time employment alongside a decline in full-time employment in recent years in the UK. In 2003 around 28 million people in the UK were employed. This is the highest measure of employment recorded, and it is argued, may be partly due to the large increase in part-time employment (Social Trends, 2004). Scottish figures mirror the wider UK situation as 68 percent of the total number of employee jobs in 2005 in both the UK and Scotland were full-time and 32 percent part-time (NOMIS, 2005).

Nolan and Slater (2003) highlight that the ratio or part time workers has risen from one in six in 1971, to one in four in 2001. They argue that the group who have suffered most in the reduction in full-time jobs are males working in manual occupations, in particular manufacturing and heavy industries of coal, steel and shipbuilding. The growth of part time employment, on the other hand, has occurred in much private sector and public sector work. In particular the impact of part-time employment growth can be seen in wholesale and retail services where 47 percent of work is part-time, and in hotels and catering, where again the part-time figure is 47 percent. Yet worryingly, part-time employment is more often carried out by females,

and part-time jobs are more likely to be characterised by instability, low-skill levels and poor pay. And importantly, as Nolan and Slater further argue, the growth of part-time work does not imply 'radical shifts in the nature of jobs', but rather may be due in part to 'patterns of 'poor' work' (ibid: 65).

With regard the Scottish situation, Paterson et al. (2004) point out that while male part-time employment has risen since 1981, male full-time employment in this period has declined. Yet for females both part-time and full-time employment has increased over the same time period. Therefore reflecting the UK situation the majority of part-time work in Scotland is carried out by females, indeed in Scotland in 2001 males comprised a mere 15 percent of part-time workers (ibid).

One of the most salient features of the UK economy over the last three decades is the closing of the gender gap regarding participation in the labour market. While employment rates for both sexes has followed, to some extent, economic cycles, the female employment rate has risen from 59 per cent in 1984 to 70 per cent in 2003, while the male rate over the same period remained steady at 78 per cent in 1984 and 79 per cent in 2003 (Social Trends, 2004). The growth of part-time work is strongly linked with the increase in female participation rates. While the growth of service sector employment has also impacted positively upon female participation rates, as much of this work is perceived as 'female' work, suited to 'female' skills. Yet, the ongoing decline in manufacturing will negatively impact upon male full-time employment.

The Scottish figures regarding gender and employment levels reflect those of the UK generally with 47 per cent of the Scottish workforce in 2002 being female. It is important not to underestimate the significance of this development. Indeed, Paterson et al. (2004) suggest that this increase in female participation is the biggest single change that has occurred in the Scottish labour market over recent years.

Between the years 1981 to 2001 the economic activity rate for men decreased from 85 per cent to 78 per cent. However, over the same time period the number of

economically active women increased from a rate of 53 per cent to 64 per cent. This change occurred alongside a dramatic decline in the number of women 'looking after the home and family'[4] on a full-time basis, shifting from one third of women in 1981 to only one in twelve in 2001. However, the increase in employment levels for women is mainly a result of them working on a part-time basis, and much of their work is characterised by instability. Indeed, the two sectors which had the greatest level of female employees, 'public administration, education and health' and 'distribution, hotels and catering and repairs', also record the highest percentage of part-time jobs (Scottish Executive, 2003).

There are some clear differences between occupations when looking at the gender of employees. For example, women make up the greatest proportion of those employed in personal service, administrative and secretarial, and sales and customer service employment. While males are over represented in the areas of skilled trades, process plant and machine operatives and managers and senior officials. Thus while there has been a general shift in employment patterns at a sectoral level and while the gap between numbers of males and females in the labour market is decreasing there are still clear patterns of employment differentiation in occupations (Social Trends, 2004).

2.3.4 Occupational shifts and the development of an hourglass economy in the UK

The broad sectoral shifts outlined above need to be examined more closely and it is useful to turn to analysis of occupational data as this will highlight shifts in occupational structures within broader industry areas. Paterson et al. (2004) suggest that there are two driving forces behind changes in employment measured at occupational levels, namely, changes in industrial sectors and changes in the organisation of occupations within these sectors. With regard sectoral change it is clear that the increase in service industries has resulted in an increase in service jobs. Yet the second factor of change needs more attention. The organisation or

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[4] UK Census terminology.

reorganisation of occupations has resulted from developments such as the impact of technology, and a shift in skills used in work and results in a reorganisation of occupations. The results of such reorganisation can be seen, not least, in forms of work traditionally perceived as semi-skilled or unskilled, as Paterson et al. (2004: 51) point out:

> The image of masses of semi- and unskilled workers, typified by the traditional navvy, is certainly a redundant one. Fifty per cent of construction workers are defined as being in skilled trades, and only 10 per cent are in elementary labouring occupations... On the other hand, 30 per cent of manufacturing employment in Scotland is now in managerial, professional and associated professional posts.

However, it is important to note that such reorganisation has not resulted in the disappearance of unskilled (elementary) workers from the labour market. Paterson et al. highlight that 12.7 per cent of male and female workers remain in elementary occupations, the majority of which are service occupations. They offer the example of the hotel and restaurant industry where nearly half of all workers are involved in elementary occupations such as waitering, portering and cleaning. Indeed, this occupational change has impacted upon much work in the service occupations with 22 per cent of employees in elementary occupations now located in hotel and catering industries.

Nolan and Slater (2003) suggest that occupational change has impacted upon the UK labour force since the 1990s. They point out that according to Labour Force Survey data recording 'share of total employment' there has been an increase of 3 per cent in the 'higher-level professional, managers and technical workers' occupational category, a fall of three percent for traditional manufacturing workers, and the share for services has remained unchanged. Yet they warn against assumptions that patterns of employment in the declining 'old' (industrial) economy are being replaced by employment in the burgeoning 'new' economy (often regarded as a knowledge economy). Indeed, when assessing the employment statistics it is

important not to underestimate the impact of official classification systems labelling occupations and also the effect of subcontracting and outsourcing employees being partly responsible for the increase in 'new' service jobs (Warhurst and Thomson 1998: 3-4). Nolan and Slater (2003: 66) point out that rather than the growth of a 'new' economy occurring statistics highlight that in the 1990s traditional service occupations, education and health, and caring occupations were the areas that showed the highest levels of absolute growth. Therefore, rather than the 'new' or 'knowledge' economy, where high-skills and high remuneration are typical, it is other less well paid and lower skilled work in the service economy which dominates in the UK today, with the majority of people employed in this type of work. As they argue:

> Too much emphasis on the growth of independent entrepreneurs at the expense of the dependant workforce misses the point. With nearly eight in ten workers employed in services, the critical issue is the shifting balance between high-, mid- and low-skilled occupations. (ibid: 77)

They further argue that the structure of employment shows the development of an hourglass economy. In this 'hourglass economy' the top end of the labour market is typically made up of high skill, high wage, high value added work, and the bottom end is characterised by a considerable level of low paid, low wage, low value added work. (This development, argued to be indicative of skills polarisation in the UK, is analysed in greater detail in Chapter four.) So while the number of people involved in 'knowledge' work or professional and technical work has increased there has simultaneously been a growth in low pay, low skill routine service work (Nolan and Slater, 2003). And this growth in low pay, routine work in service employment reflects the increase in production levels of 'relatively low-skill, low-value-added products and services' in the UK (ibid: 77).

Yet there is much focus by UK government and the Scottish Executive on the impact of the 'knowledge' economy and its demands. This deflects attention from the reality that the majority of new jobs are in mundane service sector employment. Moreover,

Futureskills Scotland (2003b: 43) stresses that the growth industries in Scotland at the turn of the century are the service industries. This growth has occurred alongside a decline in the number of jobs in manufacturing and the primary sector. And while 'high technology' industries have shown growth the projected employment growth in these industries up to 2007 will be small.

2.4 The labour market in Glasgow

Having looked at the key characteristics of the labour market more generally in the UK and in Scotland, it is important to now turn attention to the labour market in Glasgow. For the purposes of this thesis there are three related important issues that require attention. Firstly, the shift to a service economy in Glasgow is outlined. Secondly, labour market participation and problems in Glasgow relating to employment levels and access to employment are explained. Following this attention is given to arguments surrounding the actual benefits stemming from the shift to a service economy and the regeneration of Glasgow, with reference to the nature and quality of much service sector employment, including work in the style labour market and in the retail and hospitality sectors more generally.

2.4.1 The shift to a service economy in Glasgow

As discussed previously in this chapter there is little doubt that there has been a huge structural shift in the UK economy over the last few decades, with an economy that was dominated by manufacturing being overtaken by a burgeoning service-based one. This shift in the economy is clearly apparent in Glasgow, with the city being described as an 'exemplar' of previously industrial based cities attempts to transform themselves, and indeed reinvent themselves, as 'post-industrial' service centres (Warhurst and Nickson, 2001).

Local labour market data collected by SLIMS (Strathclyde Labour Market Intelligence and Monitoring Service) highlights that at a sectoral level public services

and financial services are the largest sectors in the Glasgow economy, with figures of 30 per cent of total employees and 24 per cent of total employees respectively. Indeed the largest growth area contributing to the overall growth from 1996 to 2001 was experienced by financial services, an increase of 36 percent or 24,600 jobs. Other areas of growth include public service with 17,200 jobs, and retail and catering with a growth of 10,000 jobs. Collation of labour market information allows SLIMS to make several forecasts regarding the labour market in Glasgow. They conclude that due mainly to a growth in jobs in financial services Glasgow will experience a greater rate of employment growth than the region or the UK by the year 2011. However, this increase in the financial sector is offset in part by expected declines in construction in Glasgow and across Scotland. (SLIMS, 2003)

It is difficult to provide definitive figures regarding the number of jobs in retail and hospitality industries in Glasgow as different governmental and industry bodies use slightly different units of measurement. However, data provided by the Glasgow Economic Monitor (2005) suggests that the retail and hospitality industries in Glasgow provide approximately 20 percent of all jobs. Clearly, then retail and hospitality employment are significant in current employment trends.

In particular, with regard employment growth, it is argued that in Glasgow call centre, retail and hospitality work will continue to grow in the 'foreseeable future' and as such these 'growth sector industries … will have an important role to play' in job creation (TERU, 1999: 3). Indeed, it is expected that around 40,000 new jobs will be created in the retail and hospitality sectors up to 2006 (ScER, 2004). And in terms of job vacancies in April 2004 nearly 25 per cent of all job vacancies in Glasgow, totalling around 2,000 jobs, were in sales and customer service jobs (Labour Market Trends via NOMIS, 2004).

Glasgow then appears to be developing into a service based economy and could be viewed as an exemplar of the UK wide trend. Indeed, both Glasgow and Edinburgh have attempted to benefit from the development of their city centres as regional service centres. Glasgow has been particularly successful in this endeavour and is

one of the biggest retail centres in the UK, second only to London (Turok et al., 2003). This position looks set to continue, as since the end of the 1990s investment in retailing, hospitality and leisure in Glasgow city centre has been ongoing.

2.4.2 An economic turnaround and a buoyant labour market in Glasgow yet high unemployment levels, high economic inactivity levels and existence of 'pockets' of deprivation

Glasgow then is firmly positioned as a service based city. Yet despite the growth in service work and a buoyant labour market there are problems, such as the existence of urban areas with high unemployment levels alongside difficulties of recruitment and job retention in the service sector (Lindsay and McQuaid, 2004). In spite of attempts to regenerate Glasgow the city suffers from a multitude of social and economic problems. Indeed, worryingly, Glasgow is the most deprived council area in Scotland with a much higher rate of Income Support claimants and Incapacity Benefit claimants than the regional or national levels (SLIMS, 2003[5]). Furthermore, Glasgow has a higher rate of Jobseeker's Allowance claimants, with a rate of 4.2 per cent, compared to 2.8 per cent for Scotland and 2.4 per cent for Great Britain (NOMIS online 2005).

With regard to unemployment levels employment data underlines that while the long term unemployed claimant rate for Glasgow has decreased steadily since 1998 to a figure of around 1 per cent, this rate is higher than both the West of Scotland rate and the UK rate. It is clear that Glasgow has several problems regarding unemployment, with a high unemployment rate for those in the 18-24 age group and higher long-term unemployment rates than the UK wide rate (SLIMS, 2003). With the unemployment rate in Glasgow being substantially greater than the UK rate, the issue of social exclusion, particularly exclusion from employment, impacts upon much of the population (SLIMS, 2003).

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[5] As calculated by the new Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SLIMS, 2003)

Furthermore, the 2004 annual population survey highlights that Glasgow has the highest rate of economic inactivity in Scotland. Longitudinal analysis (see figure 1 below) reveals that the figures for economic inactivity have been steadily decreasing for Glasgow over the last few years (NOMIS, online 2005). However, despite this decrease Glasgow's figure remains dramatically higher than the national figure. An inactivity rate of 29.6 per cent of the working age population does not compare favourably with the national rate for Scotland of 21 per cent or the rate for Great Britain of 21.8 per cent. On the other hand, Edinburgh has an economic inactivity rate of 20.3 per cent, comparing favourably with both the Scottish rate and the rate for Great Britain. Moreover, it is argued that the high economic inactivity rates indicate that while there have been 'new job opportunities' in Glasgow there remain a large number of individuals who have not gained access to these jobs (Glasgow Economic Forum, 2003: 15).

Figure 4: Economically inactive people in Glasgow City (with City of Edinburgh and Scotland figures) March 1999-December 2004

Time Period
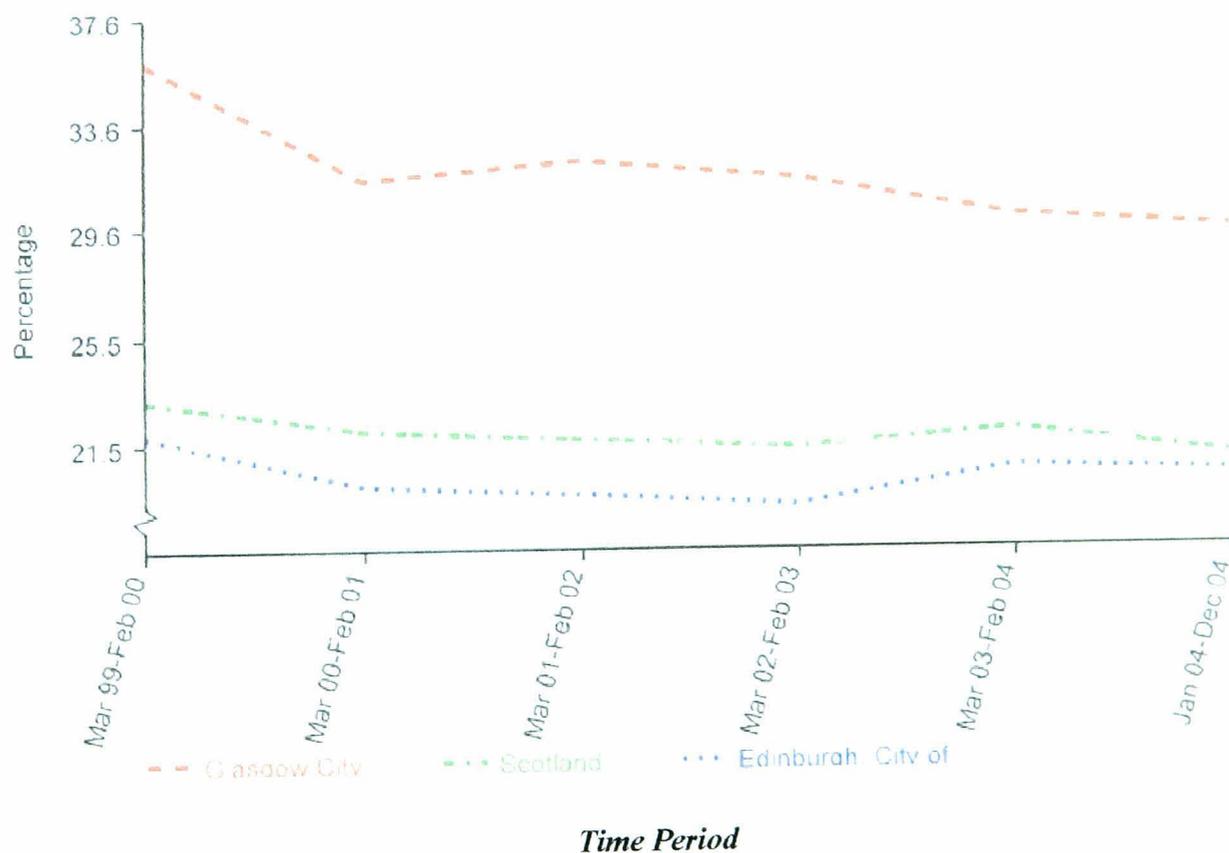
Source: NOMIS (2005)

There are some further statistics that give cause for concern, made relevant by the fact that the government is pursuing a goal of increasing qualification levels in order to overcome barriers to employment. Although Scotland has traditionally had a higher graduate level than the rest of the UK the graduate level in Glasgow, at six per 1,000, is lower than both the regional and UK levels, each currently at a rate of seven per 1,000. Glasgow also has a lower uptake of 16-19 full-time education, having a rate of 46 per cent participation, compared to 58 per cent for the UK. There is some disparity regarding qualifications in Glasgow, as the proportion of individuals possessing a degree level qualification in 2001 was higher than the region and the UK figures at 28 per cent. However, Glasgow also has a higher than average percentage of individuals who possess no qualifications at all, with the figure for Glasgow being 24 per cent compared to a regional level of only 20 per cent a UK level of 17 per cent. These statistics have worrying implications for participation in the labour market; indeed, the employment rate of those with a degree level qualification is greater than two times the figure for those without any qualification (SLIMS, 2003).

It appears then that despite economic growth and a strong economy in the UK, Glasgow still suffers from problems regarding labour market participation. This situation may be due in part to a regeneration and development of the city that has produced positive outcomes not shared equally by all of the city's population. For example, Turok et al. (2003) point out that the decline of manual employment in the UK as a whole over the last decade has occurred to a greater extent in Glasgow[6], a city that traditionally featured manual industrial employment as a core employment sector. They suggest that this 'reversal' has resulted in 'considerable dislocation costs, deep demoralisation and a host of consequential social problems for working class communities' (ibid: 31). This reduction in manual employment has occurred alongside a growth in a different yet 'narrower range of job opportunities' in comparison to the existing skills of the city's population. This second fairly narrow growth has led to in-commuting from outer city areas and has contributed to 'a smaller reduction in local unemployment and inactivity than might have been the

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[6] New Earnings Survey data show one in three full-time jobs in Britain are in manual employment, while only one in four in Glasgow (Turok et al 2003).

case with broader-based growth' (ibid: 31). Indeed Danson and Mooney (1998) highlight that the rise of the service economy has benefited individuals who live in the outskirts of the city, commenting that around half of the jobs in banking, insurance and finance are filled by commuters who travel into Glasgow city to work. While individuals located in the city and on the peripheral housing estates have not benefited from the relatively narrow growth that has occurred. Thus, the shift that has occurred in the economy of Glasgow has not benefited the existing population, with a mismatch occurring between skill supply and demand for instance. This is obviously problematic for the working age population of Glasgow.

When compared with Edinburgh, Glasgow does not compare favourably. Turok et al. (2003) highlight that Edinburgh has developed into a prosperous city, second only to London in terms of the most prosperous cities in the UK. However, Turok et al. (2003) do not suggest that Edinburgh is without its own economic and social problems, and point out that despite the affluence of the city there are still groups of people who remain socially excluded, and struggling to gain access to employment, housing and other opportunities. In the main their findings suggest that both Glasgow and Edinburgh suffer from extremes, with extreme affluence existing alongside extreme poverty and disadvantage. These extremes are apparent in the population and in the geography of each city. Their research underlines the reality that despite 'a significant economic turnaround since the mid-1990s Glasgow still suffers from issues such as high levels of unemployment (ibid: v). Indeed, they go on to suggest that:

> Glasgow has some of the largest and most intense spatial concentrations of poverty and exclusion in Britain. They have arisen mainly from the decline of the city's industrial base combined with sorting of different social groups through the housing system ...people living in such neighbourhoods are further disadvantaged by where they live, particularly through stigmatisation (ibid: vi).

The stigmatisation or social discrimination, suggested by Turok et al. (2003) is apparent in Glasgow negatively impacting upon labour market participation rates. While social discrimination is most often associated with discrimination according to race or gender, Lawless and Smith (1998: 211) also highlight the impact of stigma and discrimination by employers in relation to residence. They point out that usually those who reside in 'problem local authority housing estates' experience this form of discrimination and their research revealed that 'employers may possess discriminatory attitudes towards individuals living on stigmatised estates which affect labour market participation'.

Indeed, Glasgow Alliance (1999) points out that while the shift to a service economy has in part boosted the economic competitiveness of the city and benefited the economy it is clear that the positive outcomes of this shift has not been shared equally by all communities in Glasgow. This disparity is evidenced by the higher unemployment rates in the city compared to the rest of Scotland and the UK generally. Moreover, there are 'pockets' of high unemployment in Glasgow, areas such as Drumchapel, Easterhouse and Glasgow North, suffer from unemployment rates which are around 50 per cent higher than the average Glasgow rate. The problem of post-code or residence discrimination could be applied to the problem of unemployment in Glasgow and the existence of these pockets of high unemployment.

While there is much evidence of concentrations or 'pockets' of disadvantage and exclusion in Glasgow, merely focusing attention on the worst off areas may be misleading and unproductive. For example, Danson and Mooney (1998) argue that dual city arguments have limited usefulness in explaining the specific socio-economic problems and the 'spatial patterns and processes' that add to the inequalities apparent in Glasgow. They accept that poverty is unevenly distributed across Glasgow with many areas experiencing particularly extreme levels of poverty. However, they argue that regarding poverty there is real evidence of worsening conditions 'throughout' Glasgow (ibid: 233). Thus, they argue against a 'well defined and distinct group of (the) poor or underclass', and instead point to a 'more

widespread' situation concerning poverty and exclusion in Glasgow (ibid: 229). Indeed, they further argue that the focus, both by the media and initiatives aimed at alleviating problems, on peripheral housing estates of Glasgow as the areas suffering most from exclusion and poverty has not overcome the problems associated with these areas but has served to stigmatise these areas as 'excluded communities'. They further propose that the result of this 'has been to 'marginalise' the population of such localities further' (ibid: 233). Danson and Mooney's argument underlines the point made by Turok et al. (2003) and Lawless and Smith (1998: 211) regarding stigmatisation.

2.4.3 The regeneration of Glasgow - who benefits from this regeneration?

Over the last two decades Glasgow has clearly undergone a period of regeneration, and as underlined above is firmly positioned as a postindustrial service based city. However, the developments that have occurred in the city have not been uncontroversial. For example, Danson and Mooney (1998) highlight the differing agendas of the 'modernisers', including local government and development agencies behind projects such as the development of the Merchant City area and the City of Culture, and the 'militants' or opposing groups who question these developments. They suggest that the former aim to modernise Glasgow 'in their own image', while the latter's concern is with 'whose image is being promoted' (ibid: 222-223). Therefore there is debate regarding the new image being projected of Glasgow. Nonetheless it is apparent that 'image' and 'style' have been forefront in the redevelopment of Glasgow, for example, in 2004 Glasgow was branded 'Glasgow: Scotland with Style' in a campaign to market the city as a 'vibrant' and dynamic' location. Clearly the ongoing aim is to project an image of the city as a successfully transformed post-industrial landscape.

This emphasis on the transformation of Glasgow to a postindustrial landscape is prompted by the prominence of service work in the city. As pointed out earlier in this chapter there has been a huge growth in service work alongside a decline in traditional and heavy industries in Glasgow. Interactive service work (either face-to-

face, or voice-to-voice), not least in call centres, but also in the retail and hospitality sectors, has seen huge growth in the local labour market in Glasgow. However, it would be incorrect to assume that all work within the service sector is homogenous. Indeed it is important to note the differences between, for example, so called 'knowledge' work and 'service' work and between, for example call centre work where voice to voice customer interaction is required and work involving face to face customer interaction. More specifically and with particular relevance this thesis it is also important to note distinctions, and also similarities, between types of service work, for example, Nickson et al. (2001) argue that alongside a more routine labour market in Glasgow there is an emerging 'style' labour market, comprising boutique hotels, designer retailers and stylish cafes, bars and restaurants. Through an analysis of recruitment and selection practises, and training, working and management practises in the style labour market Nickson et al. developed their conceptualisation of aesthetic labour. The utilisation of aesthetic labour by employers involves the development and commodification of employees embodied capacities in order to enhance the service encounter. Indeed, in the style labour market employees are required to be the 'embodiment of the company' (ibid: 176), and employers in these organisations demand and utilise 'aesthetic labour'.

However, the growth of service work in Glasgow is not limited to the style labour market where shopping and consumption is geared towards tourists and more affluent professionals. The most significant areas of growth include employment opportunities in the expanding call centre, retail and hospitality sectors more generally. Moreover while Nickson et al. (2004) underline the ongoing demand for aesthetic labour in the style labour market they also suggest there is a demonstration effect with the demand for aesthetic labour filtering down into other service organisations, such as more prosaic retailers and hospitality outlets. Yet while much academic research has been conducted on the growth of call centre work and the nature of this work there is little research concerning the growth of retail and hospitality work, and in particular interactive service work in these sectors, and the nature of this work and resultant implications. Therefore, as indicated in the introduction to this thesis it is the growth of interactive service work in the retail and

hospitality sectors in Glasgow and skills demands and issues of exclusion from employment that are the focus of this thesis.

Following the changes that have occurred in Glasgow it is pertinent to investigate the outcomes of these changes regarding employment opportunities. It could be argued that the huge changes that have occurred in Glasgow over the last two decades may have further removed those previously involved in manufacturing and heavy industries from the labour market. For example, following decades of industrial decline it is clear that despite economic growth and much investment in the re-invention of Glasgow as a service economy Glasgow still suffers from a persistently poor unemployment record and urban areas with high levels of social deprivation and disadvantage. As outlined above it is clear that some parts of the city have not benefited from the recent changes in Glasgow. Danson and Mooney (1998) point out that those living in inner city areas that are run down and those populating peripheral housing estates do not benefit from the urban regeneration of cities in the UK. This is the case in Glasgow. Moreover, high unemployment levels and social deprivation and disadvantage exist despite the view of local authorities that it is vitally important that employment opportunities are accessible to all sections of the labour force in Glasgow: 'We must continue to support the growth in employment opportunity and we must redouble our efforts to open up these opportunities to all Glaswegians.' (Glasgow Development Agency and Glasgow City Council, 1999: 1)

Therefore, despite the shift to a service economy and the rejuvenation of the city into a commercial and metropolitan centre on a par with London and other major European cities it is important to clarify which segments of the population have benefited from this regeneration. For example, as discussed earlier, Danson and Mooney (1998) make the pertinent point that the shift to a service economy, which has resulted in many jobs in areas such as banking, insurance and finance, has mostly benefited those located in the outskirts or suburbs of the city. They draw attention to the fact that almost half of such jobs in Glasgow are filled by commuters from the suburbs of Glasgow. Yet those people who would previously have been expected to follow employment in manufacturing or heavy industries in Glasgow, those living in

the city and in peripheral housing estates, have not gained access to this type of service employment.

Moreover, if the growth of employment opportunities in banking, finance and insurance services has not benefited those who would have previously been expected to gain employment in the traditional, manual industries located in Glasgow it is important to look at employment opportunities and access to employment in the other growth areas, such as retail and hospitality employment. Yet with the demand for aesthetic labour apparent in much work in the interactive service sector access to this employment may also be limited to those with the required skills thus making this work inaccessible to some sections of the population. It is clear then that the regeneration of Glasgow as a modern service centre, with the resultant change in the nature of work and required skills, has not provided equal benefits to the entire population of this area.

Furthermore, aside from the issue of access to work the quality of many of jobs in the service sector in Glasgow may be problematic and thus employment in this work, while overcoming unemployment, may not necessarily overcome the problems of deprivation and disadvantage. As Warhurst (2002: 198) points out, the growth in the interactive service sector has resulted in jobs involving 'selling, cleaning, guarding and distributing'. Importantly these jobs are characterised by highly routinised work practices, a high level of regulation and control, require low skills levels and provide low pay. These issues are a major cause for concern for those employed in these jobs and those seeking to gain employment because, as highlighted previously, these jobs are predicted to be growth areas in Scotland, and particularly in Glasgow, and thus are a route to employment for many in the future. Undoubtedly the pay levels of much service work, aside from service work in the 'knowledge economy', is poor. Toynbee (2003: 9) underlines this point by stressing that 'the lowest paid occupations in 2002 were cleaners, caterers, carers, classroom assistants, launderers, dry-cleaners and check-out operators.'

And moreover, the quality of service work may not be the only problematic factor associated with this work. As Toynbee further argues:

> Although this is now a service economy [in the UK], service remains lowly, servile, womanly and worth less than traditional men's work. Note how there are no traditional men's jobs among the ten lowest-paid occupations, 80 per cent of which are occupied by women. (ibid: 9)

It is indeed clear that despite the increase in service work the status of service as being 'women's work' has not diminished. As Willis (1977) discusses in his seminal work on working class boys this group were prepared via school and prepared themselves for the realties of working class jobs in manufacturing and heavy industries. As the majority of these 'male', 'working class' jobs have disappeared the growth of the service industries has resulted in the production of jobs that are not viewed as 'male' or 'masculine'. Indeed, much service work is perceived to be feminine. As Nixon (2005: 18) highlights, the unemployed, low-skilled men in his study showed definite preference for jobs they deemed to be masculine reflecting 'the importance of male 'working-class' definitions and understandings of appropriate forms of work'. Overwhelmingly the men in this study rejected interactive service work, even if this work was better paid than manual work. They perceived interactive service work to be feminine, and instead showed preference for low-skill manual work, work that they have an understanding of, or previous experience of.

Similarly McDowell (2004) underlines the problem men face when labour markets shift from heavy industrial based regions to service sectors where jobs entail interactive service work. She argues that these changes in the labour market reflect negatively on masculinity and identity:

> What happens to traditional forms of male working-class embodiment in the labour market when the only jobs open to them rely on social attributes that

are seen as an affront to their sense of themselves as masculine, to their notions of masculine respect? (ibid: 49)

In her study McDowell found that young males, from areas previously dominated by manufacturing and heavy industries, viewed service work as female work and did not view this type of work favourably. She emphasises that:

> In the radically restructured labour markets of the twenty-first century, young working-class men are beginning to find themselves disadvantaged not only because of their class position but also, in comparison with young working-class women, on the basis of their gender, their appearance and their attitudes to authority. (ibid: 51-52)

Therefore, with concerns regarding the quality of much employment in the service sector at the 'low' end, and gender issues regarding the nature of service work and how it is perceived, there remain many problems regarding access to worthwhile and meaningful employment despite the growth of service work and the existence of a buoyant economy. Therefore it is possible that the increase in service jobs in Glasgow has not benefited those who would previously have sought employment in the more traditional occupations and industries that are in decline, namely many working class people and males in particular, as they are, for various reasons, unable to access many 'new' employment opportunities. At the very least, however, it seems that the growth of employment opportunities in retail and hospitality may not be completely successful in overcoming the problems of unemployment and disadvantage so apparent in Glasgow.

The literature surrounding the condition and development of the labour market in the UK, and in particular in Glasgow, highlights the huge shifts that have occurred over the last three decades, not least the impact of these shifts upon males who would have been involved in the heavy industries that are in decline resulting in high unemployment and inactivity levels. However, analysis would benefit from incorporating studies that examine the nature of work and employment now so

apparent in cities such as Glasgow, that is interactive service work, and the impact the growth of this work has on unemployed job seekers access to work and their views of this work. Complementing the literature detailing the key changes in the labour market, outlined above, with literature concerning the skills required in much work in the interactive service sector and unemployed job seekers perceptions of this work would offer a more rounded picture of the impact of key developments in the labour market. In the following chapters, therefore, the issues of skills and attitudes towards interactive service work will be examined.

2.5 Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the key features comprising a labour market and has highlighted the key features of the labour market in the UK, in Scotland and in Glasgow. It is clear that the condition of the labour market is important and impacts upon, not only government and industry but also at an individual level.

This chapter has provided an overview of involvement in the labour force, by summarising economic activity and inactivity rates, and highlighting that while unemployment rates have declined over the last few decades economic inactivity has risen, with more and more people, especially males, moving outside the labour market. It has been argued that the shift to a service economy has impacted upon these inactivity figures, and has been one reason for the increase in male inactivity levels increasing. The increase in services has been particularly problematic in geographic areas previously dominated by manufacturing and heavy industries.

It has also been shown that alongside the shift to a service economy, key developments in the labour market have included the growth of part-time work and the decrease of full-time work, and the shrinking of the gender gap regarding participation in the labour market. It appears that each of these developments is linked. Part time employment and the increase in service work have seemed to offer

opportunities in the labour market to females who were previously outwith the labour force. On the other hand these developments have hindered male participation rates.

Moreover, this chapter has drawn attention to the development of an hourglass economy in the UK, where the 'high' and 'low' ends of the work spectrum are disparate in terms of associated work skills, work value and wage premium. Worryingly, it is clear that growth at the 'high' end is limited, while the majority of employment opportunities are to be found in the 'low' end.

It is clear that the labour market in Glasgow reflects that of the UK more generally. The heavy industries that once dominated in Glasgow have declined over the last few decades and the city, regarded as exemplar in this respect, has developed a service-based economy. There is a broad range of service industries in Glasgow, from financial services to retail and hospitality services, and the economy in the city is considered strong. Yet, problematically, this buoyant labour market exists alongside high unemployment and high inactivity levels, with Glasgow suffering from the highest rate of economic inactivity in Scotland and a higher long-term unemployment than the regional and national rates. It has been argued in this chapter that not all communities in Glasgow have benefited equally from the regeneration of this city, and inequalities are reflected in the poor unemployment and economic inactivity figures. It is argued that in particular the growth of 'female' service work has hit this once 'masculine' industrial landscape severely. The shift to a service economy has negatively impacted upon many working class communities in Glasgow, not least working class men, due to the limited range of employment opportunities in the local labour market. It appears that the quality of much employment and access to employment in the service sector in Glasgow needs to be considered before employment in these jobs can be considered as a route to overcome exclusion. Moreover, the perceptions of service work as feminine work also needs to be tackled in order that males view this work as meaningful and worthwhile employment.

Despite the ensuing problems for sections of the population as a result of the regeneration of Glasgow and the shift to a service based economy, the growth of the service sector in Glasgow is ongoing and future growth in service work is predicted. It is appropriate then to now turn attention to the skills needed for much work and employment in the service sector, in particular, work in the interactive service sector.

Chapter 3

Skills - Conceptual and Practical Issues:
The Concept of Skill, Skill Trends, the Government and Skills and
the Skills Required in Interactive Service Work

3.1 Introduction

The concept of skills and the importance of skills across all levels, from the individual to the national level, have been of considerable interest to academics, successive governments and policy makers for several decades. Grugulis, Warhurst and Keep (2004: 1) suggest that both 'policy makers and academics keenly debate the importance of skills as a lever for boosting individual employability, firm productivity and national competitiveness.' Therefore clearly skills are of great importance, with both government and the individual benefiting from fuller understandings regarding skill trends and skill demands.

In the previous chapter key developments in the labour market in the UK were highlighted and examined. It is clear that there has been a shift in the economy from manufacturing to services. Yet, despite a buoyant labour market there are huge problems, particularly in cities where the economy was based around declining heavy industries and manufacturing, with high levels of economic inactivity. In order to better understand this situation this chapter focuses on issues surrounding the changing demand for skills occurring as a result of the decline in heavier industries and the growth of service work, focusing in particular on the skills demanded in interactive service work.

However, it is important to set the context for this discussion of skills and examine pertinent issues concerning skills in the UK including: defining, forming and measuring skill; skills trends; and the UK government's approach to skills. There then follows an examination of skill in the context of interactive service work.

3.2 <u>Defining skill, how skill is formed and how to measure skill</u>

While much has been written regarding the importance of skills to the economy, to employers and to the individual, what is meant by the term 'skill' is a complex issue. Academics and policy makers' focus on skill acquisition, as a route to employment success, yet there is much debate regarding what comprises skill. 'Skill' is also a problematic concept due to issues surrounding the way skill is formed and how it is measured or quantified. Therefore, it is important, in this initial stage of the chapter, to briefly examine how skill is defined, formed and measured.

3.2.1 Defining skill

As Clarke and Winch (2004) point out what is meant by 'skill' varies across countries, and thus it can be problematic to compare skill from society to society. Notwithstanding this significant caveat, it is important to examine what is meant by skill in the UK context, and in particular, the concept of skill utilised by the government in the multitude of skills surveys, the meaning of 'skill' as discussed by academics and what comprises skill for employers. As Grugulis and Stoyanova (2005: 3) argue: 'skill is part of a complex social system', where the skill of the individual, the skill demanded by work and the political definition of skill are all important. Thus, it is apparent that definitions of skill and how skills are viewed are shaped by many influences and may contribute to uncertainty regarding what is meant by the term skill.

Despite uncertainly regarding what comprises skill it is clear that the language related to skills has grown and has been transformed over the last few decades. There is now reference to transferable skills, employability skills, soft and hard skills, emotion skills and aesthetic skills, to name but a few. Indeed, it could be argued that as the lexicon of language used to identify and categorise skills has grown understandings of the skills utilised in work have suffered. The language surrounding skills has grown not least because it seems that there is a plethora of skills that are used in much work; indeed workers apparently need to possess many skills and be

multi-skilled in the contemporary UK labour market. Yet, there is little agreement regarding how skill should be defined, and indeed the meaning of 'skill' seems to be ever changing. For example, Payne (2000) argues that the meaning of skill has 'broadened' since the 1950s moving from a definition based around 'hard' or technical abilities in the 1950s, to a definition focusing on attitude to work or 'outlook' in the 1970s and 1980s, and in the 1990s, because of the demand for a flexible labour market, a concentration on identifying and providing individuals with 'core', 'generic' or 'transferable' skills. It could be argued that in the past analysis of skill was simpler in that it tended to concentrate on the technical or analytical capacities of work. According to the current skills literature however, there are many different types of skills, including soft and hard skills, that are applicable to the contemporary workplace (Westwood, 2004), and hence the broadening of the meaning of skill.

The debate regarding what comprises skill is ongoing. However it is important to understand what the concept of skill used in many national skills studies, involving policy makers and academics, refers to. In their study of skills utilised by the UK workforce, Ashton et al. (1999: 24) employed an initial working definition of skill as: 'Personal characteristics, influencing the quantity and quality of work performance, including abilities, attitudes, knowledge, motivation and competences.' Moreover, the National Skills Task Force (NSTF) highlights the importance of 'competence' or 'proficiency' regarding skill and suggests that:

> Skill is the ability to perform a task to a pre-defined standard of competence, but to many the word also connotes a dimension of increasing ability (i.e. a hierarchy of skill). Thus while skill is synonymous with competence, it also evokes images of expertise, mastery and excellence. Skill is by definition acquired through formal and/or informal learning and through practice. (NSTF, 2000b: 21)

Following their examination of skills utilised in the workplace in the UK the NSTF report suggests that there are three distinct types of skill, namely, generic, vocational

and 'a third group of 'skills' better defined as personal attributes' (NSTF, 2000b: 24). According to the NSTF report generic skills are skills that are used in many different occupations, including: literacy skills; number skills; physical skills; technical skills and problem solving skills. The NSTF (2000b), suggest that vocational skills differ from generic skills in that they are skills related to specific occupations, although some vocational skills, such as foreign language skills may be transferable. However, the NSTF's third category of skill is, they argue, 'more difficult to define' (ibid: 24). These skills or personal attributes 'relate to the characteristics that employers say they most often look for in applicants when recruiting' (ibid: 24). Clearly then the NSTF research is taking into account the demands of employers in their definition and conceptualisation of what comprises skill. Indeed it is important to note that employers skills demands are changing as the nature of much work has changed and the personal attributes or skills employers are requesting at the point of entry to employment are important in conceptualising definitions of skill applicable in the workplace.

The uncertainty and lack of clarity regarding what comprises skill is obviously problematic in attempting to analyse or discuss skills relevant in the UK labour market. Moreover Payne suggests specifically that the broadening of the meaning of skill, such that individual's personality and physical characteristics are regarded as skills, is also problematic. In particular, he points to the difficulties for a VET system that may be required to consider the importance of 'tacit behaviours, personality traits, attitudes and even physical characteristics', now considered skills, and he considers the inclusion of these factors as 'skills' to have implications regarding inequality and discrimination (ibid: 361). The issues of inequality and discrimination will be discussed more fully in Chapter 4, however, what is apparent is that defining skills and what the term skill encompasses is not straightforward. Yet, as the NSTF point out what employers demand or look for in potential employees when recruiting clearly determine access to employment and as such the personal attributes and characteristics of individuals appear to be conceived as skills by employers, and as such the demand for these skills deserves attention. However, it is important here to note that the definition of skill has broadened and that typically, according to the

NSTF, notions of skills imply competence regarding a particular issue that is learned either informally, formally or through practice.

As Grugulis and Stoyanova (2005) argue skill exists within a complex social system and this complexity creates problems when attempting to define skill. In this respect it is clear that the meaning of skill has broadened recently. However, Payne (2000) makes the valid assertion that this broadening to encompass factors such as physical characteristics, personality traits and attitudes may be problematic in terms of VET provision. Yet, as the definition of skill utilised by the NSTF makes clear, it is important to incorporate the demands of employers into definitions of skill, not least because it is the perceptions of employers about such 'skills' that inform decisions about recruitment and selection.

3.2.2 How skills are formed

It is clear that skills are essential to individuals and are currently the focus of much attention, however, it is important to determine how skills are formed. As pointed out above the NSTF (2000b) suggests that skills are learned either through formal or informal routes or through practice. More specifically Crouch (2004) argues there are several routes through which skills are formed; he refers to them as 'skill formation systems'.

Crouch identifies the state as a major influence in skill formation and he identifies two reasons why the state is concerned to form skills in individuals. Firstly, 'all modern states' take responsibility for basic and more sophisticated education of their population in order to enhance social cohesion and impact upon the population's mobility. Secondly, it is in government's interest that the population is skilled, due to the link between a skilled workforce and a strong economy. However, the state may not pay for or directly provide systems for skill formation despite their concern regarding them, and other institutions, such as employers, may be responsible for skill formation in individuals. Yet, when there is concern regarding skills levels government may intervene, as in the case of the formation of Training and Enterprise

Councils (TECs), an intermediary institution, in the UK. However, currently, the UK government utilises VET to form skills in the population.

Although generally the market encourages utilisation of other institutions of skill formation in some cases individual organisations offer training for work, particularly if the skills utilised in this work are firm specific. Therefore, in such instances the market can operate as an institution of skill formation. Crouch also identifies corporate hierarchy as an institution of skill formation. This refers to organisations that are large enough to benefit from economies of scale and have no financial difficulty in providing training for employees. The skills they provide are usually specific or the skills lead to a specific corporate culture.

Crouch also identifies associations formed by firms as systems of skill formation. In this type of system skills are often gained through methods such as the apprenticeship system, where education and work experience combined are the tools used to form skills. Associations are able to direct and monitor this system and as such this system is one of the most successful methods of skill provision. Yet Crouch warns, at periods when skill demands are changing quickly even associations may be unaware of new demands and the system will falter.

Lastly Crouch points to communities and networks as 'informal' methods of skill formation. These groups, which exist alongside more formal associations, utilise 'informal pressures' and are most likely to add on to the formal skill formation structures rather than providing a complete training or education system on their own. Therefore, these communities and networks of employers and employees lack any real power, yet can be successful in improving existing provision where this is required.

All of the above skill formation systems have something in common, that is, they work best in situations where it is understood what skills are required, and skills demands are stable, altering slowly and steadily. However, as Crouch (2004: 104) highlights in conditions of quick change there is less certainty regarding skills and

'(W)here whole sectors are in decline and new ones emerging, there will even be uncertainty over what kind of preparation the new occupations need at all'. Moreover, he further argues, in these situations cracks appear in the skills provision system, with blame and suspicions being levelled across groups such as potential employees, government, employers, businesses and firms, schools and those responsible for training. It appears that in times of employment change, like the current growth of service employment, skill formation systems may not function adequately to best provide for new skill demands. This is obviously problematic. As Crouch further argues, there is a situation in the UK presently where these is 'growing uncertainty' regarding which skills are required in our new global economy based around services. While it is accepted that we should all be more skilled and education and training provision should increase it is not clear what we are training for. In this climate policy makers focus on individuals as being responsible for their own learning, skilling and reskilling, by either undertaking the financial burden of skill formation themselves or by utilising the plethora of training and education initiatives provided by government. As Crouch highlights:

> Young people have in effect been expected to bear the burden of risk and uncertainty concerning skills that will be needed in the future because none of the agencies normally considered to bear responsibility for this any longer understand likely patterns of skill requirements. (ibid: 107)

Indeed it is important to note that in times of flux or change in the labour market the resulting lack of understanding regarding skills supply and demand results in the formal agencies usually responsible for skill formation, including associations, large firms, and the state, tacking a step back from their role in skills formation. For example Crouch points out: 'Large firms are unlikely to develop their own training courses...if the identity of skills is changing fast.' (ibid: 110) Moreover, Crouch (1997) argues that skill formation can suffer because those involved in skill formation have differing interests or lack appropriate information. For example, associations and firms or employers, will usually operate in their own interests and the state should lead the way with regard skill formations but often lacks appropriate

information regarding skills demands and can be slow to change provision. Moreover, individuals, particularly young people, often lack information regarding skills and are unable to invest the time and money required for skills development. Therefore it is clear that the agencies usually responsible for skill formation suffer in times of uncertainty regarding skills, which in turn will negatively impact upon individuals seeking skills provision and training.

3.2.3 Measuring skill

As it is very difficult to measure skill it is commonplace to use proxies such as qualifications or extent of training to approximate levels of skill. Government policy and the training and education system in the UK measure skills using proxies including: education; qualifications; training; and work experience. It is important to note that as Noon and Blyton (2002) point out this approach is exemplified by the work of those using a human capital method, such as Becker (1964), where there is an assumption that power lies with the individual to obtain skills through training and education. Although there are various proxies for skill Grugulis et al. (2004) suggest that currently policy makers focus their attention on qualifications as a proxy for skill. They argue that by emphasising the increasing education participation levels and the increase in qualifications possessed by the population government are able to argue that in the UK there is a situation of improving skills levels across the workforce (upskilling theory will be discussed fully in the following section). Moreover, the tools used by policy makers to measure skills aid this argument. Indeed, Grugulis argues that vocational qualifications such as NVQs, which the government are strongly in favour of, 'are effectively seen as both a means of up-skilling the working population and the way that those skills can be measured' (2002: 3).

However, this focus by policy makers and academic research on measuring, collating information on, and analysing 'proxies' for skill is problematic as the proxies used may not always measure the skills they seek to correspond to (Grugulis et al., 2004). In particular, there is a cause for concern regarding the use of traditional proxies for

skill, such as educational or vocational qualifications, as many of the 'new' skills in the ever-expanding service sector are not easily equated with existing qualifications (a point discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4). Moreover, one of the difficulties of measuring and quantifying skill in today's labour market, as Keep, Mayhew and Corney (2002) highlight, is the changing meaning of skill, and in particular the changing meaning of skill in the service sector. Nonetheless it is clear that in the UK the proxy of qualifications are used to measure skill.

3.3 Skill trends: upskilling, deskilling and skill polarisation.

Prior to examining the importance of skills to the UK government it is useful to outline skills trends in the UK over the last few decades. These trends will obviously inform and impact upon policy and as such provide the context for the examination of the approach to skills in the UK. Therefore the theories of upskilling, deskilling and skill polarisation are outlined briefly here.

Theorists proposing the upskilling argument suggest there has been a general increase in skill in work since around the 1960s, due to changes in technology and its impact on work forms along with the shift from manufacturing and industrial based work to service based work. They argue that these changes have decreased demand for manual skills and increased demand for more technical and theoretical knowledge (see for example the work of Becker, 1964 and Bell, 1973). Proponents of upskilling also highlight that more and more people are being employed in white-collar occupations.

However, upskilling theories have been criticised, for example by the work of Braverman (1974) who instead argued that in reality 'modern work' in the late 1960s and 1970s, and indeed much work in the twentieth century more generally, was becoming increasingly deskilled. New technology and the ongoing impact of Fordist and Taylorist practices in work meant that for many workers their job required little training or skill. He suggested this deskilling had a negative impact on workers as it

allowed more management control, was uninteresting work for the employee and failed to 'engage' them in their work. (Noon and Blyton, 2002)

While Braverman's work has been criticised, there has been much agreement with many of his overall findings. For example, Thompson (1989) concurs that the major trend in the capitalist workplace is a trend towards deskilling. Indeed as Grugulis et al. (2004) argue, recent research underlines the deskilling thesis, suggesting that across the US and the UK, in both the service sector and the manufacturing sector, deskilling is ongoing. However, as they further acknowledge the deskilling theses must not be viewed as relevant to all workplaces as research in other European countries has shown that employers and government policy in these countries may be more committed to increasing skills in the workplace (for example see Clarke and Herrman, 2004).

Those proposing a situation of skill polarisation suggest that in the UK over the last two decades skill change is not explained by the upskilling or the deskilling arguments. Gallie (1994) suggests that examination of the Social Change and Economic Life Initiative (SCELI) data reveals several patterns. In general upskilling was more apparent than deskilling; however non-skilled manual workers experienced a great degree of static skill levels. At a sectoral level analysis shows again a trend towards upskilling rather than deskilling. However, overall Gallie (1994: 75) points out that the evidence supports a polarisation of skill: 'Those that already had relatively high levels of skill witnessed an increase in their skill levels, while those with low levels of skill saw their skill stagnate.' He further argues that the main causes of this polarisation of skill are the growth of the service sector in the 1980s and the impact of technological change. The former has resulted in 'the presence of a particularly large and exceptionally low-skilled category of non-skilled manual work.' (ibid: 75) And a result of the latter is that individuals who utilise advanced technology in work have experienced skill increases. Moreover Gallie suggests that the SCELI data reveals that there was a trend towards upskilling in the 1980s, however this upskilling was more likely to be experienced by males. He points to the reality that much work conducted by women is part time, 'female' work which is low

skilled and has not been impacted upon by influences, such as technological change, which have resulted in an increase in skills for others.

More recent research indicates that skill polarisation is evident in the UK with the development of an 'hourglass economy' (Nolan and Slater, 2003). As pointed out in the preceding chapter the hourglass economy in the UK is characterised by a growth in high skill, high wage, high value added work at the top end and a growing number of low paid, low skill, low value added work at the bottom. For those at the top of the labour market upskilling is significant and for those at the bottom end, deskilling or skill stagnation is more commonplace. Thus the evidence points to a situation in the UK of skill polarisation, with upskilling for some, those at the top end of the labour market in particular, and skill stagnation for others, those employed at the bottom end of the labour market.

The situation regarding skills trends is not straightforward, however, skills trends arguably impact upon government policy towards skill. The issue of skills is extremely important to the UK government due to the perceived influence of skill on the national economy and on improving access to employment opportunities. These issues are the focus of the next section.

3.4 The UK government and skills

It is argued that the government's increasing interest in skills is a result of the comparatively poor productivity performance of the UK and the link between increasing productivity through increasing the skills in the population (Felstead, Gallie and Green, 2004). The link between productivity and skills underpins the government's ongoing interest in skills and the introduction of various initiatives, such as Sector Skills Councils (SSC) and the National Skills Task Force (NSTF), to examine the nature of skills, to assess skill needs and shortages, to aid the development of skills and to inform policy. Warhurst and Lockyer (2001:15) underline this government focus on skills suggesting that:

There is broad and continuing agreement amongst a range of policy-makers across the advanced economies, including Scotland, that investment in and enhancement of skills is necessary and desirable in order to make national economies more competitive, meet the demands of employers and provide employability for individuals

Government commitment to skills is not new however; Keep and Mayhew (1999) suggest that in the 1980s in the UK there was a 'supply side revolution' with regards to skills provision. Government policy became ever more concerned with increasing skills levels, and attempted to boost the supply of skills to the labour market through various training initiatives, while at the same time expounding a requirement for individuals to become committed to lifelong learning[7]. Yet Finegold and Soskice (1988) suggest that in the UK the level of demand by employers for such skilled workers was low. Nevertheless, despite this supply and demand mismatch the policy of increasing the supply of skills carried on into the 1990s.

In the 1990s the government focused on education and training as the routes to develop skill in the individual, and both VET and work-based training were utilised for skill acquisition and to provide qualifications as proxies of skills obtained. Keep and Mayhew (1999) point to the widening recognition towards the end of the 1980s that national economic success benefits from education and training, and thus, as more and more was invested in education and training the numbers of people who obtained qualifications increased. This situation was in part due to the new system of education and training which were increasingly qualifications driven.

At this time the UK government identified several groups of people as requiring particular attention regarding skill acquisition. For example since the 1980s repeated attempts have been made to offer training for the unemployed and for young people in order to increase skills levels. However, as Keep and Mayhew (1999) suggest. there have been ongoing failings regarding the outcomes of Vocational and

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[7] It is expected that individuals will be involved in lifelong learning not least to keep pace with technological change and globalisation.

Educational Training (VET) over the last two decades. In particular they point out that initiatives such as the Youth Training Scheme (YTS) and Employment Training (ET) merely became schemes to move the unemployed into work and did not increase the skill levels of participants. Also at this time government demanded that training should lend itself to being measured and certified, allowing comparisons between and across different training initiatives and schemes resulting in the introduction of, for example, NVQs. However, Keep and Mayhew argue that despite numerous policy interventions aimed at enhancing performance UK VET remained as problematic in the late 1990s as it was a decade previously.

More recently the concern regarding skills is underpinned by the commitment of governments across the developed world to develop 'knowledge based' economies, with the UK government, for example, being committed to developing a 'high skills' or 'knowledge driven' economy (Lloyd and Payne, 2003: 115). Due to the global labour market and the so called 'information society' (Castells, 1998) it is perceived that the labour force must acquire the skills necessary for the global, information driven society, or they will be unable to reap the economic benefit of these developments. However, the government's goal of a high skills economy occurs alongside a general commitment to increasing skills levels for all. As Keep and Mayhew (1999) point out, current UK VET policies underline policy commitment to increasing skills and qualifications not only to positively contribute to national productivity and competitiveness but also as a route to overcoming problems such as social exclusion. Indeed the government's commitment to increasing skills levels is underlined by the belief that: '(W)e will not achieve a fairer, more inclusive society if we fail to narrow the gap between the skills-rich and the skills-poor.' (Department for Education and Skills, 2003:7)

Although the government is keen to raise skills levels across society and view this as a route to creating a more equal and balanced society Brown argues that economies that are knowledge driven are linked to problems of 'polarization and inequality rather than convergence and equality' (2001: 252). Brown is concerned that clearly not every individual can find 'high skill employment', and therefore are there 'decent

jobs' for those not involved in highly skilled work? Regarding those who are socially excluded from appropriate and worthwhile training or education Brown wonders 'do they confront a polarized labour market which may force them into casual jobs or long-term unemployment?' (ibid: 253) Indeed due to the problems of global competition for low skilled work, the increase in technology, and a poor economic climate, rising unemployment and social exclusion should be a cause for concern for governments. Moreover, the polarisation of income and poverty is impacted upon by governments, like those of the US and the UK, because of the focus on employment for individuals, regardless of the skills involved, being preferable to unemployment. This approach is problematic, as Brown underlines '(T)his trade-off will result in a large proportion of low skilled, low waged jobs remaining a permanent feature of the employment structure' (ibid: 254). The resulting 'working poor', who undertake low skill low wage jobs, and the economically inactive remain socially excluded while also being considered responsible for their situation as they are perceived to be disinclined to seize the training or employment opportunities available to them. As Lafer (2004: 110) argues regarding the failure of US training for the unemployed in overcoming poverty, this failure occurs because there are insufficient moderately well-paid jobs available for those who need them, and importantly that 'where there are jobs, skills and education have only a weak effect on wages.'

Furthermore, there is evidence that a focus on knowledge work does not benefit the whole population, as it is clear that not every individual can be involved in knowledge work, with for example the number of 'symbolic analysts' utilising high skills as described in Reich's (1991) typology of occupations, only comprising a small section of the overall workforce (Keep and Mayhew, 1999). Similarly Crouch (1997: 381) argues that with the focus on a learning society it is clear that not everyone will be able to take part:

> For many years to come, many members of the work-force will be unable, as a result of both demand and supply factors, to gain high-quality places in the labour market. It should not be pretended that, if only they showed adequate initiative and responded to the educational opportunities available, most of

them would be able to do so. Many will be forced to compete for the low-productivity opportunities that will not require high levels of education except as the filtering device through which, by definition, many will not pass.

Moreover, Crouch argues that these people will encounter low wages and high job insecurity or at best, work in the public services, which although more secure. will be nonetheless low paid. Therefore the government's focus on raising skills levels may have deleterious outcomes. Furthermore, it is argued that focusing on increasing skills levels may lead to qualifications for qualifications sake. For example, currently the working population appear to be overqualified for the work they do, possessing more skills than is actually demanded by their employment with credentialism, where employees possess qualifications above the level required to do their job, being evident (see Ashton et al., 1999 and Felstead et al., 2004).

Ultimately the commitment to developing a knowledge economy with the focus on developing high-end skills prevalent in UK policy circles is problematic. As Thompson, Warhurst and Callaghan (2001: 924) argue rather than moving towards a knowledge economy, the UK will instead see large growth in 'low level service jobs or routine interactive service work'. Moreover, as Grugulis et al. (2004: 6) point out there is evidence of skill polarisation in the UK with 'substantial numbers' of people involved in low paid, low skill work, much of it in the service sector. Yet worryingly, as Grugulis et al. (2004: 4) argue, 'policy makers are once again being seduced by the potential of new technology and the upskilling that many associate with it', while it is clear that the majority of employers are committed to 'low skill, low wage, low trust work'. Therefore, with particular reference to VET Keep and Mayhew (1999) argue against the notion of 'upskilling' for all and the merits of utilising this to inform VET provision, and suggest that in order to have an informed VET provision in the UK examinations of the growth and development of each of Reich's occupational groups, the symbolic analysts, those involved in routine production and those involved in interpersonal services, along with identifying the skill needs of each, would allow better informed decisions regarding VET provision to be made.

It is clear then that the UK government is pursuing an agenda of upskilling for all, with the focus on developing a knowledge based economy. Although the link between skills levels and economic productiveness is important to the government it is also clear that their focus on skills is also driven by a desire to meet the skills demands of employers and increase employability through increasing skills levels in order to overcome issues such as social exclusion. However, the usefulness of any skills agenda is impacted upon by understanding of what skill comprises and the skills required for particular forms of work. As highlighted in the previous chapter the UK has seen a huge growth in service work, much of it in the interactive services, while at the same time the government are clearly focused on skills as a route to accessing and maintaining employment, and therefore it is important to examine what skills are utilised and deemed important in interactive service work.

3.5 What is skill in the context of interactive service work?

Over the last few decades there has been a structural shift in the economy of the UK with an economy previously based around heavy industries and manufacturing being replaced by a service based economy. Indeed, almost one quarter of males and females who are employed work in the area of 'distribution, hotels, catering and repairs', while one fifth of employed males and almost half of all employed females are employed in 'other services' (Social Trends, 2004). It is clear that there has been a shift to a service economy with this sector being responsible for much of the total employment in the UK. However, it is important to note that service work itself is heterogeneous, with the term service work applying to both high skill 'knowledge' work in IT for example, and much routinised, low skill, low wage work, for example, call centre work where interactions are often tightly scripted. That the term service work is used to describe both highly skilled and less skilled jobs is problematic, and indeed further complicated by the range of occupations this descriptor is applied to. For example, service work can refer to anything from financial services work to caring work.

However, despite the heterogeneity of service work much service work differs from manufacturing and manual work and the difference between the two forms of work is most apparent in a particular form of service work, that is, service work where workers interact with customers. Korczynski (2002) refers to this as 'customer service work', yet this work is also often referred to as interactive service work, that is, work that demands interaction with customers involving either face-to-face or voice-to-voice interaction (Leidner, 1991, 1993). It is the nature of customer service work, or interactive service work that is central to this thesis and therefore it is important to understand what characterises this work. Korczynski (2002: 5-6) outlines the five attributes of service work that are 'traditionally' identified as differentiating services from manufacturing work:

- Intangibility – this refers to the lack of production of a tangible product in much service work. In much service work the product is the interaction itself.
- Perishability – this refers to the fact that the majority of services cannot be produced in advance.
- Variability – although much service work, particularly interactive service work, is highly routinised and scripted the customer's involvement in the service encounter will vary.
- Simultaneous production and consumption – refers to the fact that in much service work 'production', by the worker, and 'consumption', by the customer, occur at the same time.
- Inseparability – this highlights that the customer is part of the 'service process'.

Korczynski (2002) argues that customer service work, or interactive service work, entails all five of the attributes of service work, to some extent, while other forms of service work may only have a few of the attributes. However, he observes that it is important to note that the levels of each attribute vary between different forms of customer service work, with for example retail work being involved in tangible goods, and as such this work does not 'involve absolute intangibility' (ibid: 6). Therefore there are 'degrees' of service work (ibid: 6-7).

It is clear then that interactive service work differs greatly from manufacturing or manual work, however, it is also important to understand the skills requirements of work in the interactive service sector. Ashton et al. (1999) have highlighted the importance of reassessing the skills that are important in work today, and with the rise in interactive service work and the increasing number of people involved in this work it is indeed pertinent to underline the skills required in this work. As highlighted previously in this chapter there has been a broadening of the meaning of the term skill over the last few decades and as Warhurst, Lockyer and Thompson (2002: 4) note, '(P)art of the reason for the broadening of the meaning and range of that termed 'skill' is due to changes in the structure of the advanced economies of the OECD, principally the shift from manufacturing to services.' And similarly, with specific reference to the UK, Keep, Mayhew and Corney (2002: 12) argue that the changing meaning of skill 'reflects the shifting balance of employment in the UK economy'. Therefore it seems that as manufacturing and manual work has declined and the service economy has grown there has been a resultant shift in the skills being utilised in work and therefore a broadening of what comprises skill.

As Keep and Mayhew (1999: 5) suggest 'UK conceptions of what comprises skills have shifted away from hard, technical expertise towards softer interpersonal capabilities'. The demands for skills associated with traditionally male manual work and employment have declined and more demand is made for skills useful in the service encounter, skills such as interpersonal and social skills. (Importantly, this latter form of employment and type of skills are more traditionally associated with female work and employment.) Indeed evidence from the UK skills survey suggests that 'softer' skills such as communication skills, social skills and problem-solving skills are highlighted as having greater relevance in the contemporary workplace. While Thompson (2004: 32-33) argues that in terms of skill demands there has been a 'substantial shift from the technical to the social', or 'a shift towards 'person to person' social competencies.' (emphasis in original) Moreover, it is clear that the skills utilised in service work differ significantly from traditional notions of technical or hard skills. Darr (2004) suggests that the utilisation of technical skills is often associated with the manipulation of things, whereas interaction with people relates

more closely to what could be considered to be the manipulation of people. Importantly the skills required in interactive service work are in great demand due to the nature of the economy in the UK. As Thompson, Warhurst and Callaghan (2000:124-125) point out, the fastest growing areas of employment in Scotland, distribution, hotels and catering and the personal and protective services, produce a demand for 'person-to-person' skills. In much service work it is interaction with people and not the production of 'things' that is relevant and therefore it is soft skills that are increasingly regarded as the relevant skills for this work. The term soft skills is commonly used to describe the skills and attributes used in service oriented work.

There is much evidence of the demand for 'soft' skill in service work. Keep and Mayhew (1999: 9-10) point out that many workers today, particularly those engaged in service sector work utilise skills that differ from the traditional notions of skill in that they are based on 'personal characteristics and psychological traits, rather than on the acquisition of theoretical skills and knowledge.' They further point out that such skills equate to qualifications such as lower level NVQs and are tacit. This is important as although employers may not formally demand these tacit skills, such as personal presentation, communication, and appearance, nonetheless the possession of such skills contributes to employability. Moreover, Callaghan and Thompson (2002: 240) highlight that in recruitment and selection in call centre work, a form of interactive service work, employers place less importance on 'testing' for technical skills and more effort into 'assessing social characteristics and competencies'. It is these qualities that are highly valued in this work, and as such, employers attempt to control them and turn the "intangible' into something measurable' (Thompson, 2004: 34). Westwood (2004: 40) also suggests that employment in the expanding 'personal and protective' services is typical of much new work in the service sector, like new restaurants and shops and childcare, arguing that:

> ...the service sector has brought new characteristics to the labour market far and beyond the skills that its employers might need...As this new service culture has mushroomed, so too has the demand for the kinds of skills and personal attributes that underpin it.

Moreover, the demand for and utilisation of emotional labour, another soft skill, is apparent in interactive service work. Hochschild (1983), in her influential book The Managed Heart, develops a theory of the commercialisation of human feeling and emotion in the contemporary workplace. She suggests that this process is ever increasing due to the commercial utility of this labour and argues this is problematic due to workers' alienation from their emotions. Fineman (1997) also points to the utilisation of emotions as 'competencies' in much interactive service sector employment and similarly Taylor (1998: 84) points to the management of feelings at work as being 'a predominant aspect of the new service sector workplace.' However, the workers in Taylor's study provide evidence of the importance of not only emotions but also personality and voice in employees' interactions with customers. Furthermore, Hall (1993a, 1993b) highlights that employees involved in waitering or waitressing work in the service sector give service using their bodies, emotions and personalities. Therefore, there is evidence that employees are using hard or technical skills, and soft skills, such as emotion skills and embodied skills, in their work.

Obviously interactive service work involves a combination of skills, both technical or hard skills and soft skills. However, there is increasing evidence that it is soft skills that are considered more important in this work. For example, when questioned regarding hiring criteria employers in New York City suggest that abilities such as work attitude, personal characteristics and personality are the aspects that are important to them (Lafer, 2004: 115). Lafer also emphasises that soft skills, such as friendliness and team working ability, and traits such as emotional intelligence (or as he suggests 'skills unrelated to formal education') have been highlighted as the skills that are of greatest importance in the current labour market (ibid, 113-114). There is also evidence that at the point of recruitment and selection the possession of and display of soft skills is more important to employers than technical know how or work experience. Belt, Richardson and Webster (2002), in their study of the utilisation of social skills in call centre work, found that employers 'valued' social skills more highly than technical skills, previous related work experience or formal qualifications. Belt et al. report a demand for social competencies, comprising people skills and communication skills, from employers in this sector. Moreover, Warhurst

and Nickson (2005) suggest that regarding selection criteria for employers in the interactive service sector soft skills, including social and aesthetic skills, are more important than technical skills.

Despite the obvious importance of employees' soft skills to employers involved in interactive service work there is however deliberation regarding whether the multitude of attributes and personal characteristics associated with soft skills can accurately be labelled skills. Whatever label is given to the soft skills utilised in interactive service work, person to person skills, social skills or emotional skills, it is apparent that these skills differ from traditional notions of skill. Keep and Mayhew (1999: 5) suggest that conceptions of skill have moved towards softer capabilities 'many of which could be conceived of as personal characteristics or attributes rather than as skills in a traditional sense'. This highlights that there is some doubt as to what extent soft 'skills' can be considered skills at all. As Grugulis et al. (2004: 6) stress with regard to the skills debate:

> One of the most fundamental changes that has taken place in the last two decades has been the growing tendency to label what in earlier times would have been seen by most as personal characteristics, attitudes, character traits, or predispositions as skills.

Grugulis et al. (2004: 6) and Grugulis and Vincent (2004) point out that 'new' skills may not be so new, but rather is a result of attributes and qualities being 'relabelled as skills'. Certainly the demand for soft skills is not a new corporate strategy. Mills (1951), for example, draws attention to the importance of soft skills in the 'personality market' of sales work in the middle of the 20th century.

> ... in the great shift from manual skills to the art of 'handling', selling and servicing people, personal or even intimate traits of the employee are drawn into the sphere of exchange and become of commercial relevance, become commodities in the labor market. Whenever there is a transfer of control over one individual's personal traits to another for a price, a sale of those traits

which affect one's impression upon others, a personality market arises. (p. 182)

For Mills individuals' personal traits are important in the context of 'the shift from skills with things to skills with persons' (ibid). Therefore it is clear that the recognition of the demand for soft skills or personal characteristics and attributes is not new, but what may be new is that these skills, characteristics and attributes, are now viewed as vital to the job, possibly due to continuing competition in the service sector, and also that these skills are now overtly demanded at the point of recruitment and selection (Nickson et al. 2001).

As discussed previously it is difficult to measure skill, and this may be particularly true for soft skills. The proxies of qualifications, learning time and training time may not be useful with regards measuring or quantifying soft skills such as emotion skills or social skill. As pointed out previously definitions of skill vary across countries, yet in the UK both academics and policy maker's definitions of skill allude to 'competency' or 'proficiency'. These descriptors can be applied to soft skills and as the report of the NSTF (2000b) points out skills can be acquired through 'formal and/or informal learning', with many soft skills developed informally.

However, despite the difficulties surrounding defining, forming and measuring soft skills, the importance of soft skills in skills debates continues as employers, particularly those involved in the interactive service sector are increasingly demanding such skills in their employees. Indeed debates regarding what comprises skill need to recognise the importance of employers' demands regarding skill in the context of the growth of interactive service work. Importantly, such debates need to include examination of the impact of the broadening of the meaning of skill particularly appreciating that soft skills can incorporate a demand for aesthetic skills from employers, and which has a potential impact on unemployed job seekers' access to this work.

3.6 Conclusions

It is argued in this chapter that the issue of skills is increasingly important for government and individuals due to the huge changes that have occurred in the nature of much employment in the UK. The shift to a service economy has led to a resultant demand for skills beneficial in this work, such that employers, particularly those in the interactive service sector, are demanding soft skills rather than technical skills at the point of entry to employment. Yet, while the word 'skill' implies proficiency or competence it has been argued that there are many characteristics of the individual now regarded as skill.

This chapter also highlights the importance of skill formation and underlines that there are various skill formation systems, with skills being acquired through both formal and informal learning. However, as Crouch (2004) argues these formation systems work best when skill demands are stable. The huge changes that have occurred in the labour market over the last few decades in the UK may therefore be problematic in that although government emphasises the importance of skills and increasing skills levels, it may be unclear what skills are needed in the economy.

It is understood that, as Crouch (2004) argues, government are interested in skills to both enhance social cohesion and the social mobility of individuals and because of the link between a skilled workforce and a strong economy. The UK government seems committed to the idea of a knowledge economy and high skills for all, yet it is argued in this chapter that there is much evidence that not everyone can take part in the knowledge economy or enjoy employment at the top end of the labour market. Grugulis et al. (2004) and Thompson et al. (2001) for example point out that most growth in the economy is occurring at the bottom end of the labour market, in services such as interactive service work, where low skill and low pay are the norm.

Due to the growth of interactive service work, and the nature of this work, skills demands have altered resulting in Keep and Mayhew's (1999) call for a better understanding of employer's skill demands. Therefore the chapter focused attention

on the skills utilised in the ever-expanding service economy, highlighting the demand for soft skills in the interactive service sector. There is much evidence of the demand for soft skills in interactive service work and employers preference for employees who possess 'soft' skills over technical skills at the point of entry to employment. However, this chapter highlighted that what comprises soft skills is huge and ranges from team working ability and communication skills, to emotion, social and aesthetic skills. Evidence suggests that due to the importance of interaction between customer and employee in interactive service work employers are demanding and utilising the range of employees' soft skills in order to enhance the service encounter. However soft skills are defined it is apparent that they differ from previous definitions of skill where the focus was on technical ability and as Keep and Mayhew (1999) argue, what comprises skill is now linked to personal characteristics or attributes.

As Ashton et al. (1999) argue, due to the changing nature of work it is vital to reassess the skills that are important in work today. This chapter has highlighted the importance of soft skills in interactive service work and it is noted that, as Nickson, Warhurst, Cullen and Watt (2003) suggest, employers in the interactive service sector perceive soft skills, including social and aesthetic skills, to be more important than technical skills at the point of recruitment and selection. Therefore the following chapter, Chapter 4, focuses attention on this demand for and utilisation of 'aesthetic skills'.

Chapter 4

Aesthetic Skills: Demand and Implications

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted that due to changes that have occurred in the economy, in particular the increase in service work, the issue of skills is of increased importance to individuals, employers and the government. The demand for soft skills in interactive service work has resulted in calls for improved understanding of employers' skill demands (Keep and Mayhew 1999) and the skills important in work today (Ashton et al. 1999). Thus while the previous chapter focused attention on the general demand for soft skills this chapter underlines the specific demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work.

Moreover, this chapter emphasises that this demand for aesthetic skills and other 'soft' skills has many implications for employees, for those seeking employment and for policy makers. Therefore there then follows an examination of some implications arising from the demand for aesthetic skills, specifically regarding access to this work and the exclusion of particular groups due to a lack of appropriate skills, experiences of this work and skill formation of aesthetic skills.

Finally the chapter draws attention to a further consequence of the demand for aesthetic skills in much interactive service work, that is, unemployed job seekers' perceptions of work that requires the display and utilisation of aesthetic skills.

4.2 The demand for aesthetic skills

It is clear that Hochschild's concept of emotional labour has been influential in subsequent research on service sector work and employment. Emotion skills are clearly demanded by employers in the interactive service sector, yet studies of

contemporary interactive service work have also shown that work in this industry is performative in nature and that employees are required to use not only their emotions, but also their 'voice', 'body', and 'personality' in order to give good service to customers (Hall 1993a and 1993b). Similarly Leidner (1993) alludes to the importance of visual and aural aesthetics of employees' work in the interactive service sector. Corporeality may be significant in this type of work, as unlike much work in industries such as manufacturing, interactive service sector employees are required to be involved in face-to-face or voice-to-voice interaction with customers. Employers in interactive service sector are demanding skills that positively impact upon the service interaction as employees are increasingly regarded as part of the product being sold and therefore it is considered that they should 'physically embody the product' while also being regarded as 'walking billboards' for the product and the company (Zeithaml and Bitner, 1996: 304, cited in Korczynski, 2002: 147).

Furthermore, Hancock and Tyler (2000) also point to the value associated with the body in contemporary labour markets. In these labour markets, gender, class, race and ethnicity, age, sexuality and disability form the 'embodied hierarchy'. Clearly, all of these aspects of, what Hancock and Tyler refer to as 'social identity' are important in the workplace. Similarly, McDowell (1997) argues that in merchant banking employers choose employees paying particular attention to class and gender characteristics. She underlines that the work of merchant banking requires an 'interactive performance' with the customer where, '(P)hysical appearance, weight and bodily hygiene, dress and style were all mentioned by interviewees [employees] as a crucial part of an acceptable workplace persona (ibid: 127).'

Indeed due to the importance of employees' service interaction with customers there is evidence that in some areas of the service sector employers are utilising employees' aesthetic competencies or skills. Warhurst et al. (2000) argue that this practice is particularly prevalent in what they term the 'style' labour market in Glasgow. They argue that within Glasgow's general shift to a service economy there has also developed a style labour market, with the city centre in particular offering numerous designer style retail outlets, boutique hotels and trendy cafés, bars and

restaurants. Within this labour market many employers seek employees with embodied capacities and attributes, and the potential to provide 'aesthetic labour'. Warhurst et al. define aesthetic labour as:

> ... a supply of 'embodied capacities and attributes' possessed by workers at the point of entry to employment. Employers then mobilise, develop and commodify these capacities and attributes through processes of recruitment, selection and training, transforming them into *'competencies'* or *'skills'* which are then aesthetically geared towards producing a 'style' of service encounter ... deliberately intended to appeal to the senses of customers, most obviously in a visual or aural way (ibid: 4, emphasis added).

The concept of aesthetic labour refers then to the hiring of employees who possess corporeal capacities and attributes suited to the organisational aesthetic of the organisation. As James (1989) argues emotional labour, like physical labour, requires learned skills, and it is suggested by Warhurst et al. (ibid) that so too does aesthetic labour, with embodied capacities and attributes transformed into 'competencies' or 'skills'. These competencies or skills are intended to appeal to customers' senses and enhance the service encounter.

The emergence of the concept of aesthetic labour, and indeed a focus on the corporeal aspects of employees, as a useful tool aiding understandings and analysis of work in the interactive service sector is relatively recent. Previously the dominant paradigm in studying interactive service work had been Hochschild's (1983) concept of emotional labour. While both an extremely influential and useful concept, emotional labour does not focus attention on the corporeal dimensions of employees involved in interactive service work. Moreover, while many studies have alluded to the utilisation of employees' body, voice and personality in interactive service work (for example Hall, 1993a and 1993b; Leidner, 1993; McDowell, 1997) these studies do not explicitly focus on the commodification of the aesthetic qualities or skills of both male and female employees across interactive service sector employment. It is important to note however, as Witz et al. (2003) argue, that there has been a long

appreciation of the importance of employees' appearance in work, yet this focus on employees' appearance is both empirically and conceptually retired in previous studies. For example, although Mills (1951), Hochschild (1983) and Hall (1993a and 1993b) draw attention to the importance of visual and aural aesthetics of employees in interactive service work these studies remain underdeveloped in terms of the commodification of aesthetic qualities of employees.

Subsequently, however, attempts have been made to foreground the importance of the aesthetics of employees in interactive service work. In their studies of interactive service work in the airline industry Tyler and Abbott (1998), Tyler and Taylor (1998) and Hancock and Tyler (2000) shift the focus of attention, regarding the work of flight attendants, from the commodification of these employees' emotions to an analysis of the commodification of the female body in this work, work they describe as 'body work'. Tyler and Taylor suggest that body work, like emotion work, is considered part of being feminine and as such is part of female work, with females being required to perform and conceal emotional labour as well as 'body work' in order to offer a good work performance. They suggest that the 'exchange of aesthetics' with regards body work occurs as part of a 'gift exchange'. By this they mean that although employees are expected to be involved in body work this work is neither rewarded nor recognised by employers.

Subsequent research by Hancock and Taylor (2000) that now recasts this body work as aesthetic labour still presents the exchange of aesthetics as a gift and therefore beyond contract. Thus while Tyler and her colleagues highlight the importance of the aesthetic qualities of employees as contributing to commercial gain for organisations they describe the aesthetic work of employees as 'invisible work', in that it is not developed, trained or remunerated by employers.

On the other hand the concept of aesthetic labour developed and employed by what Wolkowitz (2006) refers to as the 'Strathclyde Team', argues that aesthetic labour is not invisible. As the research of the Strathclyde Team highlights, aesthetic labour is recognised, rewarded and trained by employers and as such is a feature of the

employment relationship (Warhurst et al. 2000; Witz et al. 2003; Nickson, Warhurst, Commander and Kirk, 2007).

Current usage of the term aesthetic labour is most usually associated with the work of the Strathclyde Team, and importantly, it is the concept of aesthetic labour as first conceived by Warhurst et al. (2000) that informs this doctoral research. As stated above aesthetic labour is not invisible work and also is not beyond contract.

Moreover, Nickson, et al. (2001) suggest that aesthetic labour is most apparent at the level of physical appearance but argue that their notion of embodied capacities and attributes implies something more than merely physical appearance. Indeed, Witz et al. (2003) conceptualise aesthetic labour as comprising elements of corporeality including embodied performance, demeanour and comportment. Highlighting the importance of embodiment and corporeality in much interactive service work Nickson et al. (2001: 179) point out that employees involved in interactive service work reported requirements that they possess the right dispositions for this work including aspects related to 'dress codes; manner; style; shape and size of the body…the "right" sort of appearance and "disposition"'. Although aesthetic labour comprises many elements Nickson et al. point out that '"looking good" or "sounding right" are the most overt manifestations of aesthetic labour' (ibid: 170). Certainly, from the aesthetic labour research, it is clear that both the aural and visual aesthetic competencies and skills of employees are important in interactive service sector organisations where both voice-to-voice and face-to-face interaction occurs between customers and employees. Nickson et al. (2001: 180) point to the comments of a hotel personnel manager who suggested that at the point of recruitment and selection 'We didn't want someone who spoke in a very gutteral manner.' While in telephone banking an interviewee explained that, 'You have to be the friendly face at the end of the phone … people can hear a smile in your voice' (Nickson et al., ibid). Clearly then potential employees' corporealness and voice and accent are important at the point of recruitment and selection.

As pointed out in the preceding chapter there is demand for soft skills, including corporealness, in much interactive service work. It is important to note that what comprises 'skill' may be changing (Keep and Mayhew, 1999; Grugulis and Vincent, 2004; Grugulis et al. 2004) with what could be described as a process of relabelling occurring. This development is particularly pertinent to soft skills, and specifically to emotion skills and aesthetic skills. The debate is ongoing regarding what comprises skill, as exemplified by the debate regarding whether emotion work can be viewed as skilled work (see for example, Payne, 2000 and Bolton, 2004), and this debate also extends to aesthetic labour and aesthetic skills. As Keep and Mayhew (1999) rightly point out soft skills are aligned with personal characteristics or attributes, and importantly, may not be perceived as skills in the traditional sense. However, the recent inclusion of appearance and aesthetic skills in employer's skill surveys adds weight to the notion of aesthetic skill as 'skill'. As pointed out in this thesis, the NSTF indicate that what employers look for in potential employees at the point of recruitment determines access to employment, and as such appearance appears to be conceived as a skill by employers. Moreover, recent employers skills surveys, from the UK, the US and Australia, highlight that employers in retail and hospitality perceive the skills of attitude and appearance to be important in this work (HtF, 2000; Jackson and Briggs, 2003; Martin and Groves, 2002; ScER, 2004). Furthermore, and emphasising its increasing acceptance as a skill, aesthetic skills are now incorporated into skills surveys such as the ongoing research into work skills in the UK involving the 2006 Skills Survey. In this survey work Felstead, Gallie, Green and Zhou include aesthetic skills in their study of work skills and define them as 'looking and sounding the part' (2007:29) and underline that the utilisation of aesthetic skills is most apparent in the service industries.

Furthermore, Nickson, Warhurst and Witz (2000: 15) point out that aesthetic skills are not only pertinent at the point of recruitment and selection, as evidenced by the employers skills surveys, but are vital in 'doing the job'. They state, '...organisations seek to mobilise, develop and commodify employees' *physical capital* (Bourdieu, 1984) into a style of aesthetic labour which forms the animate component of the aesthetics of the organisation.' (italics in original) As stated in the definition of

aesthetic labour employers and management mobilise, develop and commodify employees' capacities and attributes, producing aesthetic competences and skills which are utilised in the workplace. Through the processes of recruitment and selection potential employees are effectively screened for the possession of suitable corporealness, voice and accent. Then through training and management employees 'produce a 'style' of service encounter' (Nickson et al. 2001: 170). It is clear then that employers are demanding embodied capacities and attributes at the point of recruitment and selection, and through processes of training and management they mobilise and develop these capacities and attributes into aesthetic competencies and skills.

It appears that management and employers realise the commercial utility of aesthetic skills. Certainly, as Darr (2004: 57) underlines, 'quality service', and 'technical competence' are deemed to be of equal importance in contributing to organisational success. Due to the increasing importance of quality service and its association with commercial success employers in the interactive service sector focus on quality service by utilising employees' aesthetic competencies and skills and in this process the corporeal aspects of employees provide commercial gain for organisations. Moreover, it is argued that employer demand for aesthetic skills and competencies is becoming more prevalent due to its perceived commercial utility (Warhurst et al., 2000). The importance of image in producing commercial advantage is clearly understood by employers. For example, a survey of dress and appearance policies of employers across a range of industries highlights that the critical reason for 'regulating employees' appearance is "image"' (IRS Employment Trends, 2000: 4). Employers understand that in an increasingly competitive market, where employee and customer interaction is part of the product on sale, much can be gained from focusing attention on employees who 'look good' and 'sound right'. Undoubtedly the debate concerning what comprises skill will continue, yet what is important here is that employers are demanding qualities related to appearance, conceived as embodied capacities and attributes by Warhurst et al. (ibid), that are mobilised, developed and commodified into competencies and skills.

Furthermore, although the demand for aesthetic skills by employers involved in interactive service work is apparent, it is important to note that the demand for aesthetic skills varies across sectors and within different 'styles' of sector, with aesthetic labour being most prevalent in 'stylish' organisations. It is apparent that employers in style organisations utilise aesthetic competencies and skills of employees, yet there is what could be described as, a filtering down effect. Nickson et al. (2001) highlight that the utilisation of employees' aesthetic skills occurs in both the style labour market and in organisations outwith the style labour market, that is, more prosaic organisations including high street retailers and hospitality organisations. These 'demonstration effects' (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007: 107) indicate importantly that the utility of employees aesthetic skills is recognised by many interactive service sector organisations and is not only limited to those considered to be involved in the style labour market. This filtering down effect may be explained by increasing competition across organisations. As competition in this ever-expanding sector increases competitive advantage may focus more and more on aesthetic labour and the utilisation of employees embodied competences and skills. However, it must be noted that the demand for and management of employees' aesthetic competences and skills is not a *new* management strategy, yet, as Warhurst and Nickson (2005:3) suggest, the mobilisation of aesthetic labour is 'increasingly a *corporate strategy*, less ad hoc and more systematic' (italics in original).

The demand for aesthetic skills from employers in the interactive service sector appears therefore to be related to organisational success. In this sector the success of an organisation is linked to both technical competence and to the quality of service (Darr, 2004). The latter is positively enhanced by the utilisation of employees' aesthetic skills and results in commercial gain or success for the organisation (Warhurst et al., 2000). The commercial utility of employees' aesthetic skills is increasingly recognised by employers and as such the utilisation of employees' aesthetic skills is now apparent in organisations outwith the style labour market as organisations attempt to compete in the expanding interactive service sector.

The increasing utilisation of employees' corporealness in many interactive service sector organisations, both within and outwith the style labour market, is indicated in studies such as Pettinger's (2003) examination of clothing retail work. Pettinger found that branding is particularly important in this work and she goes on to distinguish between aesthetic labour and aestheticised labour. She argues that some of the work she examined could not be described as aesthetic labour, but what she terms aestheticised labour, with the awareness of and utilisation of aesthetic skills more overt and apparent in the former and less apparent in the latter. Essentially, Pettinger highlights the differences in corporate aesthetics, which includes employers utilisation of employees aesthetic competencies and skills, between overtly stylish clothing retailers and more prosaic, fashion retailers.

As Pettinger's study highlights it is important to note the variations regarding preferred style of aesthetic both within sectors in different organisations and across sectors. The 'style' or type of aesthetic labour will differ across companies and sectors. For example, there will be a difference in the 'style' of aesthetic labour between a boutique/designer style shop and a chain fashion retailer with the 'style' of aesthetic labour matching the 'style' of the organisation. Similarly there is likely to be differences across the service sector in terms of the particular aesthetic management and aesthetic labour being performed, such that the organisational aesthetic of retail may differ from hospitality.

However, despite these differences, both across sectors and between different styles of organisation, the aesthetic labour research highlights that employers in many 'style' organisations and other organisations involved in interactive service work in Glasgow are not recruiting individuals with technical job experience or skills but in fact are seeking employees with 'person to person' skills, and notably aesthetic skills. Employers then train the technical skills required for the work, often very basic skills, 'in house'. Importantly, however, Nickson et al. (2001) do not suggest that aesthetic skills are taking the place of other skills used in the workplace, but rather that aesthetic skills complement other skills such as social and technical skills. Nonetheless, it is potential employees' aesthetic skills that seem to take priority at

the point of recruitment and selection for many employers. Therefore, as Nickson et al. (2004: 15) argue 'in customer service work, recruitment and selection is more likely to be based on people's social and aesthetic skills rather than technical skills'.

While the initial research by Warhurst et al. (2000) and Nickson et al. (2001) highlighted the importance of aesthetic labour and the utilisation of employees' aesthetic competences and skills, and Witz et al. (2003) examined in detail the conceptualisation of aesthetic labour, more recent research by Nickson et al. (2004) and ScER (2004) has sought to examine the extent of employers utilisation of aesthetic labour. These more recent reports utilise a survey of hospitality and retail employers and employees in Glasgow incorporating organisations both within and outwith those deemed to be part of the style labour market. The focus of this survey research is the skills needs of employers in the retail and hospitality industries for customer facing staff. Nickson et al. (ibid) argue that it is important to determine the extent of aesthetic labour and utilisation of employees' aesthetic skills as this has been overlooked in much literature to date. There are clearly debates concerning the shift to soft skills, and what this means for the nature of work. However, soft skills are generally conceived as skills concerning 'attitude', for example the literature surrounding emotional labour, or social and interpersonal skills, yet employers demands regarding employees 'appearance' is not given the same attention. Analysing the results of the survey research Nickson et al. (ibid) argue that employers in interactive service work place importance on employees' attitudes *and* appearance and the survey data outlined below highlights the extent of these demands. Indeed the survey research reveals some pertinent information regarding the skills that employers involved in interactive service work in the retail and hospitality sectors in Glasgow regard as important. It is important to now highlight the main findings of this survey, focusing on the extent of demand for employees who possess aesthetic skills, both by employers involved in style and non-style organisations.

Firstly, regarding the importance of image and appearance of employees to business success more than 50 percent of employers involved in the survey suggested it was

critical and a further 40 percent suggested it was important. Therefore over 90 percent of employers believe employees' image and appearance contribute to effective business. Table 3 below shows in detail the importance placed on individual components of employees' image and appearance. It is apparent that size, height and weight are deemed to be less important than characteristics such as age, dress sense/style, voice/accent and physical looks.

Table 3: Aspects of image and appearance (%age rounded)

	Critical	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
Age	5	12	35	48
Size		7	22	71
Height	1	3	16	80
Weight		6	25	70
Dress sense/style	7	42	34	17
Voice/accent	8	36	33	22
Physical looks	2	20	48	30

Source: ScER (2004: 14)

Secondly, at the point of recruitment and selection employers showed clear preference for the 'right personality' and the 'right appearance' over qualifications. Indeed 65 percent of employers deemed the right personality to be critical for customer facing employees. As figure 5 below highlights only 2 percent of employers considered 'right appearance' to be not important. While regarding qualifications only 19 percent suggested it was important and 40 percent suggested it was not important. While previous work experience in the sector was considered to be important it was not deemed as important as right appearance.

Figure 5: The attributes and capacities employers are seeking at the point of entry to employment (recruitment and selection) (%)
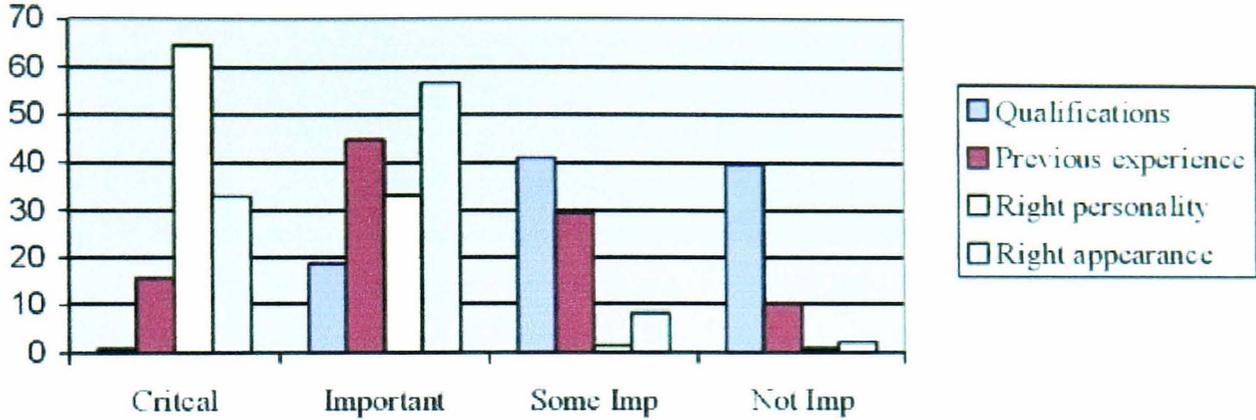
Source: ScER (2004: 16)

A third pertinent finding, and linked to the above findings, highlights the skills employers emphasise as important in customer facing staff. As figure 6 below shows employers place greater importance on social and interpersonal and self-presentation skills than technical skills. Indeed '99% of respondents felt that social and interpersonal skills were felt to be of at least significant importance, and 98% felt likewise about self-presentation skills.'(ibid: 17) Yet less than 50 percent of employers considered technical skills critical or important for customer facing staff.

Figure 6: The skills that are important in customer-facing staff (%)
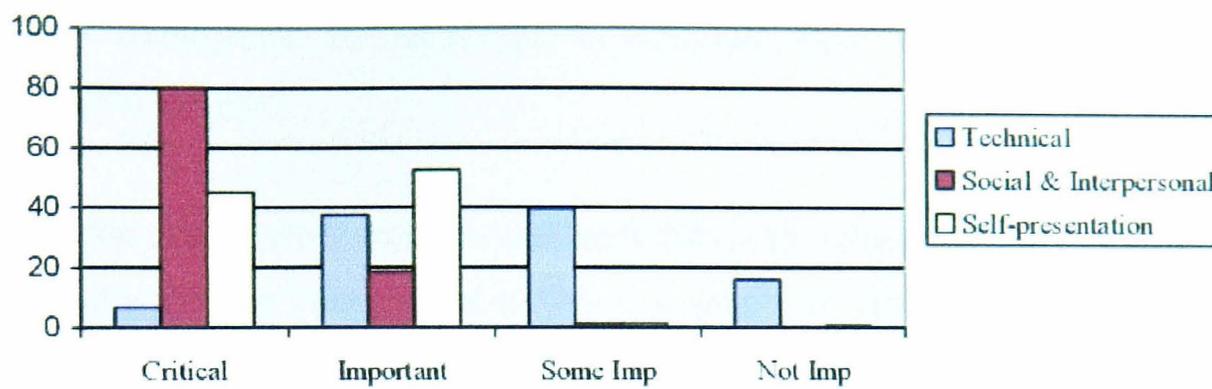
Source: ScER (2004: 16)

The survey data also highlights an important finding regarding skills shortages. Employers suggest that the skills lacking in potential employees, those applying for employment, are related to customer handling skills or soft skills. Indeed 20 percent of employers suggested that applicants lacked social and interpersonal skills to a large extent and, 12 percent suggested applicants lacked self-presentation skills to a large extent. Yet regarding the skills lacking in existing employees employers pointed out that these soft skills were to a large extent not lacking in existing customer facing staff. As Nickson et al. (2004: 24) argue potential employees are 'filtered' according to possession of social, interpersonal and self-presentation skills through the processes of recruitment and selection. And they further suggest that 'those with social and aesthetic skills are at a distinct advantage in the recruitment and selection process, compared to someone who lacks such skills.' (ibid)

Additionally, as employers' dress codes and uniform policy highlights, employees' appearance continues to be of importance when they are actually in work. The ScER survey data reveals that dress codes are important for employers, with 80 percent operating a uniform policy. Also, 90 percent of employers had a dress code in place for employees. These dress codes covered issues such as clothing style, jewellery and make up/personal grooming and hairstyle and length (ScER, 2004: 15). While training for employees tends to focus on the technical aspects of the job, some employers delivered training regarding interpersonal and self-presentation skills,

including training in body language, dress sense and style, and personal grooming (ibid: 19). Therefore it is clear that the standards applied by employers at the point of entry to employment for employees is continued once employees are actually carrying out the work.

Overall the ScER survey research highlights that in the interactive service sectors of retail and hospitality employment in Glasgow employers are placing clear demands that employees have the correct attitude and appearance for customer facing work. Potential employees' social and interpersonal skills and self presentation skills were seen to be of greater importance to employers than technical skills and previous work experience at the point of entry to employment. These 'soft' skills were also of importance once employees were carrying out their work. Therefore the demand and utilisation of employees' emotional, social and aesthetic competencies and skills can be seen to be widespread in the area studied.

Importantly the concept of aesthetic labour signifies the embodied nature of interactive service work in contemporary 'style' organisations. This theory explores the corporeal dimension of this labour. In aesthetic labour the aesthetics of the body/the self are put to work - engaging aesthetic or embodied competencies and skills, in the performance of paid work. A difference between industrial/manufacturing type work *done by the body*, where physical effort is exerted by the body, and some forms of post-industrial work, such as interactive service work in the 'style' labour market, where physical *work is done 'to' the body* - is that the body itself is worked upon. It is this work done to the body that produces favourable service encounters and thus creates profit for organisations. (However, it is important to note that in interactive service work work is still done by the body, only to a lesser extent than much industrial and manufacturing type work.) The utilisation of aesthetic labour appears to be most prevalent in 'style' organisations but as commodification of this labour appears to be filtering down into other service organisations, it is clear that employers understand the commercial utility of such labour. Indeed the concept of aesthetic labour offers an appreciation and

understanding of the commercial use of the body and employees corporeality in order to increase customer satisfaction.

However, with regard the specific issue of skills the aesthetic labour research allows appreciation and understanding regarding the importance of possessing skills related to the aesthetics of the body/self for employees involved in interactive service work. As highlighted previously Keep and Mayhew (1999: 10) point out that what is regarded as skill has expanded to include 'knowledge, capabilities, traits, and physical attributes'. And indeed as Warhurst and Nickson (2001) argue, possessing such characteristics as aesthetic skills is 'a new facet of what it can mean to be "skilled".'(Cited in Grugulis et al., 2004: 7) The survey research outlined in this section illustrates the ongoing demand for aesthetic skills by employers involved in interactive service work with employees' aesthetic appeal being important in organisations branding and competitive strategies (Warhurst and Nickson, 2005). Yet as the debate regarding what comprises skill continues it is important to note that possession of the skills employers are demanding at the point of recruitment and selection determines access to work. In the case of interactive service work employers are clearly demanding qualities related to attitude and appearance, with Nickson et al. (2004) underlining the current 'consensus' in skills debates regarding the importance of these skills to employers in the retail and hospitality sectors of interactive service work. And further, Warhurst and Nickson (2007: 107) argue, regarding attitude and appearance, '... there can be little doubt that they are important to employers and they are being configured as the skills that matter to these employers.' Therefore they argue that both attitudes and appearance need to be incorporated into definitions of soft skill (ibid: 115)

Most certainly the aesthetic labour research highlighted the nature and demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work, with more recent studies underlining the extent of this demand while emphasising specific skills needs and the importance of aesthetic skills to employers in retail and hospitality in the interactive service sector. However, what may be problematic regarding these skills demand concerns who is being employed for this work, and the implications for employees regarding

employers' utilisation of their aesthetic skills. Indeed Warhurst and Nickson (2007) extend their examination of aesthetic labour to include an examination of employees' experience of this work. It is important therefore to now highlight the implications of the increasing importance of soft skills, and in particular aesthetic skills.

4.3 <u>Implications of the demand for soft skills, and in particular the demand for aesthetic skills</u>

As discussed above there is clearly a demand for aesthetic skills, with employers in the interactive service sector requiring a mix of skills, social, technical and aesthetic. However, with regard the demand for aesthetic skills it is evident that there are several important implications for employees and with regard policy resulting from this demand. Firstly, the evidence suggesting that the demand for aesthetic skills results in discrimination and exclusion from interactive service work is outlined. Secondly, it is argued that the demand for soft skills, including aesthetic skills, has implications at the level of gender with negative impacts upon both male and female work and employment. Thirdly, it is argued that an important implication of the demand for and utilisation of soft skills, including aesthetic skills, in work is the resultant control employers have over more features of the employee. And finally it is argued that the demand for aesthetic skills has implications in terms of skill formation and proxies for measuring skill which may be problematic for policy makers and organisations responsible for providing skills training.

4.3.1 Discrimination and exclusion: the importance of social class with regard aesthetic skills

Alongside discrimination on the grounds of for example, age, race and ethnicity, gender or sexuality, discrimination on the grounds of potential employees appearance, described as 'lookism', is increasingly problematic. Lookism is becoming more and more pervasive in the world of work where the economy is increasingly dominated by services and the interaction between customers and

employees is vital. Research has shown that advertisements for interactive service sector employees contain language such as 'well spoken and of smart appearance' and 'very well presented' (cited in Nickson et al. 2001: 179). Yet while there is legislation against the former forms of discrimination, there is currently no such protection against lookism. However, there is a movement to make 'lookism' illegal, with for example, discrimination on the grounds of height or weight now illegal in San Francisco, and labour law in South Africa making discrimination on the ground of 'looks' illegal (Scottishjobs online, 2005). Moreover, jobcentre employees have guidelines in place regarding discrimination and it is perceived that words such as 'attractive' are inappropriate and should not be used in job descriptors (The Employment Service, 1988). Nonetheless the language used in newspaper advertising continues to reflect employer's demands for attributes related to the appearance of individuals.

Indeed, Nickson et al. (2003) suggest that the increasing demand for and utilisation of aesthetic skills is disadvantaging a large section of the population who lack these skills or the required cultural capital. Employers focus attention on the cultural capital and related aesthetic skills of employees because 'by virtue of their cultural capital, these workers are perceived to be more appealing to consumers, and through their work ... create a reference point for those customers.' (Nickson, et al. 2005: 7) It is important to note that this exclusion occurs at the point of recruitment and selection. As Nickson et al. (2004) point out those who do not possess social and interpersonal and self-presentation skills will be rejected at the point of recruitment and selection and in this way individuals who do not possess social and aesthetic skills will be at a greater disadvantage than those who possess such skills. Indeed Warhurst and Nickson (2007: 116) suggest there is a 'new exclusionary potential' associated with the demand for aesthetic skills with 'lookism or discrimination based on appearance a distinct possibility.' Furthermore, it is important to note that as Witz et al. (2003: 41) underline embodied dispositions, which can be conceived as aesthetic skills, are not possessed equally by all members of society, but rather are 'fractured by class, gender, age and racialized positions or locations.' This unequal distribution of aesthetic skills has implications in terms of exclusion from work.

Providing further evidence of the exclusionary outcome of the demand for aesthetic skills is evidenced by the findings of a study of unemployed job seekers in Glasgow where these individuals expressed concern regarding employer prejudice towards the unemployed, with for example, their lack of a 'posh accent' negatively impacting upon their chance of gaining call centre work (TERU, 1999). And furthermore, Nixon (2005) suggests that in his study of unemployed males individuals lacked the skills required for interactive service work. And as Smith (2000) notes, the government aim to integrate the unemployed into the new opportunities for employment, such as those provided by the expanding service sector, yet, he argues, these individuals very often lack the skills relating to the appropriate behaviour and 'dispositions' required of service workers. Moreover, Smith also suggests that these 'skills' are not attained through routes such as education and training. They may however, as argued by Keep and Mayhew (1999), Nickson et al. (2003; 2004) and Warhurst and Nickson (2005) be related to social class. Consequently, due to a lack of apposite skills, groups of individuals, and especially those from working class, often inner city areas, are being overlooked as potential labour in the 'new' economy of service in Glasgow.

The link between class and aesthetic skills is the focus of much work surrounding the demand and utilisation of aesthetic labour. Nickson et al. (2003, 2004) make the salient point that the aesthetic skills demanded by many employers in the interactive service sector are skills which workers from middle class backgrounds are more likely to possess and thus they make a link between possession of aesthetic skills and social class. This link is evidenced by the reality that employers in the style labour market are drawing upon 'younger people from middle-class suburban areas, especially students' as they are perceived to have the necessary skills for this interactive service work (Nickson et al. 2003: 194). Therefore, as Warhurst et al. (2004: 10) indicate, if '"corporeal capital", in the form of deportment, accent and ability to dress appropriately is becoming the determinant of what gets young people a job in some parts of the service sector, the potential for further reinforcement of class divides present itself.' Moreover, as Keep and Mayhew (1999: 10) argue, employment that utilises aesthetic labour such as much work in bars, restaurants and

clubs service is provided by employees who display skills or personal attributes which 'in the UK context may well be related to class background'.

Furthermore, Nickson and Warhurst (2005) suggest that it is not only skills related to appearance that are linked to class but also skills related to attitude. They cite Hochschild's (1983: 97) point regarding potential airline employees being 'screened for a certain type of out-going middle class sociability', where attitude is clearly linked to class. Therefore for Nickson and Warhurst in interactive service work 'the social background of employees becomes an issue and becomes important in creating employability and the capacity to do work so that having or contriving to have 'middle-classness' becomes key in both getting and doing these jobs.' (ibid: 8)

Further evidence of the link between class and skills apposite for interactive service work is provided by Belt et al. (2002) who highlight that call centre employers situated in old industrial areas demand a level of social skills in employees that they found difficult to find in local labour pools. They point therefore to a skill mismatch between employer demand and the supply of labour regarding social skills in these regions. This reported lack of skill apposite for the interactive call centre work obviously affects the employability of these mainly working class individuals.

Due to the link between class and possession of the skills required by employers in interactive service work the increasing demand for skills associated with appearance, presentation and demeanour may increase the exclusion of certain groups already disadvantaged when it comes to the labour market participation. Thus the unemployed and individuals from working class backgrounds may be losing out in the labour market to other labour market sources such as middle class commuters and the ever-increasing student workforce. Importantly employers are more likely to recruit the right appearance for their organisation rather than train it (Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). The emotional and aesthetic skills demanded by employers, those associated with what Warhurst and Nickson (ibid) term 'middle-classness' may be creating a situation where the unemployed and those from working class backgrounds who lack these skills are displaced in the labour market by students and

the middle classes who possess these skills Warhurst and Nickson, ibid). This exclusion from growth sector employment opportunities is problematic because, for example, Glasgow has experienced problems of filling service jobs in the area of hospitability and retail in the recent past, yet the city suffers from higher than average unemployment levels and economic inactivity levels.

Moreover, the issue of exclusion due to employer's skills demands is added to by the perceptions of the unemployed themselves resulting in a situation of self-exclusion. For example the TERU study of unemployed individuals in Glasgow concludes that due to a perception that they do not have the 'appropriate skills and characteristics' needed for work in growth sectors such as hospitality and retail they self select or exclude themselves from this type of employment (1999: 22). Furthermore, Lindsay (2005) argues that a 'real or perceived lack of interpersonal skills' required for retail, hospitality and call centre work is a factor in unemployed job seekers excluding themselves from these occupations. Therefore unemployed job seekers' perceptions of skill, both the skills demanded by employers and their perception of their own skills, are important factors in contributing to their exclusion from this work.

4.3.2 Gender and 'soft' skills, and in particular aesthetic skills

As highlighted in Chapter 2, as the service sector has grown so too have female employment levels, with a related decline in manufacturing and heavy industries resulting in a decline in male employment levels. Furthermore, alongside these changes there has been a simultaneous change in work patterns, with an increase in part time employment and a decrease in full time employment. Within these patterns it is noticeable that the biggest increase in employment has been in the part time employment of females, most usually in the service sector. This has led to claims of a feminisation of the workforce. Furthermore, regarding the changes in the labour market, gender and skills, the Institute for Employment Research has identified two distinctive low skill or no skill labour markets in the UK. The first comprise mostly male, blue collar, manual and full time workers and the second encompasses much service work where the employees are often female, part time and involved in

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interaction with customers. The former labour market is decreasing in size, yet the work is often unionised and better paid than work in the latter, expanding, labour market where remuneration is low. (Atkinson and Williams, 2003: 3-4) However, although at a glance the ongoing demand for soft skills may appear to advantage females while disadvantaging males it is actually clear that the demand for soft skills, including aesthetic skills, resulting from the growth in interactive service work has negative implications for both males and females.

It is argued that the demand for soft skills, including aesthetic skills has impacted upon males. As Helms and Cumbers (2004: 12) suggest employment in industries such hospitality 'require personal and customer servicing skills that do not necessarily match up with a workforce more attuned to, and indeed socialised into, manual blue collar labour.' Similarly, McDowell (2004: 49) questions 'what happens to traditional forms of male working-class embodiment in the labour market when the only jobs open to them rely on social attributes that are seen as an affront to their sense of themselves as masculine, to their notions of masculine respect?' She concludes that in the current service economy, where social, attitudinal and aesthetic skills are important, males are disadvantaged on the bases of 'their gender, their appearance and their attitudes', aspects of what she terms 'the new patterns of discrimination' (ibid: 52). However, it is important to note that more and more males are now entering service employment, in part due to declining opportunities outwith this sector, and as such the service sector is providing a replacement employment opportunity for the declining manual services. Moreover, it could be argued that the negative impact of the demand for interactive service skills affects older males who had previously either been employed in manual work or experienced socialisation into manual work as appropriate 'male' work. With the reduction in manual employment younger males are experiencing a view of the labour market where growth areas are mostly in services. As such their understanding of work may not be traditional, manual blue-collar labour, but rather the reality of many opportunities in the service sector and as such the demand for soft skills, including aesthetic skills, may have less of an impact upon these males. Nonetheless the nature of service work may negatively impact upon both younger and older males.

However, it is not only males who suffer from the demand for soft skills. There is some evidence that the value of soft skills, including social skills, are increasingly being recognised. Yet Grugulis et al. (2004) warn against celebration of the fact that social skills are now viewed, both by policy makers and academics, as valuable skills, particularly in the service sector. While this appreciation of social skills may result in the workforce, the majority of which are female, being regarded as more skilled than they may have previously, it is unlikely that this reappraisal of their skills will result in positive outcomes in the form of an increase in wages, because as Felstead et al. (2002) point out, there is no wage premium for social skills despite employers demand for them. For example, in their study of call centre training Belt et al. (2002: 31) highlight the importance of female social skill in this type of employment, and underline that although these skills are demanded and recognised by employers they are 'poorly rewarded in financial terms'. Moreover, recent research has revealed that while females are more likely to use aesthetic skills at work than males, aesthetic skills do not attract a wage premium. Therefore, although these skills are demanded and utilised at work there is no premium associated with them (Felstead et al. 2007). As Lloyd and Payne (2000) argue, wage determination is a social process and value is often associated with gender and market position. For example, 'female' occupations such as cleaning and childcare may not be low skilled but are considered to be of low value. And furthermore, as Bolton (2004) points out some skills can be classed as unskilled due to the lack of status and thus power those performing the tasks possess. The relationship between power in the workplace and skill is not only evidenced by female low skill work but also by low skill migrant labour, where low skilled work, such as cleaning work, is poorly paid due, in part, to the status of those performing the work. Therefore the demand for soft skills, and in particular aesthetic skills, has an impact for both males and females, with females not being rewarded financially for their use of soft skills and males from working class, blue-collar backgrounds lacking the required skills for this work and also possibly excluding themselves from this type of work.

4.3.3 Employers control over soft skills, including aesthetic skills

A further implication of the demand for and utilisation of soft skills, such as aesthetic skills, concerns the control and influence employers will have over particular aspects of employees. There is evidence that due to the increasing importance of service delivery in the service sector workplace employers are increasingly moving towards control of employees' soft skills, such as their emotions and personality and they are subject to managerial control and definition (for example see: Taylor, 1998 and Fineman, 1997). The majority of jobs where soft skills are of paramount importance are at the bottom end of the labour market, usually in the interactive service sector. In this sector employers, who already exert control over employees' physical labour through processes such as routinisation, will be able to extend their control over employees to include control over employees' attitudes and appearances. For example, it is argued that so called 'new' work practises, such as demands for team-working, adaptability and communication, have a negative impact on employees, in that they result in more control over employees work by employers and less control over their work for employees (Lloyd and Payne, 2004). Thompson (2004: 34) also highlights that employers in call centres attempt to 'shape and dictate' employees attitude, through techniques of monitoring and surveillance, 'turning the "intangible" into something measurable.'

However, with the ongoing demand for aesthetic skills it is clear that employers practises of control, definition, monitoring and surveillance has expanded to encompass employee's appearance. Therefore concerns may be raised regarding employer's ability to mould the appearance of employees, with the demand for aesthetic skills meaning that 'individuals have to subvert their own identity and style for the sake of employability.' (Nickson and Warhurst, 2005: 9) However, Nickson and Warhurst go on to argue that at the top end of the labour market the middle classes have over the years been concerned with issues such as 'dressing for success' and other literature aimed to enhance their career prospects. And therefore, they suggest:

If such advice is deemed reasonable and is seemingly efficacious for professional workers, it would be inequitable and irresponsible to deny other workers the same opportunities, especially if to do so would deny then access to an appropriate and expanding jobs market. (ibid: 9-10)

4.3.4 Skill formation of soft skills, including aesthetic skills

As stressed in the previous chapter there are various routes through which skills are formed and these skill formation systems work best when skill demands are relatively stable and less effectively in periods where sectors are in decline and others are rising, due to uncertainty regarding skills demands (Crouch, 2004). It is argued that currently in the UK there is an emphasis on training and acquiring skills, but uncertainty regarding what skills are required. Therefore the demand for aesthetic skills may have resulted in confusion regarding what skills individuals need to equip them for work in the interactive service sector and how these skills can be formed and measured. Furthermore, compounding the lack of clarity regarding skills demands in the expanding interactive service sector, it is not clear to what extent traditional skill formation systems, for example, VET in the UK, can effectively develop the soft skills demanded by employers in the service economy.

It is argued that uncertainty, particularly in government training initiatives for the unemployed, regarding skills requirements is not a new phenomenon. As McGregor and McConnachie (1995) point out training initiatives and vocational training programmes in the 1980s and 1990s lacked awareness of the skills needs and recruitment and training needs of local employers. While more recently Nickson et al. (2003) highlight the focus on training for IT skills in much training provision for the unemployed, due to a belief that IT skills contribute to employability. Similarly a study by TERU (1999) also concluded that training providers for the unemployed in Glasgow might not be addressing the lack of apposite skills for employment in the growth areas of retail and hospitality work. Moreover, Nixon (2005) highlights that the unemployed males in his study were not being offered training in the skills important for interactive service sector employment, despite the expanding job opportunities in this sector. And furthermore, Belt and Richardson (2005) suggest,

that with regard call centre training for the unemployed, training providers do not fully understand employers demand for soft skills at the point of recruitment and selection.

There is evidence then that training providers may lack a comprehensive understanding of interactive service sector employers' skills demands, for example focusing on IT skills in call centre training, rather than the social skills and very basic technical ability demanded by employers (Belt and Richardson, 2005). Moreover, Ball (2004: 11) argues that the real economies that young people face are '"written out" of many education and training policies', as they focus on traditional forms of employment or IT and the knowledge economy, thus ignoring the 'new' economies and the 'role of the performativity of the worker'. Therefore, as Nickson et al. (ibid) argue the focus on acquisition of hard skills in training provision for the unemployed results in a mismatch in terms of employers in the interactive service sector skill demands and existing training for the unemployed, which further compounds the exclusion by employers and self exclusion by the unemployed regarding access to work in the interactive service sector. Indeed Belt and Richardson (ibid) point out that the inadequacy of pre-employment training for the unemployed results in the soft skills mismatch remaining unresolved. Therefore they argue there is a need for greater and more effective communication between training providers and employers in order that training providers understand the skills demands of employers.

Keep and Mayhew (1999: 10) suggest that the changing nature of what is regarded as skill has implications for policy regarding skill formation and training. In the first instance VET provision must take into account the broad range of skills being demanded and better understand the very nature of skill and they argue that:

> ... in seeking to address the demands of employers looking for the type of 'aesthetic labour' reported by Nickson et al., VET providers would appear to need to be thinking about speech training, deportment, and personal grooming classes rather than degrees, GCSEs or Novas. (ibid: 10)

However, even if it is accepted that skills such as aesthetic or embodied competencies and skills can be labelled skill there has been little work done to examine if such skills are transferable and, as Keep and Mayhew (1999) suggest, amenable to change through traditional training such as VET, or measurable using traditional methods. Keep and Mayhew argue that it is difficult to offer VET that provides for soft skill training and certification and point out that 'many of the attributes being labelled as skills appear to be personality traits or attitudes which may only be partially amenable to change and enhancement through traditional VET.' (ibid: 10) While similarly the report by ScER (2004) recognises that it may be problematic to integrate aesthetic skills into current VET provision due to difficulties surrounding methods of quantifying or measuring aesthetic skills. The extent to which aesthetic skills can be developed is also highlighted by Pettinger (2003: 168) who argues that 'skills' related to aesthetics are 'reflections of particular forms of capital structured via gender, age, class and ethnicity, not free floating "skills" but firmly rooted in social characteristics.'

However, the word skill implies a level of competency or proficiency and these descriptors can surely be applied to soft skills, including aesthetic skills. As the NSTF (2000b) also points out skills can be acquired through 'formal and/or informal learning', and the soft skills related to social and cultural capital, associated to 'middleclassness' may be formed through informal learning. Indeed as Witz et al. (2003: 41) argue, returning to the work of Giddens, 1991 and Shilling, 1993, 'modes of embodiment are unfinished projects and therefore open to transformation as part of the reflexive project of the embodied self.' Therefore through informal methods, or what could be termed less traditional methods of learning or skill acquisition, the body may be worked upon to better equip it for work in the interactive service sector. The extent to which an individual can 'work on' their physical capital or develop the aesthetic competencies and skills demanded by employers is further examined in Chapter 9 of this thesis where there is an examination of the efficacy of an aesthetic skills training programme for the unemployed. However, it is important to note here that Belt (2003: 17) argues that upon completion of a pre-employment call centre training course trainees 'accepted that they would need to change the way in which

they presented themselves verbally, visually and in written form, in order to get a job' in call centre work. Therefore it may be possible to transfer the skills required by employers in interactive service work to those previously lacking them.

Yet, even if it is possible to transfer or form soft skill, such as aesthetic skills or social skill, there remains the issue of measuring or quantifying these skills. For example how possible is it to measure the outcomes of speech training, deportment, and personal grooming classes? Moreover, as pointed out previously there is evidence that soft skills do not attract a wage premium. It is argued that despite employers demand for soft skills there is no wage premium for skills such as social skills (Felstead et al. 2002) or as Belt et al. (2002: 31) suggests they are 'poorly rewarded in financial terms'. Therefore if soft skills are not rewarded financially are they worth acquiring? Despite the lack of remuneration specifically related to soft skills it is important to underline that possession of these skills contributes to employability, and thus possession of these skills improves access to work. Thus the advantage of possessing these skills is apparent.

Despite difficulties surrounding what can be defined as skill and how 'new' skills can be formed and measured it is clear that employers are demanding soft skills, including aesthetic skills and that as Keep and Mayhew (1999) argue the personal characteristics or attributes required in service work contribute to employability. Yet is it clear that the government is pursuing traditional methods of training to equip young people and the unemployed with the skills they deem necessary to take part in the labour market, resulting in a soft skills mismatch. While it is not clear to what extent aesthetic skills lend themselves to being developed in individuals through traditional methods of skill attainment, such as through VET, it is important to recognise that employability is determined, in part, upon possession of these skills.

4.4 Unemployed job seekers' perceptions of work that requires aesthetic skills

As discussed above there are several implications regarding the demand for aesthetic skills that impact upon, not only the unemployed, but also bodies responsible for providing skills training for unemployed job seekers. Yet even if the skills mismatch regarding soft skills could be overcome, with individuals employability enhanced via appropriate skills training, the literature highlights that there is one very significant factor that may impact upon unemployed job seekers' participation in interactive service work – the negative perceptions of work that requires soft skills, and specifically, aesthetic skills.

Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) point out that there is little research into unemployed job seekers' views of specific areas of interactive service work and attempt to address this gap by examining attitudes towards work in three areas of the service sector, namely, retail, hospitality and call centre work. They argue that it is important to understand unemployed job seekers' perceptions of work in these industries as negative attitudes towards this work results in the 'elimination of these opportunities from individuals' search strategies' (ibid: 315). As highlighted in Chapter 2, there is a growth of opportunities in interactive service work, in industries such as retail and hospitality; however, it is important that these opportunities are open and attractive to all sectors of the population. Yet there is evidence that interactive service work is viewed negatively and indeed rejected, by unemployed job seekers, and male unemployed job seekers in particular (Helms and Cumbers, 2004; Lindsay and McQuaid, 2004; Lindsay, 2005; McDowell, 2004; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2002; Nixon, 2005; TERU, 1999). McQuaid and Lindsay (2004) report that male unemployed job seekers are less likely to consider entry level employment in the service sector than females, and older males less likely to consider this employment than younger males. Yet despite these differences, with regard gender and age, overall perceptions of this work among unemployed jobs seekers are poor. Therefore it is important to understand why this work is unattractive to the unemployed in order that solutions may be offered to overcome these negative perceptions. Effective solutions would allow the opportunities available in this work to be accessed by all.

Firstly, there is evidence that unemployed job seekers may not possess, or at least perceive that they lack, the skills required for interactive service work. Nixon (2005: 17) suggests that the unemployed males in his study rejected interactive service work, in part because they did not possess the skills required for this work, and furthermore, were 'not being taught the skills increasingly important for employment in the service economy.' Nixon (2005) highlights that the young unemployed males in his study expressed preferences for manual work or 'back shop' work as they perceive that in this work employees are not judged on the emotional aesthetic or cultural attributes and abilities, that as Nixon notes, 'the young men clearly lack' (ibid: 6-7). As he points out: 'The young men knew that they didn't fit into certain environments, aesthetic ideals or norms of behaviour and this contributed to their rejection of jobs that judged them on these criteria' (ibid: 7). Moreover, a study of unemployed job seekers in Glasgow's attitudes to interactive service work concludes that this work is not attractive to the unemployed due to a perceived lack of the skills necessary for this employment (TERU, 1999). Although the TERU report also highlights that the perceived quality of these jobs also influences the unemployed job seekers' negative perception of interactive service work it is important to note that individuals' views towards interactive service work is in part influenced by a perceived lack of the skills necessary in this work. Lindsay (2005) provides further evidence of unemployed job seekers' negative perceptions of interactive service work due to perceived skills mismatches. He highlights that a substantial minority of the unemployed job seekers in his study ruled out employment in retail, hospitality or call centre employment due to a perceived lack of appropriate skills and a perception that they were unsuited to dealing with customers.

Moreover, there is evidence that it is not only a perceived lack of the skills required in interactive service work that impacts upon unemployed job seekers' perceptions of this work, it is apparent that males, in particular, dislike the nature of work that requires the display of soft skills, such as aesthetic skills. For example, McDowell (2004: 49) argues that the nature of interactive service work requires social attributes that 'affront' males 'sense of themselves as masculine'. Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) similarly point out that the perceived nature of much work in the retail and

hospitality sectors deters older males and individuals who have no experience of service work from considering employment in these areas. Indeed, McDowell (2004) and Nixon (2005) argue that interactive service work requires the display of soft skills, skills that many males perceive to be female skills. The demand for 'female' skills therefore seems to affect male unemployed job seekers more than females. Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) found that male unemployed job seekers are more likely to rule out employment in retail and hospitality work than female unemployed job seekers. As Nixon (2005: 8) suggests, the nature of interactive service work places a demand on employees to 'act in a certain way' or put on a' smiley face' that male unemployed job seekers are uncomfortable conforming to.

Evidence suggests that unemployed job seekers, specifically males, express preferences for manual work or work that they have past experience of, expressing traditional preferences for future employment. Various studies have underlined that male unemployed job seekers generally identify manual work, such as construction, warehousing, landscaping or gardening, as their preferred area of employment (Helms and Cumbers, 2004; Lindsay, 2005; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2002; Nixon, 2005). As Helms and Cumbers (2004) and Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) point out, these males express a preference for manual work over service work despite the dearth of opportunities in manual work and the growth of opportunities in interactive service sector employment. Furthermore, as Lindsay (2005), McQuaid and Lindsay (2002) and Nixon (2005) highlight, unemployed males express preferences for work that they have experience of, often work involving manual skills and competences. The male preference for manual work may be due to the lack of required interaction with customers involved in such work. As Nixon (2005) suggests, unemployed males, regardless of age, preferred employment is typically manual in nature and takes place in a male dominated environment, while the least liked employment involves interaction with customers where employees behaviour is subject to close scrutiny and management of emotions is required.

Despite the reported negative perceptions of interactive service work among unemployed job seekers Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) and Lindsay (2005) suggest

that individuals who have experience of regular employment in service work are less likely to disregard this work in the future. Moreover, Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) also suggest that younger unemployed job seekers (age 18-24 years) are more likely to consider undertaking entry-level employment in the service industry than those aged over 24 years. The more positive attitude towards service work displayed by the younger unemployed job seekers in Lindsay and McQuaid's study may be a result of less gender stereotypical attitudes towards work, with older males perceiving service work to be 'female' work. However, Lindsay and McQuaid (ibid) also highlight that the low pay associated with service work may have less of an impact on younger people, particularly if they do not have the financial and family responsibilities that older males may have.

Aside from the issues of skills and the nature of interactive service work it is important to note that, as McQuaid and Lindsay (2002) argue, the long term unemployed may overlook entry level employment opportunities in service work due to the perceived instability and low pay associated with this employment. As Lindsay (2005) notes, perceived skills gaps, a preference for familiar occupations and negative perceptions regarding the quality of interactive service work all contribute to the negative view unemployed job seekers hold regarding interactive service work. Importantly, the view of interactive service work as low skilled, low paid and offering few opportunities for career progression (Lindsay, ibid) may not be unrealistic. Indeed, as noted above, although aesthetic skills, and other generic skills such as emotion skills, are demanded and utilised at work they attract no significant wage premium and therefore possession of these skills is not financially rewarded (Felstead et al. 2007). The unemployed job seekers' views of this work as poorly paid insecure work leads McQuaid and Lindsay (ibid: 625) to suggest that 'the selectivity that characterised the job-search strategies employed by many of the respondents [in their study] may act as a significant (and previously little acknowledged) barrier to work.'

The above findings suggest that unemployed job seekers are aware of the skill requirements for interactive service work, and that their perceived lack of these skills

and reluctance to be involved in employment that utilises such skills impacts upon their negative perceptions of this work. Moreover, if training for the skills required in interactive service work, such as aesthetic skills, is not available it is unsurprising that many unemployed job seekers will select future employment that reflects past work experiences and skills.

4.5 **Conclusions**

This chapter has argued that among the soft skills utilised by employers in the interactive service sector employees' aesthetic skills are increasingly important. Due to the performative nature of much work in this sector it is not just employees' emotions that are valuable and deemed important by employers but also their corporeality. In part due to increasing competition and in an attempt at market differentiation employees are now expected to embody the product of the organisation in order to enhance the quality of service, and therefore employers are demanding employees with appropriate aesthetic skills and utilising employees' aesthetic labour. The aesthetic labour research draws attention to this under analysed form of work and highlights the nature and extent of aesthetic labour while also underlining employers' demands for aesthetic skills. However, it is understood that employers' utilisation of employees' aesthetic skills is not a new phenomenon and that employers require a combination of skills, social, technical and aesthetic. Yet, importantly, at the point of recruitment and selection employees are filtered in to and out of employment in much interactive service work according to their possession of appropriate aesthetic competencies and skills.

However regarding the demand for aesthetic skills as Witz et al. (2003: 41) note: 'The kinds of embodied dispositions that acquire an exchange value are not equally distributed socially, but fractured by class, gender, age and racialised positions or locations.' Thus employees' embodiment is dependent upon characteristics such as class, age, gender and race, and this has implications in terms of who possesses the aesthetic skills demanded by employers and who does not. Whether soft skills such

as aesthetic skills are viewed to be 'skills' or 'characteristics' of the individual is almost irrelevant when it is clear that the possession of these skills contributes to employability. Academic debate regarding what comprises skill does not change the reality that employers in some sectors prefer the social skills of attitude and appearance to technical skills at the point of recruitment and selection. Moreover, while the demand for aesthetic skills is most apparent in the style labour market Warhurst and Nickson (2007) note a demonstration effect, with these demands filtering down into retail and hospitality organisations considered outwith the style labour market. Therefore access to employment in these growth sectors is often dependant upon possession of aesthetic skills.

This chapter then highlighted several implications resulting from the demand for soft skills, and in particular aesthetic skills. Firstly it is argued that the demand for aesthetic skills is disadvantaging sections of the population who do not possess these skills, with a 'new exclusionary potential' linked to the demand for aesthetic skills. Importantly it is highlighted that possession of aesthetic skills may be linked to social class (Keep and Mayhew, 1999; Nickson, et al. 2003; Warhurst et al., 2004), with these skills possessed by workers from middle class backgrounds, or the student population. Therefore employability in the interactive services is linked to social class and those from working class areas are not accessing jobs in the interactive service sector, an area of growth where there are currently many employment opportunities. Moreover, self exclusion due to a perceived lack of appropriate skills for interactive service sector employment further disadvantages the unemployed as they rule themselves out of seeking work in retail, hospitality and call centre work due to a perceived lack of required skills.

Secondly, it was highlighted that the demand for soft skill, including aesthetic skills, by employers in the interactive service sector has negative implications for both males and females with regard access to work and remuneration. Soft skills are often deemed to be skills that females are more likely to possess, with males and in particular males previously employed in manual blue collar work, lacking these skills. Therefore males, regardless of age may suffer disadvantage due to their lack of

such skills, or as McDowell (2004) puts it their gender, appearance and attitude. However, it is argued that this disadvantage may be more acute for older males. Furthermore, females may also suffer disadvantage due to the demand for soft skills because although employers in the interactive service sector are demanding skills such as social skills and aesthetic skills, these skills offer little or not wage premium. It is argued that this is due to the perception of work involving soft skills as low skill work that is therefore low paid work.

Thirdly, it was highlighted in this chapter that there may be some cause for concern regarding employers control over employees' soft skills, including their attitudes and appearance. Yet, at the top end of the labour market there has been continuing importance given to these skills with professional employees keen to enhance their career prospects by utilising various management techniques. And as Nickson and Warhurst (2005) argue those at the bottom end of the labour market may have to give the same attention to soft skills that professional employees currently do.

This chapter also drew attention to the implications for skill formation and the measurement of skills brought about by the demand for soft skills, including aesthetic skills. Following Crouch (2004) it is agued that skill formation systems may not be performing well due to the huge shift in the labour market and the resultant shift in demand for skills, particularly the demand for soft skills in service work. The skill formation systems in place may not be effective in their ability to develop the skills apposite for much service work, and furthermore the traditional methods of measuring skill, for example the proxy of qualifications, may not be appropriate for many soft skills. Evidence underlines that the training provision for the unemployed does not address the development of soft skills such as aesthetic skills, the skills demanded by employers in eh interactive service sector. This soft skill mismatch is clearly problematic and it is argued that training for the unemployed needs to incorporate the skills apposite for work in the interactive service sector. Moreover, it is highlighted that the extent to which many soft skills, such as aesthetic skills, can be developed through existing training methods is debatable, yet as Witz et al. (2003) point out embodiment is open to transformation and can be worked upon.

Finally, it is argued that the demand for aesthetic skills raises another important issue regarding employment in the interactive service sector, that is, unemployed job seekers' views of interactive service work, work that requires soft skills, including aesthetic skills. It is argued that the negative perceptions unemployed job seekers hold of interactive serving work are influenced by the skills required for this work, the nature of the work and issues regarding the quality of the work. Yet these negative perceptions, and the preference for work outwith the service sector, most apparent in male unemployed jobseekers, are problematic considering the decline of manual employment and the growth of opportunities in interactive service work.

As discussed in this chapter the change in the nature of much employment in the UK and the resultant shift in skill demands, in particular the demand for aesthetic skills, clearly has implications in terms of access to employment. There is much concern among government and academics regarding the issue of social exclusion, and in particular exclusion from the labour market and the issue of employability is given much attention by both. Therefore it is now appropriate to examine the concepts of social exclusion and employability and how access to employment has been impacted upon by the changes in the economy and the changes in the nature of much work.

Chapter 5

Social Exclusion and Employability: Skills Training for the Unemployed

5.1 Introduction

It is clear that the changing demand for skills, highlighted in the previous two chapters, has implications, for policy makers, individual employees and employers. Indeed, the literature highlights that the changing demands for skills, in particular the demand for aesthetic skills, may further disadvantage those already excluded from employment. It is important therefore to now turn attention to the issue of exclusion from employment, and particularly the issue of employability and government policy to overcome exclusion from employment. However, in examining social exclusion it is important to not only focus on levels of deprivation and disadvantage but also to identify the processes resulting in exclusion. Indeed, enhancing understandings regarding issues such as access to employment opportunities allows for the development of apposite policies and actions that will allow the excluded to become included.

In order to examine the problem of social exclusion in relation to unemployment it is appropriate to examine the concepts of social exclusion and employability in detail. This chapter aims to firstly define the concept of social exclusion. Then it considers the context in which social exclusion is taking place and underlines the causes of social exclusion. Next, attention is given to a salient dimension of social exclusion, that is, unemployment, and the UK government's policy to combat unemployment by focusing on increasing employability in order to enhance access to employment. Therefore, the concept of employability is discussed and it is highlighted that while the government utilises a narrow supply side view of employability to underpin much of their employment strategy a broader approach, as suggested by McQuaid and Lindsay (2005), to tackling employability, incorporating demand and contextual factors, would be more beneficial.

The chapter then emphasises the government's focus on enhancing employability in the unemployed through skills training. However, it is argued that training initiatives for the unemployed suffer from a lack of understanding regarding employers' demands and that employer's skill demands and recruitment and selections practises disadvantage the unemployed. Moreover, due to the poor quality of much employment in service work, with issues such as low pay, low skill, and poor job stability apparent, gaining employment may not overcome social exclusion. Therefore, current policy interventions may need to consider the limited effect they have on overcoming social exclusion.

Finally, the chapter considers the problematic situation of unemployment, poverty levels and social exclusion in Glasgow. It is argued that this city, despite undergoing regeneration, has not overcome the problems associated with the restructuring of an old industrial region, and in particular suffers from higher than average unemployment levels and very high economic inactivity levels. Yet, the city's shift to a service economy is ongoing and the employment opportunities, with ongoing vacancies in some areas of service work, this brings could positively impact upon the unemployed if appropriate measures were in place.

5.2 The concept of social exclusion: origin, definition, context and causes

5.2.1 Origin of the concept of social exclusion

The term social exclusion has been utilised since the 1960s although its use has gathered momentum more recently such that over the last decade in particular policy makers, academics, practitioners and politicians have increasingly used this term (Littlewood and Herkommer 1999). Indeed, the problem of social exclusion is regarded as an important focus for much research and policy interventions and the term 'social exclusion' is currently widely used in academic literature and political discussion. Yet it is important to note that the term social exclusion is a relatively recent addition to the discourse around social welfare, disadvantage and poverty in

the UK. And moreover, the introduction of this concept must be viewed within the context of globalisation and the subsequent economic reorganisation that has occurred in the later half of the 20th century (Bhalla and Lapeyre, 1997).

Reflecting the concern with high levels of poverty and social exclusion across Europe several bodies have focused on these issues as areas that demand attention. For example, the Maastricht Treaty includes a focus on social exclusion and the Council of Europe is concerned with social exclusion approaching it from the point of human rights (Room, 1995). Indeed, the European Union's concern with poverty stretches back three decades and they set up several anti-poverty programmes, the first from 1975-80 and the second from 1986-89. However, by the 1990s when the report of the third poverty programme was issued the language used to discuss deprivation and disadvantage was social exclusion and not poverty. Room (1995) points out that it is not clear to what extent this shift of terminology was due to many governments' opposition towards using the language of 'poverty' and preferring to use the term social exclusion.

It is important to point out that in the past the terms social exclusion and poverty have been used interchangeably, however it is clear that these two do not refer to the same thing. Nonetheless, the concept of social exclusion is useful in helping to understand the processes that contribute to deprivation and poverty. Percy-Smith (2002) points out that since the mid 1990s the social policy of the EU has focused on social exclusion rather than poverty. However, social exclusion does not merely refer to poverty but encompasses many other elements such as marginalisation, deprivation and discrimination. The term social exclusion refers to a dynamic process and poverty is one outcome of this process. As Room (1995: 5) points out:

> the notion of poverty is primarily focused upon distributional issues: the lack of resources at the disposal of an individual or a household. In contrast, notions such as social exclusion focus primarily on relational issues, in other words, inadequate social participation, lack of social integration and lack of power.

It is important to note however, as Burgess and Propper (2002) point out, that one of the main components of social exclusion is the absence of an income, a situation that can lead to an individual living below the poverty line. This problem is escalating, with for example over the last decade the number of households living below the poverty line doubling such that now around one in five people live below this level. However, studies of poverty, utilising the concept of poverty, do not examine the fundamental causes of poverty in terms of agency. Utilising the concept of social exclusion allows us to examine the dynamic processes that lead to individuals becoming excluded from elements of society whilst highlighting the importance of agency in producing the situation of social exclusion.

Moreover, it is also argued that the concept of social exclusion is more useful than the concept of the underclass, as social exclusion concentrates attention on the structural processes that cause exclusion from opportunities, participation and choices. Furthermore the concept of social exclusion is preferred and seen as more useful in examining deprivation and disadvantage as the concept of the underclass has often been used to highlight that individuals' situations are self-induced. By contrast, many argue that utilising the concept of social exclusion focuses attention on the reality that exclusion is not merely a chosen situation but a result of processes which occur due to conditions in society (Burchardt, Le Grand and Piachaud, 2002; Byrne, 1999). However importantly, research around the underclass has highlighted the importance of the spatial concentration of disadvantage and thus contributes to our understanding of social exclusion.

5.2.2 Defining social exclusion

In outlining the origin of the concept of social exclusion some understanding regarding what social exclusion refers to have already been suggested. Put simply Lee and Murie (1997) suggest that the term social exclusion is used to highlight the dynamic processes through which people are disadvantaged. While Bhalla and Lapeyre (1997) point out that in the UK context the concept of social exclusion is utilised to examine interest patterns or distortions to the social system. It is clear that

the meaning of social exclusion varies from country to country and differs across continents. Bhalla and Lapeyre (1997) suggest that the concept of social exclusion is multi-dimensional, encompassing social, economic and political dimensions, while it has also been suggested that it should include cultural life (Green, 1997). Despite the differences in definition and what factors are important to the concept of social exclusion there is agreement in the literature that social exclusion is a dynamic process which is impacted upon and has an impact upon many elements of social life including: housing tenure; employment status; education; democratic participation; health; and social isolation. It also encompasses social experiences such as leisure and culture. Importantly though, suffering from exclusion from some elements of society does not necessarily mean exclusion from other elements. Yet, often it appears that individuals can suffer from exclusion from many of the dimensions of social exclusion as each negatively impacts on the other. For example, a period of unemployment can lead to poor housing status, possible social isolation and ill health. There are numerous attempts to define social exclusion, and perhaps reflecting the complexity of the concept itself, many of these definitions are overly complex. However, it is important to specifically outline the definition of social exclusion utilised in this research.

Veit-Wilson (1998: 45) suggests that there are there are two competing versions regarding the discourse around social exclusion and he highlights the difference between the weak and strong versions of this term. The former implies that to have a positive impact on social exclusion we must look to changing the characteristics of the socially excluded themselves with the aim being to allow them access to dominant society. The latter version, however, also emphasises the impact of 'those who are doing the excluding' and suggests that to overcome social exclusion it is imperative to reduce the power of exclusion that some people in society hold. Byrne (1999) argues that his analysis of social exclusion is aligned with the strong version of social exclusion but that government policy in the UK addresses social exclusion following the weak approach. Byrne further argues that social exclusion is a direct result and inevitability linked to the newly restructured post-industrial capitalist society in which we live in the UK. It is the internal exclusion within post-industrial

societies that is the concern of his writing on social exclusion. This exclusion, he suggests, is a result of changes in society such as the changing nature of work, the impact of global competition and the shift from manufacturing to services in western economies. So it is the change that has taken place within industrial societies that concerns Byrne and not external exclusion, such as that derived from race or gender. He argues that 'advanced industrial societies are converging on a norm of social politics organized around a flexible labour market and structural social exclusion' (1999: 70), and that social exclusion 'is a necessary and inherent characteristic of an unequal post-industrial capitalism founded around a flexible labour market and with a systematic constraining of the organizational powers of workers as collective actors.'(ibid.: 128)

Byrne suggests that Madanipour et al. (1998: 22) offer the most useful definition of social exclusion by defining it as:

> a multi-dimensional process, in which various forms of exclusion are combined: participation in decision making and political processes, access to employment and material resources, and integration into common cultural processes. When combined, they create acute forms of exclusion that find a spatial manifestation in particular neighbourhoods. (quoted in Byrne 1999: 2)

As the aim of this thesis is to examine the impact of the demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work upon unemployed job seekers access to this work in Glasgow, it is appropriate to adopt Madanipour et al.'s definition of social exclusion. Importantly, this definition highlights the spatial manifestation of social exclusion, that is, how the problem of social exclusion is concentrated around particular areas. While it may be the case that in the UK there is a history of spatial polarisation it seems that post-industrial society, and in particular the reinvention of post-industrial cities such as Glasgow, has resulted in significant areas of such cities missing out on the benefits of this reinvention and regeneration. Indeed, there is a growing gap between the earnings of the middle and upper classes and those at the bottom end of this scale. Reflecting this and perhaps compounding it, is the growth of a divided

Britain where inequality is very apparent. Danson and Mooney (1998: 218) suggest that debates around the issue of 'new spatial and social structures' of urban areas highlights several points. Marginalisation of certain groups in society and the further exclusion of the already disadvantaged in 'run-down' urban areas is a result of economic and social change. And, as social and economic polarisation occurs, there is also a physical reorganisation of space. Thus although post-industrial cities such as Glasgow have undergone a transformation, fuelled by the shift to a service economy and urban regeneration, there are distinct groups of people who have not benefited from this 'transformation' but have 'lost out' (ibid: 218). Danson and Mooney focus their attention on Glasgow in their analysis of disadvantage and exclusion and they conclude that poverty and social exclusion has a spatial dimension and indeed is concentrated in certain areas in Glasgow. They argue that the areas that have benefited from the regeneration of Glasgow are the middle class suburbs and therefore they view Glasgow's post-industrial 'transition' as problematic.

Although it is important to note the spatial dimension of social exclusion with regard this research it is argued that this thesis accepts that in order to overcome social exclusion, and in particular exclusion from employment, it may be practical and useful to include elements of both the strong and weak versions of social exclusion identified by Veit-Wilson (1998). As Byrne (1999) argues, it is important to examine the processes and agency, including the impact of the shift to a post-industrial society, involved in excluding individuals and to reduce this power of exclusion. However, the so called weak version of social exclusion highlights that in order to have a positive impact and overcome exclusion it is important to change the characteristics of the socially excluded in order to overcome their exclusion. It is argued in this thesis that both the impact of changes such as the changing nature of work and the shift to a service economy and characteristics of the socially excluded impact upon individuals exclusion and as such both need to be examined in order to understand the internal and external processes that result in exclusion. Moreover, the UK government, as Byrne (1999) argues, clearly addresses social exclusion following the weak approach, as exemplified by their focus on changing the characteristics of the socially excluded themselves, through routes such as skills

training in order to overcome exclusion. Therefore as these methods are currently prominent in the UK and adopted by government it is vital to include analysis of the government's methods in the examination of exclusion from employment and how to overcome this.

Put simply, the concept of social exclusion is used to refer to exclusion from many areas of social and cultural life in post-industrial society. This situation includes exclusion from areas such as political participation, employment and education. Exclusion is particularly problematic as it is multi dimensional and often has a spatial dimension to it, as Madanipour (1998) and Byrne (1999) point out. Madanipour et al.'s definition of social exclusion highlights the spatial dimension of social exclusion and therefore this definition in particular is especially useful for this thesis. However, it is also important to have an understanding regarding the context in which social exclusion is occurring.

5.2.3 Context and causes of social exclusion

It is vital to understand that social exclusion occurs within a particular context in the UK. In their examination of the growth of discourse around exclusion Littlewood and Herkommer (1999: 2) first outline the backdrop to the current social and economic situation. They highlight that there has been several influential and interrelated changes to society, which have occurred through the second half of the twentieth century. These changes include: changes in work patterns; resultant shift in demand and supply of different 'forms of labour'; alterations to the welfare state system, in particular provision for low pay and unemployment; relational changes in family life, work life and in neighbourhoods and regions; a change in relations 'between ethnically, nationally and culturally diverse groups'; and changes in the nature of juridical rights. Thus the social and economic climate of the UK has been impacted upon by these relatively recent changes in society. Importantly, as the above changes have occurred many concepts, previously regarded as particularly useful to explain social phenomena, such as the concept of class, have undergone criticism and are considered by some as less useful in examining the current social

world. Thus there has been a shift to utilising the concept of social exclusion as a useful organising tool or concept which allows an examination of the huge problem currently facing societies not only in the developing world, but also in so called developed countries across Europe and in the UK (ibid: 3).

While the above changes highlight the context of the language of social exclusion, Littlewood and Herkommer (ibid: 3) argue more specifically that the following developments have particular salience with regard the 'forces of social exclusion': the reality of 'endemic unemployment', which has a great impact on the young, and increasing levels of unstable employment; the decline of manual employment and the increase in white-collar employment; the rise in the numbers of women participating in paid employment; the rise of technology; the increasing demand for and supply of a wider range of qualifications; population movements and the suggestion of 'a rise in resistance to such movement among sections of indigenous populations.' Although it is clear that these 'forces' or causes of social exclusion have resulted in exclusion for many there is much debate regarding who is to blame for this exclusion. Is it the fault of capitalist society, the state and institutions that many people are excluded from participating fully in society, or does the blame lie with the individual who has free choice and it these choices which result in his inclusion or exclusion?

Burchardt et al. (2002) suggest that the literature surrounding the causes of social exclusion can be divided into three separate viewpoints. One is similar to the assertions made by many concerning the concept of the underclass, that is, that individuals are responsible for their own social and economic situation and suffer from social exclusion due to their own actions and values. The second version focuses attention on structural systems that are in place, such as globalisation, the welfare state and capitalist society, and assesses their impact on social exclusion. The third wave of literature is concerned with discrimination and rights, and how processes of discrimination and a lack of basic rights serves to bring about social exclusion. Burchardt et al. (2002) propose that cause and agency are linked in that viewpoints regarding the agents of social exclusion, or 'Who is doing the excluding?' (ibid.: 4), correspond with viewpoints regarding the causes of social exclusion. Thus, in the literature, the two are inextricably linked. In terms of agency they highlight

opposing views expressed in much of the literature regarding who is responsible for exclusion. They suggest that those who argue that individuals are responsible for their own situation, and thus their own social exclusion due to their morals, viewpoints and behaviour, essentially attach the blame for social exclusion to the individual. Yet the opposing viewpoint suggests that social exclusion is the inevitable result of social systems and therefore is not the fault of the individual or indeed individual organisations. While yet another vein of thought suggests that a powerful elite operate in their own interests and in doing so cause the social exclusion of many.

The existence of three almost separate and distinct viewpoints regarding the causes and agents of social exclusion apparent in the literature means that there is little agreement regarding the causes of social exclusion, mostly because opinions differ regarding agency. However, at a national level The Scottish Poverty Information Unit (1998) argues that the causes of social exclusion are structural, not random, and that factors such as unemployment and discrimination serve to create and sustain social exclusion. Despite the lack of consensus regarding the causes of social exclusion it is important to examine social exclusion utilising a framework that captures the dynamic and multifaceted nature of this exclusion. Therefore again it is important to stress here that the approach used in this research involves looking at forces both outwith and within the control of the individual, such as the changing nature of work and resulting shifts in the demand and supply of different forms of labour, discrimination, and changes in the welfare state system, regarding unemployment, that impact upon individuals.

Yet regardless of the approach to social exclusion taken it is vital to note the problems associated with this exclusion and the impact it has on individuals. As Lee, Murie, Marsh and Riseborough (1995: v) argue, social exclusion has four key elements that make it such a problematic circumstance of social life; it is compounding, persistent, concentrated and is resistant to traditional policy solutions. Utilising the concept of social exclusion allows an examination of disparities between populations, not only comparing those at the top end of society with those at

the bottom, but also to look at those actually outside the parameters of civil society, those unable to access employment, adequate housing, and so on, those who are excluded.

Moreover, it is important to understand that social exclusion refers to a dynamic process. The term is used to refer to multiple factors of deprivation and importantly it highlights the dynamic processes that result in individuals becoming excluded, deprived and disadvantaged. Therefore in any analysis of social exclusion it is vital to not only measure deprivation and disadvantage but also to clearly identify the processes resulting in this problematic situation. This understanding will allow the development of policies and actions that attempt to alter these processes such that the excluded become included.

A critical examination of the literature regarding the definition, context and cause of social exclusion highlights that approaches differ. In particular there is a distinct lack of consensus in the literature concerning the causes of social exclusion. However and usefully in relation to this thesis, there are three key points that emerge from this literature. Firstly, Littlewood and Herkommer (1999) emphasise the importance of context in understanding social exclusion, such as the decline in manual employment. Secondly, Madanipour et al's (1998) definition of social exclusion draws attention to the spatial manifestation of this exclusion. Thirdly, Byrne (1999) underlines the importance of processes and agency with regard analyses of social exclusion. This thesis draws upon these three strands of literature in its empirical exploration of exclusion from employment.

Having discussed the origin, definition, context and causes of social exclusion it is important to now focus attention on a particular form of social exclusion, that is, exclusion from employment. Exclusion from employment is arguably one of the most problematic forms of exclusion in the UK, with increasing access to employment a priority and issue of great concern for the government, as evidenced by the numerous interventions in place to overcome difficulties accessing employment opportunities.

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5.3 Unemployment – a salient dimension of social exclusion in the UK context

The deleterious effects resulting from exclusion from employment is clearly recognised in the UK and the utility of examining access to employment through the lens of social exclusion is apparent. Indeed, Padmanabha Gopinath (Director of the International Institute for Labour Studies) suggests that the concept of social exclusion has 'become central in discussions on the emergence of "new poverty" associated with economic restructuring and long-term unemployment' (Gopinath in Rodgers, Gore and Figueiredo 1995: vi). However, Percy-Smith (2002) points out that the focus on social exclusion in the social policy of the EU may have narrowed concern to integration into the labour market, rather than other aspects of social exclusion. Nonetheless unemployment is a salient dimension of social exclusion in the UK context and is also the particular concern of this thesis.

Firstly it is important to point out that although there is a strong link between social exclusion and unemployment they are clearly not the same thing. Unemployment is one factor that can cause social exclusion yet gaining employment does not guarantee social inclusion. Nevertheless it is understood that an individual's position in the labour market has a huge impact on social exclusion and poverty. Moreover, employment plays an important role in society and, it is argued, plays an equally important role in contributing to the quality of life on an individual. MacKay (1998) outlines the views of many, such as Freud, Marx and Darwin, who suggest that individuals need to work and benefit greatly over their lifetime through attachment to work. It seems that employment has a greater impact on us than the monetary outcome of work. Thus, as MacKay (1998: 63-64) argues 'the exclusion imposed by unemployment can only be understood by considering employment as a structure which adds meaning to life. Employment provides organisation identity, contact, collective purpose and a target for energy.'

Therefore the positive outcomes associated with employment cannot be underestimated and the link between labour market participation and inclusion in society is apparent. Indeed Lee and Murie (1997) suggest that changes in the labour

market are one development that has led to inequalities of income and so contributes to the process of social exclusion. It is important to tackle unemployment, or access to employment, in order to overcome social exclusion as the result of unemployment includes economic instability, deprivation, low quality housing and health care and low levels of social participation in society. In this respect, one group vulnerable to exclusion are the long-term unemployed. The term 'long-term unemployed' applies to anyone of working age who is available for work but has been unemployed for one year or more. Importantly the long-term unemployed are less likely than the unemployed to obtain work. In the UK in 1990, of those unemployed 36 per cent were long-term unemployed (Silver and Wilkinson, 1995: 285). This figure increased such that in 1995 45 per cent of the unemployed in the UK were long-term unemployed (OECD: 1998). The situation of increasing levels of long-term unemployment is worrying, as the longer an individual remains unemployed the less likely they are to find employment. Indeed, one-third of employers would not consider the long-term unemployed for employment, even for entry-level jobs (Scottish Enterprise Network: 2000). Also problematic is the reality that periods of long-term unemployment produce a vicious circle where the lack of employment and many unsuccessful attempts to obtain work results in low motivation and a lack of self-confidence and belief in oneself.

Moreover, it is important to note that there is a link between success in the labour market and qualifications and skills. The rhetoric surrounding globalisation suggests that in our global economy there is demand for a flexible labour market. Canny (1995) suggests that young people are more able to adapt and respond to this need for flexibility. Yet due to the link between educational qualifications and labour market success, it is the proportion of young people who possess qualifications who are succeeding in the current labour market. Those without, she suggests, are increasingly being marginalised and excluded. The reality is that a person is more likely to be unemployed if she has few or no qualifications and is unskilled. The unemployment rate for those possessing a degree or higher level of qualifications is much lower than for those without such qualifications. And furthermore Sianesi

(2003) suggests that education leads to higher wage returns for individuals, with academic qualifications in particular being rewarded highly in the labour market.

Reflecting these findings many have commented on the reality that the young today are experiencing levels of unemployment that are far greater than those of previous decades. Byrne (1999) argues that due to the outcomes of de-industrialisation young people today are actually in a worse off situation than their parents were regarding access to employment which is secure and reasonably paid. While Green (1997, quoted in Byrne 1999) points out that 39 per cent of 25-34 year olds have undergone one or more spells of unemployment. Moreover, due to the impact of de-industrialisation and the resulting unemployment it is suggested that there should be a focus on developing policies that offer employment opportunities for the long-term unemployed, older, and younger workers (Lee and Murie, 1997).

Yet, importantly, there is an issue regarding the move to employment, concerning the quality of employment and remuneration levels if employment is to result in overcoming cases of social exclusion. For example, Atkinson (1998) argues that the quality of employment is important in determining whether employment will result in inclusion, with the conditions and wage offered for the job being important factors. Similarly Smith (2000: 318) argues that 'those who have a reasonable foundation of income are both more likely and more able to take up paid work'. For Byrne (1999) the important issues concerning employment and overcoming social exclusion are job security and wage levels and he draws attention to evidence from UK studies that illustrate the unemployed regard job security as more important than wage level.[8] Byrne also highlights that the unemployed are keen to access work that both offers them an income greater than benefit level and that is secure. Furthermore Toynbee (2003: 8) in her examination, and experience, of work in low paid employment in the UK, suggests that employment should be underpinned by fair pay, that is, 'a wage should reflect the dignity and value of the work done'. Therefore clearly it is not only access to employment that is important in overcoming exclusion

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[8] The importance of job security may be related to the complicated and time consuming process of applying for social security benefits. Repetition of this task, due to unstable employment, would be further problematic for individuals and may deter them from unstable employment.

but also rather access to employment that offers a reasonable wage and a level of job security.

Access to employment, or unemployment, is clearly linked to social exclusion, yet it is only one form of exclusion. Nevertheless unemployment is of great concern to the UK government and they have emphasised overcoming social exclusion as synonymous with overcoming unemployment. It is important therefore to now examine the government's approach to overcoming social exclusion by increasing access to employment.

5.4 Social exclusion, unemployment and government policy

As understandings of the term social exclusion vary between countries, and analyses of social exclusion focus on different dimensions of it different governments have introduced a variety of methods in order to address it. Moreover as the causes and outcomes of social exclusion are manifold, many policies have been introduced in order to fight it. In the UK the Labour government is clearly aware of the impact of social exclusion and have made it a key concern. Tony Blair has described social exclusion as:

> A short-hand label for what can happen when individuals or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, poor housing, high crime environments, bad health and family breakdown. (Opportunity For All, 1999)

In December 1997 the government set up the Social Exclusion Unit to 'help improve government action to reduce social exclusion by producing "joined-up solutions to joined-up problems"' (Cabinet office online, 2001). Thus the governments approach to tackling social exclusion highlights that as the causes and outcomes of social exclusion are many they must therefore be tackled with a variety of related policy solutions.

The work of the Social Exclusion Unit covers England, with the problems of social exclusion in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales being dealt with by their respective devolved administrations, in Scotland's case the Scottish Executive.[9] In Scotland, in 1998 Donald Dewar, then Secretary of State for Scotland, set up a consultation paper on social exclusion (The Scottish Office), underlining the government's commitment to tackling social exclusion in Scotland. Scottish Enterprise[10] also lists economic inclusion as a 'mainstream goal' of their organisation (Scottish Enterprise Network, 2000). Clearly, then, there is agreement regarding the need to tackle social exclusion, its causes and its outcomes.

One focused initiative set up by the UK government is Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs). SIPs, which have been set up across the UK, with several in Scotland, are a multi-agency approach to overcoming social exclusion. They offer support with access to training opportunities, education and employment, help with childcare arrangements, and general help in the areas of health and well-being. It is believed that this support will help tackle social exclusion with help offered at the neighbourhood level. And, as noted earlier, with the spatial dimension of social exclusion being particularly relevant targeting support and providing it at the local level is assumed to be an effective strategy for tackling social exclusion.

However, more specifically in the UK there is a heightened awareness of the problem of long-term exclusion from the labour market and therefore from many social opportunities. Current policy is concerned with affecting the cycle of lifelong dependency brought about by unemployment and the 'cycle of dependency' when this effect is passed on to the next generation (OECD, 1998: 67). In general, the Labour government has focused on labour market integration as a route to overcoming social exclusion. The government is therefore keen to highlight the importance of work for individuals and for society. There is a belief that unemployment equates with exclusion, while employment equals inclusion. Indeed,

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[9] Formed in 1999, the Scottish Executive is the devolved Government for Scotland.
[10] Scottish Enterprise is funded by the Scottish Executive and is the main economic development agency in Scotland. It aims to support businesses, both newly formed and existing, and the people of Scotland in order to allow Scotland to compete successfully in the global economy (www.scottish-enterprise.com, 2003).

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Smith (2000: 312) argues that the government conceptualises social exclusion as 'exclusion from paid employment and ... this has shaped the appropriate policy response.' As stated previously, as the government focus on exclusion from paid employment it is important to examine this exclusion, which is, as Tony Blair points out, is linked to problems such as unemployment and poor skills. Consequently it is through access to employment that they concentrate their efforts to overcome social exclusion and in particular the poverty outcome of social exclusion. The aim of this government is to achieve inclusion, particularly inclusion through employment, and they underpin this view by suggesting the social obligation individuals have to be in paid employment. New Labour have moved from what they term the old 'passive' benefit system/state to an 'active' welfare system/state where onus is put on the individual to include themselves in society. As such, government policies have moved away from earlier social assistance models where help was passively received by individuals in order for them overcome poverty and inequality, while since the 1980s UK government policies 'require active participation on one's own insertion' (Silver and Wilkinson: 1995). This shift in government policy is exemplified, for example, by the renaming of unemployment benefit to job seekers allowance. However, this change to the system has implications regarding equality. For example, Lister (1998) suggests that the Labour government has sidelined the goal of tackling equality in the UK by instead focusing its attention on the promotion of social inclusion. This shift, she argues, is occurring at the expense of equality and she questions whether 'in the context of entrenched structural inequalities, genuine social inclusion including the eradication of poverty, is possible without greater equality.'(1998: 224)

On a more positive note, Hills (2002: 243) suggests that, in terms of UK policy, utilising the concept of social exclusion along with an anti-poverty and anti exclusion agenda has 'led to a much richer policy mix, with a much greater chance of long-run success.' Clearly an understanding of the dynamic nature of social exclusion, instead of a concentration on poverty as a measure of social deprivation and disadvantage, is a more useful tool for government to utilise in policy development. Yet, in the UK, the reality is that many different bodies are attempting to address social exclusion, a

situation that can result in a duplication of effort, certain areas being overlooked and thus much confusion regarding current provision of support for those who are socially excluded.

Nonetheless the government's social inclusion strategy is ongoing and there are two main strands to government policy to overcome social exclusion caused by unemployment. One is concerned with the poverty or unemployment trap and the other is concerned with training policies for the unemployed. The former refers to attempts to overcome lack of incentives to work. Policies have been introduced to overcome this, such as Working Families Tax Credit to encourage those previously better off on benefits to enter full time employment with an increase in income provided by a combination of wage for employment and family credit benefit. Other attempts to provide incentive to work include the introduction of the national minimum wage. The second strand of government policy is concerned with improving employability and addressing skills mismatch through the introduction of training schemes for employment, such as the New Deal scheme.

The empirical research conducted with regard this thesis is in part shaped by the policy responses to social exclusion, with the assumption that participation in the labour market equates to inclusion underpinned by the belief that individuals are obliged to participate in paid employment in order to overcome issues of social exclusion. Yet, it is important to note that the government's strategy is twofold, with emphasis both on overcoming poverty or unemployment traps and improving employability through skills training for the unemployed. Clearly the government aims to ensure that the quality of work, particularly with regard remuneration, overcomes exclusion, and that the provision of training addresses problems related to employability and access to work. However, it is important to examine to what extent these aims are fulfilled, with specific reference to work and skills in the interactive service sector and unemployed job seekers access to this work, the focus of this thesis. It is important therefore to examine the governments approach to addressing exclusion from employment by enhancing employability through skills training.

5.5 Employability and training for the unemployed

This section reviews various definitions of employability and suggests a definition and framework of employability that allows an examination of the impact of both supply and demand factors in influencing employability. While it is argued here that the most useful framework of employability gives equal weighting to demand and supply factors it is clear that the government's strategies to overcome unemployment focus on a narrower definition of employability, highlighting the characteristics of the individual as the factors that require intervention. This belief results in policy intervention to increase employability via training for the unemployed, most usually using methods of skills training and developing effective job search skills. The difficulties associated with this policy are outlined. Following this discussion there is an examination of the effectiveness of one pre-employment training initiative for the unemployed, an attempt to develop generic skills to enhance trainees' ability to gain employment in call centre work.

5.5.1 An employability framework

McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) underline that the concept of employability has been utilised in various forms since the beginning of the twentieth century, yet most recently it has gained importance due, for example, to its perceived usefulness in attempting to overcome social exclusion, and due to increasing levels of long-term unemployment and inactivity. However, there is much dispute in academic literature, and differences in definition in policy literature, concerning the concept of employability and what factors are pertinent to it.

Hillage and Pollard (1998: 1) define employability as 'the capability to gain initial employment, maintain employment and obtain new employment if required.' They suggest that an individual's knowledge, skills and attitudes, or employability assets, and how they 'present' and 'deploy' these assets are important in determining employability. Furthermore, they recognise that 'context factors', such as the personal circumstances of the individual and external socio-economic factors affect

employability also. However, Hillage and Pollard's definition of employability has been criticised due to the over emphasis on the factors relating to the individual. For example, Brown, Hesketh and Williams (2003: 110) argue that the emphasis by Hillage and Pollard on an individual's 'capability' regarding gaining and maintaining employment overlooks 'the fact that employability is primarily determined by the labour market rather than the capabilities of individuals.' They use the example of a tight labour market where the unemployed remain unemployed, yet in conditions where there is a shortage of labour the unemployed become employable. Thus, they argue, employability is not only based upon factors relating to the individual but is affected by external circumstances outwith their control, such as the condition of the labour market, and they define employability as *'the relative chances of acquiring and maintaining different kinds of employment.* (ibid: 111, emphasis in original)

Similarly, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) suggest that the Hillage-Pollard framework of employability suffers from an overemphasis on the influence of supply side factors of employability. McQuaid and Lindsay highlight the differences between a narrow definition and a broader definition of employability. For the former version supply-side issues, in particular the supply of employability skills and attributes, are of importance, while for the latter the perspective includes issues such as job search and the demand for labour alongside employability skills and attributes. They argue that these two views of employability differ mostly with regard their view of employability as an issue that relates to an individual's work readiness or the external factors that affect an individual's ability to gain employment. Therefore clearly with the narrow supply-side definition emphasis is placed upon the characteristics of an individual that contributes to his or hers ability to achieve employment and sustain it. Yet, and more usefully, for the broader definition, where supply and demand issues are important, factors external to the individual, such as the condition of the local labour market, are considered alongside factors relating to the individual. Indeed McQuaid, Green and Danson (2005) suggest that a broader concept of employability is more useful and point out that:

A narrow supply-side view of employability skills and attributes can help to identify relevant sets of skills and polices for certain people in particular circumstances. However, a broader concept of employability also allows the additional consideration of vital demand, personal circumstances and other factors that influence the employability of people in a particular labour market, or at a particular time, and so are fundamental to these people gaining or changing employment. (ibid: 194)

McQuaid and Lindsay also argue that the most useful definition of employability should include demand and supply side factors. Indeed they develop a very detailed framework of employability (Table 4 below) that includes individual factors, external factors and personal circumstances, as being essential elements of employability.

Table 4: An employability framework (with examples)

Individual factors	Personal circumstances	External factors
• **Employability skills and attributes** *Essential attributes* Basic social skills; honesty and integrity; basic personal presentation; reliability; willingness to work; understanding of actions and consequences *Personal competencies* Proactivity; diligence; self-motivation; judgement; initiative; assertiveness; confidence; act autonomously *Basic transferable skills* Prose and document literacy; writing; numeracy; verbal presentation *Key transferable skills* Reasoning; problem-solving; adaptability; work process management; team working; personal task and time management; functional mobility; basic ICT skills; basic interpersonal and communication skills; emotional and aesthetic skills; customer service skills *High level transferable skills* Team working; business thinking; commercial awareness; continuous learning; vision; job-specific skills; enterprise skills *Qualifications* Formal academic and vocational qualifications; job-specific qualifications *Work knowledge base* Work experience; general work skills and personal aptitudes; commonly valued transferable skills	• **Household circumstances** *Direct caring responsibilities* Caring for children, elderly relative, etc *Other family and caring responsibilities* Financial commitments to children or other family members outside the individual's household; emotional and /or time commitments to family members or others *Other household circumstances* The ability to access safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing • **Work culture** The existence of a culture in which work is encouraged and supported within the family, among peers or other personal relationships and the wider community • **Access to resources** *Access to transport* Access to own or readily available private transport; ability to walk appropriate distances *Access to financial capital* Level of household income; extent and duration of any financial hardship; access to formal and	• **Demand factors** *Labour market factors* Level of local and regional or other demand; nature and changes of local and regional demand (required skill levels; occupational structure of vacancies; sectors where demand is concentrated); location, centrality/remoteness of local labour markets in relation to centres of industry/employment; level of competition for jobs; actions of employers' competitors; changing customer preferences, etc *Macroeconomic factors* Macroeconomic stability; medium- to long-term business confidence; level and nature of labour demand within the national economy *Vacancy characteristics* Remuneration; conditions of work; working hours and prevalence of shift work; opportunities for progression; extent of part-time, temporary and casual work; availability of 'entry-level' positions *Recruitment factors* Employers' formal recruitment and selection procedures; employers' general selection preferences (for example. for recent experience);

(such as driving);

occupational specific skills
Labour market attachment
Current unemployment/
employment duration; number
and length of spells of
unemployment/
inactivity; 'balance' of work
history
- **Demographic
  characteristics**
  Age, gender, etc.
- **Health and well-being**
  Health
  Current physical health;
  current mental health;
  medical history;
  psychological well-being
  Disability
  Nature and extent of:
  physical disability;
  mental disability; learning
  disability
- **Job seeking**
  Effective use of formal
  search
  services/information
  resources (including
  ICT); awareness and
  effective use of informal
  social networks; ability to
  complete
  CV's/application forms;
  interview
  skills/presentation; access
  to references; awareness
  of strengths and
  weaknesses; awareness of
  location and type of
  opportunities in the
  labour market; realistic
  approach to job targeting
- **Adaptability and
  mobility**
  Geographical mobility;
  wage flexibility and
  reservation wage;
  occupational flexibility
  (working hours,
  occupations, sectors)

informal sources of
financial support;
management of
income and debt
*Access to social
capital*
Access to personal
and family support
networks; access to
formal and informal
community support
networks; number,
range and status of
informal social and
network contacts

employers' search
channels
(methods of searching
for staff when

recruiting);
discrimination (for
example, on the basis
of age, gender, race,
area of residence,
disability,
unemployment
duration); form and
extent of employers'
use of informal
networks; demanding
only appropriate
qualifications or
credentials
- **Enabling support
  factors**
  *Employment policy
  factors*
  Accessibility of public
  service and job-
  matching technology
  (such as jog
  search/counselling);
  penetration of public
  services (for example,
  use and credibility
  among employers/job
  seekers); incentives
  within tax-benefits
  systems; existence of
  'welfare to
  work'/activation and
  pressure to accept jobs;
  accessibility and
  limitations on training;
  extent of local/regional
  development policies;
  measures to ease the
  school-work transition
  and address
  employability issues at
  school and university
  *Other enabling policy
  factors*
  Accessibility and
  affordability of public
  transport, child care
  and other support
  services

Source: McQuaid and Lindsay (2005: 209-210)

As Table 4 above highlights examinations of employability need to incorporate individual factors, such as employability skills and attributes and demographic characteristics, personal circumstances, like household circumstances and work culture, and importantly, external factors, including demand factors and enabling support factors. Indeed, McQuaid and Lindsay argue that employability 'should be understood as being derived from, and affected by, individual characteristics and circumstances *and* broader, external (social, institutional and economic) factors that influence a person's ability to get a job.' (ibid: 206, emphasis in original) They further argue that individual factors, personal circumstances and external factors are interrelated. The concern of this thesis is the changing nature of work and the resultant change in skill demands and therefore 'individual factors' which include 'employability skills and attributes' are the factors of particular importance here. However this thesis would suffer from being supply focused if it did not also consider 'personal circumstances' and 'external factors' in examining employability. Therefore, it is appreciated here that, as identified by McQuaid and Lindsay, personal circumstances such as 'work culture' and external factors such as 'vacancy characteristics' (including remuneration and conditions of work), the effectiveness of training provision and 'recruitment factors' (including recruitment and selection procedures and employer discrimination), impact upon an individual's employability and as such need to be addressed as much as 'individual factors' such as skills and attributes.

Moreover, McQuaid and Lindsay (2002) examine unemployed job seekers perceived barriers to work and highlight that these barriers can be viewed as being either external factors or personal and circumstantial factors. What it is important to identify with regard these two sets of factors is the lack of control the unemployed have over external factors compared to personal or circumstantial factors. McQuaid and Lindsay report that individuals perceive that they suffer from external factors including: employer discrimination against the unemployed; a lack of sufficiently well-paid opportunities; employer discrimination against older workers; a lack of appropriate opportunities; and a lack of access to information about jobs. Moreover,

they also perceive that personal circumstances, such as problems associated with losing benefits, costs related to starting work and a lack of access to private transport, also affect their ability to gain employment. Therefore it is clear that the unemployed identify a combination of internal and external factors that impact upon their employability.

Moreover, despite a lack of clarity in the literature and in policy regarding employability it is argued that the concept of employability is useful in examining the issues of access to employment for the unemployed *and* access to better-quality employment for those currently employed (McQuaid et al., 2005). Moreover, although unemployment levels are lowering economic inactivity levels have grown across the developed world, with areas of industrial decline having particularly high levels of inactivity (Danson, 2005). As such McQuaid et al. (2005: 193) point out unemployment may be one manifestation of an individual's 'lack of employability', yet for older workers the outcome may be economic inactivity. Therefore although employability is most often utilised with reference to the unemployed the concept of employability has relevance for the unemployed, for those in employment and for those who are economically inactive.

Furthermore, it is argued that employability, like social exclusion in the UK, has a spatial dimension. McQuaid et al. (2005) suggest that the lack of 'demonstrable and accredited human capital and work experience', leading to problems regarding employability, can be found to be 'concentrated in particular households and communities' (2005: 193). This again highlights the spatial dimension of inequality in the UK, with, as pointed out previously, social exclusion being located in particular geographic areas and within particular groups. It is argued that problems of employability are particularly apparent in 'post-industrial' cities, such as Glasgow, with for example a skills mismatch where the employment opportunities and skills demanded by employers do not match the skills of some of the population (Danson and Mooney, 1998). As Danson (2005) highlights the new economy in old industrial regions, such as Glasgow, offers employment opportunities that are quite different from those previously offered, with opportunities now available for females and new

entrants to the labour market in areas of work where new skills are demanded. However, the creation of new jobs entailing new skills, such as customer service skills, has implications for those excluded from this employment and in many instances for those undertaking this work, as these new opportunities are overwhelmingly, as Danson (2005) points out, in low skill, low pay, part time, temporary and non-unionised jobs. Thus while the changes in labour markets, particularly the shift to a service economy in the UK, has increased the employability of some, the quality of much of this employment means that gaining employment does not necessarily lead to inclusion. Indeed, Danson argues that processes such as de-industrialisation has resulted in greater polarisation and exclusion which has resulted in 'new patterns of division with increased inactivity and greater distance from the labour market becoming embedded within certain communities.' (ibid: 289)

Much of the employability literature, including the influential Hillage and Pollard (1998) definition, can be criticised for being supply focused, emphasising the factors pertinent to the individual, failing to fully take into account the factors that impact upon employability that are external to the individual (Brown et al, 2003). However, even this corrective is inadequate. As McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) point out employability is influenced by individual, personal and external factors, and this thesis adopts this broader view of employability. Unfortunately, as the next section argues, the government is committed to overcoming unemployment and increasing the employability of individuals by tending to focus on individual factors, and in particular individuals' 'employability assets' and the presentation and deployment of these assets.

5.5.2 Employability and government policy – training for the unemployed

McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) point out that employability underpins much UK employment strategy, with employability being key in the government's welfare to work agenda and fundamental to many policy initiatives. As a result of concerns regarding lack of skills, skills mismatches and skills gaps, alongside unemployment levels and high economic inactivity figures, a major tool in the government's attempt

to increase employability and to overcome these problems has been the introduction of training policies for the unemployed to increase skill levels, such as the New Deal initiatives. Government argue that such measures benefit both the individual and the economy, while Silver and Wilkinson argue that if training policies are 'properly integrated with other economic policies and adjusted to labour demand of enterprises, raising skill levels can not only increase hiring of disadvantaged groups but also raise labour productivity' (1995: 290). It is important to note the context in which these policy initiatives are taking place, where the development of new economies with advancing technology and globalisation is occurring alongside worsening employment figures and high economic inactivity rates. Indeed a report by the ILO suggests 'there is mounting concern over the social exclusion that follows from limited employment opportunities.' It is apparent that the changes in skill demands, as highlighted in the preceding chapter, are one factor that has led to concerns regarding employability and access to employment, with the UK government focusing on increasing employability through skill acquisition to overcome unemployment. Yet the focus on skills by the government in order to enhance employability may be problematic. Indeed, the ILO report argues, utilising training to increase skill levels as an intervention may not be an adequate solution but rather 'the major labour market barriers to the employability of …vulnerable groups need to be recognized: poor job growth, discrimination, insufficient access to fundamental education, government transfer policies that discourage work, rapid economic change, and the compound labour market disadvantages which accompany poverty.'(ILO online – **www.ilo.org** - accessed 25/10/2005) Therefore there are clearly other factors that impact upon employability, as highlighted in this chapter, rather than a narrow focus on skills.

Indeed, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) criticise current labour market policy and argue that 'the current application of the concept of employability, at least within labour market policy, often, but not exclusively, leans heavily upon its individual centred, supply-side components.' (ibid: 202) They do point out that some local initiatives take on board both demand and supply factors, but they argue that these may not be suitably integrated. They reiterate that the government's focus on

employability to overcome changing skills needs in the economy and skills mismatches is backed up by the belief that up-skilling and increasing employability will benefit the individual the economy and society. Yet, they highlight, 'there is a renewed acceptance in social policy circles that responses to unemployment must focus on the attributes and responsibilities of the individual' (ibid: 204). Therefore it appears that policy is attempting to solve wider demand side problems with individual supply side solutions and, as McQuaid and Lindsay point out, there are concerns regarding the governments employability agenda as the focus on supply side issues implies that unemployment is a result of failings associated with the individual rather than a result of factors such as current labour market conditions.

Moreover, underling the importance of tackling both supply and demand side factors regarding employability McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) highlight that individual factors of employability require different interventions than personal circumstances, with, for example, the former possibly benefiting from existing supply side type policies. Moreover, factors such as employer, and economic and labour market factors are distinct from individual and personal factors as they are 'external' to the individual and outwith their control, and as such these factors need to be addressed by the government through policy, by trade unions and by employers, for example. Utilising the broad framework of employability suggested by McQuaid and Lindsay allows examination of the 'multidimensional barriers to work or progression faced by many unemployed and employed people' (ibid: 215) and in this way utilising this framework, with attention paid to both supply and demand side issues, may aid policy by ensuring that the many factors affecting employability are addressed through various policy measures.

In addition, the government's policy of pursuing up-skilling for all and increasing the employability of individuals by focusing on their skills and attributes in order to enhance employability can be criticised in that it may not result in overcoming social exclusion. It is important to note that employment does not necessarily equate with inclusion or equality, for example, there has been a sharp rise in the number of jobs which require few skills, offer low pay, may be part time or temporary positions with

little job security, and thus do not aid inclusion but merely maintain inequalities (Smith, 2000). Smith argues that it is not an increase in skills that will result in individuals taking up employment but the attainment of a realistic income level. As he and others (Toynbee, 2003) have suggested, rather than the current system a more effective strategy than tax benefits, wage subsidies and the focus on increasing employability, is greater remuneration for work. Similarly, Helms and Cumbers (2004) point out that the growing income disparity in the UK is due in part to the increase of 'worklessness' but is also a result of the disparity in wages. They argue that the low income of low-skilled workers, the so called 'working poor' is a major cause for concern and should be addressed by government. Likewise, McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) point out that the extent to which labour market inclusion equals social inclusion is questioned due to the reality that much work in the UK, particularly many of the new opportunities for employment in the service sector, are in low skill low pay employment. Hence even if individuals are able to enhance their employability and gain employment the work they access may overcome their worklessness, but not their exclusion or poverty. Equally, Brown (2001) refers to the 'working poor' who occupy jobs in low skill low pay employment and who, despite being employed, suffer from social exclusion. Lafer (2004) makes a similar point regarding training for low skill, low pay work in the US. He argues that training policies in the US to increase skills levels has little impact upon exclusion and poverty and points out that many American work full time yet remain below the poverty level which highlights that 'demonstrating a satisfactory work ethic does not guarantee a living wage.' (ibid: 116) Therefore, he argues that training that results in access to low pay employment is an 'inappropriate agenda for federal employment policy' (ibid).

However, not only can the approach taken by government concerning overcoming social exclusion by increasing employability through skills training be criticised for being both supply focused and merely offering training for poor quality work, there are several other relevant criticisms of the governments approach. For example, Smith argues that 'enhancing "human capital" within the framework of labour market flexibility is seen to represent the best route to social inclusion.' (2000: 313)

Yet he suggests that the welfare system in the UK is coercive and forces individuals to undertake employment in order to overcome social exclusion.[11] He argues that this system represents a shift away from issues surrounding redistribution and equality to combat social exclusion and from an understanding of the huge impact of structural causes of social exclusion to a focus on the individual's ability to overcome social exclusion. Moreover, the work-based training and experience provided by government training initiatives may not benefit the unemployed as Sianesi (2003) suggests that there are negative wage returns for the possession of apprenticeship qualifications and lower level vocational qualifications such as N/SVQ Level 1 and 2. In particular this study found that the negative effect is stronger when these qualifications are obtained through participation in government training initiatives. It is suggested that obtaining such qualifications via this route may result in individuals being perceived in a negative light by potential employers or 'that the skills acquired are not tailored to the requirements of firms and the labour market' (ibid: 14). Underlining this point regarding the suitability of skills training Cerretti (2000) suggests that funding availability and success in obtaining funding, rather than policy, drives the content of much training provision and therefore it is not necessarily the case that training programmes addresses the current training needs or skills requirements of employers. And furthermore, training initiatives can be criticised for 'cherry-picking' candidates, selecting trainees who are more likely to gain employment due to characteristics such as their education or age. This practise distorts the success of the training and limits its value, while also disadvantaging those further removed from the labour market by not including them in training (Lange and McCormick, 2000).

Although the government attempt to overcome social exclusion through enhancing employability it is clear that they utilise a narrow definition of employability focusing on supply side factors, where the onus is on the individual to overcome exclusion through employment training. Thus this approach can be criticised for

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[11] However, while individuals are aware of the government led initiative to overcome the government's definition of social exclusion, individuals seek alternative methods to keep themselves included in society. For example, they undertake undeclared employment. As a consequence there is a difference between many individual's definition of social exclusion and the government's definition. (Smith, 2000).

failing to tackle the many structural causes of social exclusion and contextual or demand factors that impact upon employability. Therefore, as McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) argue, utilising a definition of employability that includes both supply and demand factors and recognises the interconnections between these factors in impacting upon employability would better inform government policy and enhance its effectiveness. Indeed, it is argued here that training has not been a particularly useful tool in combating exclusion and creating inclusion into the labour market. Many training programmes focus on young unemployed people and use methods of combining on-site training and on the job training and work experience. The high numbers participating in such schemes reduces the official unemployment rates but this may only disguise the reality that the majority of these people do not move onwards to full time permanent employment from such training schemes, employment that importantly overcomes exclusion.

5.5.3 The effectiveness of government training to enhance employability, with regard employment in one form of interactive service work (call centre work)

McQuaid et al. (2005) suggest that utilising the concept of employability is particularly useful when analysing labour market inclusion policies. Pre-employment training initiatives are one inclusion policy favoured by government to overcome unemployment by increasing the employability of individuals. Training initiatives for the unemployed cover a huge range of areas, from care work to manufacturing work, and more recently, due to the increasing importance of call centre work in the UK, training for call centre work. Belt and Richardson (2005) suggest that many training providers in the UK now offer training for work that requires the generic skills utilised in much service work, such as call centre work. Yet they highlight that there is little academic research concerned with examining such initiatives and address this gap by examining the outcomes of one such training scheme. Their study of pre-employment call centre training for the long term unemployed highlights that existing training has some positive outcomes for participants yet is not completely effective in increasing employability in this group. Trainees reported that they had learned more about call centre work, had found the training enjoyable, had grown in

confidence, and importantly displayed awareness of the importance of social skills and emotional labour in this work. Belt and Richardson also emphasise other positive outcomes for the unemployed, such as gaining experience of this work, a factor employer's regard as important in recruits. However, they argue that evidence from their study highlights three main issues that negatively impact upon the effectiveness of this initiative in increasing the employability of the long term unemployed that undertook this training.

Firstly, Belt and Richardson (2005) suggest that there is a mismatch regarding employers and training provider's idea of required skills for call centre employment. The training was initiated in order to meet the skills mismatch between the skills employers in call centre work demand and the skills possessed by the unemployed upon completion of the training. However, trainers emphasised the importance of gaining technical IT skills, while employers preferred potential employees to poses social skills and only required basic technical competence at the point of recruitment and selection. The soft skills mismatch therefore remained unresolved with employers suggesting the skills deficits at interview that concerned them were the trainees' lack of, or non-display of, social skills. In this way trainees suffered because they did not '*present, use* and *deploy* their employability assets (ibid: 265, emphasis in original). Belt and Richardson (ibid: 267) argue that there was 'evidence of misunderstanding between training providers and employers about the type and standard of skills required for call centre work, particularly in terms of basic skills, IT and communications or interpersonal skills.' Therefore they suggest that training providers and employers need to communicate more effectively to ensure those providing training to potential employees understand employer's skills demands.

Secondly, the practises and attitudes of employers impacted upon the trainee's chances of gaining employment. For instance, employers were reluctant to offer employment to the unemployed. Employers suggested that the characteristics of this group meant they were not a good source of potential employees, as for example, they may not remain in the job long term, they may lack the ability and skills to perform the work required, and ultimately employers preferred to employ individual

who had previous customer service experience. Of those employers who suggested they would consider the unemployed for employment in their organisation the recruitment criteria and their recruitment practises acted as barriers to employment for the unemployed. Again within this group of employers there was a demand for six months previous related work experience, which obviously disadvantages those with work histories in non-service work. Furthermore, Belt and Richardson suggest that the interview techniques used by employer's disadvantaged those with no previous experience of service work as in these competency based interviews it was vital to display customer service experience. Moreover, employers failed to provide adequate feedback to allow trainees to gain insight into their 'failure' in the recruitment process. Belt and Richardson argue that this finding reflects the 'poor relationship' between the training providers and employers. Finally, regarding employers' attitudes and practices Belt and Richardson found that employers demanded employees who were extremely flexible regarding working hours, a criteria that excludes, for example, many females with caring responsibilities. Belt and Richardson argue that for the unemployed to stand a better chance of gaining employment employers' recruitment and selection practices and demands regarding working hours must change. They further point out that their findings highlight that policy needs to consider both supply and demand side issues in attempts to increase employability. Although employers were involved in this training initiative, thus attempting to incorporate demand factors, the scheme suffered from the misunderstandings and lack of communication between training providers and employers and this negatively impacted upon the employability prospects of the clients.

Thirdly, Belt and Richardson suggest that training providers focused on getting clients into work and 'neglected the question of the *sustainability* of these jobs', (ibid: 268, emphasis in original) despite the reality that a proportion of those who gained employment subsequently left their new job. It was indicated that the reasons for this centred on the work conditions and Belt and Richardson make the pertinent point that there is cause for concern regarding not only the quality of some of the jobs but also the effectiveness of the training in preparing the clients for this work.

Belt and Richardson argue that their findings highlight the 'complexity' involved in the concept of employability. As emphasised by McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) the unemployed are confronted with a variety of factors in their attempt to overcome unemployment by increasing their employability. Importantly, many of these issues are outwith the control of the individual.

In addition to the evidence provided by Belt and Richardson, Smith (2000: 319) points out that attempts to integrate the unemployed into the labour market by focusing on attaining new skills may not be effective as the skills the unemployed 'lack are more often not those acquired through education or training but those related to the forms of conduct and dispositions required in service sector employment.' This relates to the points made in the preceding chapter regarding what can be defined as skill, particularly regarding the 'soft' skills demanded by service sector employers, and to what extent these 'skills or attributes can be developed through training. This issue of developing soft skills, specifically aesthetic skills, will be addressed in Chapter 8 of this thesis, however, it is important to note here that regardless of where these skills or 'forms of conduct and dispositions' are developed it is the soft skills apposite for interactive service work that employers are demanding potential employees display at the point of recruitment and selection. Therefore a lack of these skills, or as Belt and Richardson (2005) highlight, the inability to 'present' these skills at interview, will act as a barrier to employment in this work.

Belt and Richardson (2005) highlight that the unemployed suffer negative consequences resulting from of a lack of knowledge on training providers part, from the quality of the jobs they are attempting to access, the overall quality of the training they undertake, and from barriers to employment due to employers recruitment and selection practises. These factors are external to the employee, or as McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) would suggest are not individual factors but are personal circumstances and external factors, factors that the individual has less control over. Therefore placing responsibility for inclusion and increasing your own employability through skills training will not impact upon these other factors. As McQuaid and

Lindsay argue it is important to utilise a definition of employability that includes both supply and demand factors as this allows importance to be placed on the interconnections between these factors in impacting upon employability. Such a method, they argue, would better inform government policy and importantly, impact upon its effectiveness. However, as they suggest, different problems require different solutions. They accept that what they term individual factors, issues relating to skills and attributes and effective job seeking, for example, may profit from supply side policies that are in place, yet they point out that personal circumstances and external factors may require interventions via different policy measures from government, may be influenced by trade union measures and could be impacted upon by issues within employers control. Clearly it is not only the individual who can influence employability.

Having examined employability and training for the unemployed it is now important to turn attention to the issues of exclusion, employability and training for the unemployed in Glasgow. Following economic restructuring Glasgow now offers many employment opportunities in service work, yet the city suffers from social exclusion and, in particular, worrying employment statistics.

5.6 Social exclusion, employability and government training – the Glasgow case

It is important to examine Glasgow and social exclusion as the city contains several areas of disadvantage where the gap between the wealthy and the poor seems to be on the increase. Indeed income inequality has worsened over the period 1997-2002 and the risk of low income, low pay and inequalities has also worsened (New Policy Institute, 2002). A result of this widening gap is that many individuals become socially excluded. Also, overall the health of the population in Scotland is worse than the rest of Great Britain or Europe. Yet within Scotland there are variations, with 'substantial inequalities' between different areas and between different groups, with for example Glasgow having very poor records for deaths from cancer and heart disease.

Moreover, the statistics relating to employment highlight that Scotland, and Glasgow in particular, suffers from worrying trends. In Scotland almost one third of those employed are paid less than £6.50 per hour, with part-time work being particularly low paid. The probability of suffering from low pay is related to educational qualifications, with those with no qualifications or poor qualifications being paid less than those with fairly low level qualifications. Furthermore, an individual is three times less likely to benefit from ongoing training in work if they have no qualifications in the first instance, and in this way suffer from ongoing disadvantage regarding skills and training.

As highlighted in Chapter 2 Glasgow has undergone a shift away from an economy based around heavy industry and manufacturing towards a service based economy where much new employment opportunities are in call centres, retail and hospitality (TERU, 1999). However, Glasgow's position as an old industrial region brings with it the associated problems of displacement from employment and high levels of economic inactivity. Despite the recent attempts to regenerate Glasgow the city still suffers from a multitude of social and economic problems, indeed Glasgow is the most deprived council area in Scotland with higher rates of Income Support claimants and Incapacity Benefit claimants than regional or national levels (SLIMS, 2003). Also Glasgow suffers from one of the highest rates of worklessness in Scotland (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2005). Although the unemployment rate in Glasgow has fallen since 1998 the figure is higher than the rate for the West of Scotland and the UK. With large numbers of commuters from the suburbs filling 50 percent of jobs in Glasgow (Nickson et al., 2003), unemployment in Glasgow is almost double that of Scotland and the UK (SLIMS, 2003). As argued previously in this thesis the existence of high inner city long-term unemployment levels and high economic inactivity rates should lead to much concern regarding the social groups that are not benefiting from the developments occurring in the Glasgow economy. For example, Shuttleworth and McKinstry (2001) highlight that despite the increase in service work and a relatively buoyant labour market Glasgow suffers from high unemployment levels. Yet, they further point out, high unemployment in Glasgow

occurs alongside recruitment and retention problems in the service sector. Therefore with new opportunities for employment in service work, such as retail and hospitality, it is important that there is an understanding of the skills being demanded by employers in this work in order that training provision for those attempting to access this work meets employers' skills demands, thus benefiting employers and the unemployed.

However, accessing employment is a complex process and involves various factors. McGregor and McConnachie (1995) suggest that economic growth is important in order to facilitate an increase in full time employment, yet many economies are not showing an adequate level of growth to facilitate this. Therefore, due to these economic conditions, 'the most disadvantaged groups and communities become even more detached from the conventional economy and the problems of long-term unemployment grow' (ibid: 1588). Moreover, they suggest that there are a number of other factors that combined or even on their own act as obstacles to labour market participation for individuals located in areas of urban disadvantage. These obstacles include few local employment opportunities, inadequate transport to the wider area, lack of educational and vocational qualifications and skills, problematic child care facilities, the negative effect of social welfare creating a welfare trap, stigma attached to these individuals by employers and a culture of negativity towards reintegrating into the labour market and towards education and training in general. It is clear therefore that integration into the labour market, particularly for those suffering from long-term unemployment, is more complex than accessing suitable training for work skills. Indeed the barriers to employment are numerous and complex. However, the government has focused on training for the unemployed and increasing skills levels as a major tool in overcoming employment, and as such this training needs to be well informed and offer practical advice regarding accessing employment in the current labour market.

Clearly then just as social exclusion is multi-factorial, unemployment in cities such as Glasgow is a result of a wide set of circumstances. While all of these factors need to be taken into account when looking at the issue of unemployment and social

exclusion this thesis is concerned specifically with the impact of employers skills demands and potential employees skills or lack of skills, and the provision of adequate and well informed training provision for the unemployed as determining factors in accessing employment in the service sector of the Glasgow labour market. McGregor and McConnachie point out that in the 1980s in the UK training initiatives at the local level were concerned with addressing vocational qualifications and training needs, yet awareness of the needs of local employers was not well informed and was 'based more on guesses than accurate information' (ibid: 1593). They further argue that vocational training programmes still suffer due to organisations lack of ongoing awareness of employer's recruitment and training needs. Similarly, Keep and Mayhew (1999) argue that despite interventions to develop and improve its performance VET in the UK remains problematic. This situation is obviously challenging for all concerned, the unemployed, training organisations and employers. Therefore it is clear that an understanding of the recruitment and training needs of employers in the surrounding labour market should inform training interventions targeting the long-term unemployed. As highlighted in Chapter 4 Crouch (2004) points out that in conditions such as those apparent presently in the UK, that is, the shift to a service economy, there is uncertainly regarding the skills required for work and, he argues, in these conditions skill formation systems do not perform adequately. It is these circumstances of 'uncertainty', he argues, that prompt government and policy to focus on the responsibilities of the individual to be accountable for learning, skilling and reskilling because 'none of the agencies normally considered to bear responsibility for this any longer understand likely patterns of skill requirement.' (ibid: 107) Policy therefore is currently concerned with individuals enhancing their own skills base, through accessing training initiatives put in place by government. However, as discussed above there is some doubt regarding the effectiveness of much training.

It is important therefore to examine the suitability of training provision for the unemployed in Glasgow because, as Helms and Cumbers (2004) argue, the restructuring that is occurring in old industrial regions has led to new employment opportunities while policy to overcome exclusion places great emphasis on

improving employability to enhance access to employment for the unemployed. There are many training organisations and economic development agencies in Glasgow offering training for the unemployed through government initiatives such as the New Deal, the Modern Apprenticeship Schemes, Training for Work (Glasgow), Glasgow Works, Skillseekers, Glasgow Employment Zone and Action Teams. A few of the training organisations focus specifically on certain areas, such as training for call centre work, however, the majority of the training organisations offer a broad range of training courses. The focus of training provision for the unemployed in Glasgow is examined in Chapter 8 of this thesis. However, what is important to note is that often the successful outcomes of training initiatives are based on 'job outcomes' upon completion of the course. However, it is argued that retention rates are equally important, and as Belt and Richardson (2005) highlight, job sustainability is an important measure of success regarding training for the unemployed. For example, although the New Deal in Glasgow had a success rate of approximately 31 percent, with 31 per cent of those starting the course moving into employment, the retention rate is only two thirds (Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector, 2002). Statistics like these lead the Glasgow Council for the Voluntary Sector to suggest that: 'The scale of movement into sustained employment associated with New Deal, measured in terms of absolute numbers, is simply too small to make more than a modest contribution to raising the city's employment rate. (ibid: 11)

5.7 Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the concept of social exclusion, examining the origin of the concept, providing an operational definition, and highlighting the importance of context with regard social exclusion. The usefulness of the concept in examining disadvantage, deprivation and exclusion from many areas of social and cultural life is apparent. In particular the multi-faceted nature of the process of social exclusion and the resulting spatial manifestations of disadvantage, as defined by Madanipour et al. (1998), make the concept useful in attempts to examine disadvantage relating to labour market participation for those from a region that has undergone restructuring.

as in the case of Glasgow, the focus of this thesis. It is understood that the causes of social exclusion are manifold and related in particular to context, with exclusion from employment being understood to be in part due to economic restructuring. Indeed the shift to a service economy in cities such as Glasgow is closely linked to the high unemployment rates and worrying levels of economic inactivity.

It is also suggested in this chapter that the government pursue a policy of overcoming exclusion from employment focusing on enhancing individuals' employability, through skills training and strategies such as job search assistance. However, it is argued here that the government focuses on a narrow definition of employability and as such many of the measures they have implemented to increase employability focus on the individual rather than considering all the factors that impact upon an individual's employability, such as the condition of the labour market. It is contended that, as McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) emphasise, both demand and supply factors influence employability and as such should be taken into consideration in policy initiatives aimed at increasing employability. Furthermore, it is argued that, as the ILO point out, concentrating on skills acquisition to overcome unemployment shifts attention away from issues, such as the changing economic climate and discrimination, that impact upon labour market disadvantage. It has been argued in this chapter therefore that more attention needs to be paid to factors external to the individual that impact upon and contribute to labour market disadvantage, for example the quality and suitability of training provision and the recruitment and selection practices of employers.

Moreover, it is pointed out in this chapter that for employment to overcome social exclusion the quality of employment needs to be sufficient to overcome exclusion. It has been highlighted that factors including remuneration, work conditions and job security are important in determining if employment will prevent social exclusion and indeed these factors may act as incentives to gain and maintain employment. (Atkinson, 1998; Byrne, 1999; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2005; Smith, 2000; Toynbee, 2003) As Smith (2000) concludes, for welfare to work programmes to be successful the quality of jobs offered and remuneration must be adequate allowing the

unemployed to access 'meaningful employment'. It is clear that many new opportunities for employment in retail and hospitality work are in low skill, low pay employment and thus the issue of the 'working poor' needs to be addressed even if government training is successful in enhancing individuals ability to gain employment.

It is further argued in this chapter that training provision for the unemployed suffers from a lack of understanding of employers' needs (McGregor and McConnachie, 1999). While qualifications gained through skills training via government schemes does not contribute to an individuals earning capacity possibly because of negative connotations associated with such training or because the skills do not meet employers demands. As Belt and Richardson (2005) argue, training provision can suffer from training provider's lack of understanding regarding the skills being demanded at the point of recruitment and selection by call centre employers. Moreover, it is also clear that the unemployed need to be better informed regarding opportunities in the current labour market, that is be informed about the areas of growth and the realities of work in these areas. As Silver and Wilkinson (1995: 290) point out training policy aimed at increasing skill levels needs to be 'adjusted to labour demand of enterprises' in order to overcome labour market disadvantage for the individual and to benefit the economy.

The literature highlights that the labour market in the UK has undergone huge changes, with resulting changes in the nature of work. It is clear that in this new landscape employment is still considered essential both for the individual and for the economy. The government therefore focuses on employment as a route to overcome the problems associated with social exclusion, and concentrates on increasing employability to overcome worklessness. As has been argued in this chapter, the effectiveness of this strategy is limited due the very real barriers to employment and enhancing employability that exist and that are external to the individual's immediate control. It is clear from the literature that issues such as employer's skills demands and recruitment and selection practises impact upon employability, while the quality and availability of appropriate training provision also has an effect.

Examination of the literature regarding labour markets, skills, social exclusion and employability highlights that one of the forces of social exclusion is the decline in manual employment and the shift to a service economy in the UK. The three strands of literature reviewed in the first half of this thesis provide important context for the empirical investigation that encompasses the second half of the thesis. The literature also highlights that in the context of a shift to a service economy analysis of the employment relationship usefully incorporates aesthetic labour and the utilisation of aesthetic skills. Together these developments impact on the experience of the unemployed in relation to accessing work in the interactive service sector.

As underlined in the following chapter, where the methodology adopted throughout the study is discussed in detail, adopting a critical realist perspective, examining choices made by employers, training providers and the unemployed and how these choices impact upon the different groups involved, provides an opportunity to advance understandings concerning the changing nature of work and employment, employability and access to work. Therefore the latter half of this thesis offers an examination of employers' skills demands for interactive service work and issues surrounding training provision for the unemployed for interactive service work in Glasgow, while also assessing unemployed job seekers' perceptions regarding interactive service work.

Methodology

6.1 Introduction

This chapter describes and justifies the methods used in this thesis. It is important that the research methods used should relate to the theoretical underpinnings and the aims and objectives of any research. Ultimately the research methods utilised in this study allowed an examination of the three main areas of interest, namely: the skills demands of employers in the interactive service sector; the availability and quality of training provision for the unemployed for interactive service work; and the perceptions of the unemployed regarding interactive service work.

This chapter begins with a discussion of epistemology and ontology, important factors in determining the methodology of any research. It highlights that the critical realist approach adopted for this research impacts not only upon the methods chosen to investigate the social phenomena but also on the choice of research topic itself and the way in which the research is approached. Following this discussion there is an examination of the differences between qualitative and quantitative research. It is concluded that the choice to pursue a qualitative study is in part influenced by the critical realist stance adopted in the research but also by the practical consideration of the best tools for the job.

There then follows a description and justification of research methods used in the study, outlining the interview method, the focus group method, participant observation and the quantitative survey method. The use of each method is justified and considered to be the most appropriate method according to the situation, the topic under investigation and the actual questions that will be asked. Leading on from this discussion the practicalities involved in the field research are detailed, describing the four strands of research and the multitude issues associated with field

research, such as issues of access to participants and how to record data. Subsequently the vital process of data analysis is then discussed, outlining the way in which the data gathered is analysed. Toward the end of this chapter issues of validity, reliability and generalisability are considered, and the ethical considerations important to this piece of work are reviewed.

Moving through this chapter it should become clear that the aim and objectives of the research are best met by the methodologies, methods, analysis method and ethical considerations employed in this piece of work. The chapter begins therefore with an examination of the theoretical underpinnings of this work.

6.2 Epistemology and ontology

In philosophy and in the social sciences the researchers ontological and epistemological positions determine methodology and therefore it is appropriate to begin this chapter by outlining the research paradigm that underpins this research. Ontology refers to the study of being, or the study or theory of what exists, while epistemology involves the study of knowing or the theory of how we know (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002). The researchers ontological and epistemological positions inform their work, from start to finish, and do not only impact upon practicalities such as which research tools they choose, but also influence their choices regarding the topic they are studying and the way in which they choose to investigate it.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) suggest that in general there are three main differing approaches to the study of behaviour, namely normative approaches, interpretative approaches and critical approaches. Table 5 below identifies the main components of each approach.

Table 5: Differing approaches to the study of behaviour

Normative	*Interpretive*	*Critical*
Society and the social system	The individual	Societies, groups and individuals
Medium/large-scale research	Small-scale research	Small-scale research
Impersonal, anonymous forces regulating behaviour	Human actions continuously recreating social life	Political ideological factors, power and interests shaping behaviour
Model of natural sciences	Non-statistical	Ideology critique and action
'Objectivity'	'Subjectivity'	research
Research conducted 'from the outside'	Personal involvement of the researcher	Collectivity
Generalizing from the specific	Interpreting the specific	Participant researchers,
Explaining behaviour/seeking causes	Understanding actions/meanings rather than causes	researchers and facilitators
Assuming the taken-for-granted	Investigating the taken-for-granted	Critiquing the specific
Macro-concepts: society,	Micro-concepts: individual perspective,	Understanding, interrogating, critiquing, transforming actions and interests
institutions, norms, positions, roles,	personal constructs, negotiated meanings, definitions of situations	Interrogating and critiquing the
expectations	Phenomenologists, symbolic interactionists,	taken-for-granted
Structuralists	ethnomethodologists	Macro- and micro-concepts:
Technical interest	Practical interest	political and ideological interests, operations of power
		Critical theorists, action researchers, practitioner researchers
		Emancipatory interest

Source: Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000: 35)

The normative approach outlined above is aligned with positivism. In the past there were seen to be two traditional opposing approaches to social research, or 'schools' of social science as Silverman (1993) describes them, positivism and interpretive social science. In general positivism concerns itself with the discovery and study of social facts and structures and utilises quantitative methods to test hypothesis, while interpretive social science is more concerned with the concepts of meaning and social construction and utilises qualitative methods to aid hypothesis generation (Silverman, 1993). It is useful to examine the reasoning behind these differing approaches to the study of social life.

Positivists argue that in order to examine social phenomena researchers must approach their study the same way that researchers in the natural sciences, such as physicists or chemists, approach theirs. Therefore positivists would argue that it is possible and indeed necessary to study social phenomena in the same way as natural

phenomena are studied (May, 1997). In this way the aims of natural science and the positivist approach to social science are the same, that is 'the prediction and explanation of the behaviour of phenomena and the pursuit of objectivity' (May, 1997: 10). In particular positivists are concerned with cause and effect and observable 'facts'. In an effort to align itself with the scientific method and thus be viewed as science the positivistic position argued that researchers should also use methods aligned with the scientific method. It is important to positivists to 'define', 'count' and 'analyse' variables, yet positivists can be criticised for overlooking the impact of social life and culture on the 'variables' they study (Silverman, 1993). Although the positivist approach holds little weight today as an appropriate methodology to study social phenomena this methodology has been linked to important sociological work. For example Durkheim believed in the importance of 'scientific detachment' and 'value freedom' in social research (Williams, 2006: 230).

Yet it would be problematic to approach the study of social life and social phenomena along the same lines as research into natural phenomena. Moreover, positivism can be criticised for not taking account of 'individual subjectivity and the role of consciousness in shaping the social world' (Williams, 2006: 230). Due to the nature of the social world it is argued that social research cannot be objective but rather is subjective, with the researchers interpretation of and impact upon the phenomena also important. The importance of subjectivity and human actions inform the interpretative approach.

Table 5 highlights the main features of the interpretive approach to the study of behaviour. Interpretivism studies behaviour at the individual level and is aware of changing human behaviour and the re-creation of social life caused by human action. This approach also accepts the involvement of the researcher and the impact this involvement has on the study of behaviour. Within the interpretive approach there is also emphasis not only upon observable behaviours but also particularly on meanings, that is how individuals understand social phenomena and the ways in which their behaviour is affected by their understandings (Cohen et al., 2000). Interpretativists argue that the naturalistic method adopted by positivists is not useful

in examining social phenomena. Instead this approach utilises qualitative methods in order to understand 'meaning'. However, because of this focus on meaning and interpretation and the utilisation of qualitative methods criticisms have been made that this approach suffers from a lack of objectivity and is too relativist. In essence how does the interpretative researcher know that her understanding or interpretation of behaviour is accurate? Moreover, as the table above emphasises, the interpretive approach tends to focus on micro level explorations, thus not taking into account macro factors, such as structures operating in society, that impact upon social phenomena like behaviour.

The interpretative and positivist approaches have traditionally been seen as two opposing styles involving quite disparate techniques: with qualitative methods, small scale research and researcher involvement typical in the former and quantitative methods, larger scale research and the importance of the 'objective' outsider researcher important in the latter. Critical theory, it is argued, offers a third approach to the study of social phenomena, with an emphasis on 'the political stance of emancipation of individuals and groups within society.' (Clough and Nutbrown, 2002: 14) What is important to critical theorists is that the aim of research is to effect change, change for individuals and change within society. As table 5 shows political and ideological factors and the powers and interests of individuals and groups, at the micro and macro level, are important in this approach. While the researcher is deemed to be part of the research and facilitates the research the importance of being critical and offering a critical reflection upon the research is paramount.

As the title informs us critical realism is a critical approach to the study of social phenomena. While the critical realist accepts the realist assumption that 'a world exists that is in some respect independent of the knowing subject' what differentiates critical realists from realism that is associated with empiricism and idealism is their approach to 'how "the real" is understood.' (Smith, 2006: 255) For empiricists social phenomena are studied via sense data, sensations, impressions and perceptions, and for idealists via sensation and mental constructs (the interpretative approach or phenomenological approach). However, the critical realist epistemology argues that

the study of social phenomena requires 'rational abstraction' (ibid) in the study of social phenomena.

Significantly, the critical realist approach emphasises the importance of social structures on social phenomena, structures such as the relationship between two groups of people, for example, workers and capitalists. The impact social structures have on social phenomena is all-important, but it is important to note, social structures are not necessarily fixed, but rather may change with time or undergo change due to individuals' actions. However, structures may become deep rooted or 'institutionalised' (ibid.) if they do not alter over time, making it difficult to then change these structures.

As Cohen et al. (2000) point out the critical approach has emancipatory interest in the study of social phenomena and aims to influence social change, however, there is debate amongst critical realists regarding which structures are problematic in society. As Smith (2006) comments whether the researcher believes class, patriarchy or other forms of division in society are the main problem the researcher's resultant approach to the research will depend upon the researcher's own cultural values and assumptions about what is 'real'. However, researchers are part of their research and their understandings of the world will undoubtedly impact upon their work, and therefore must be acknowledged.

It is important to note that although these three approaches, normative, interpretative, and critical are associated with differing practices and understandings Clough and Nutbrown (2002) accurately point out that in practice researchers may not limit themselves by approaching research from within the parameters of one approach only, but that often research may involve a synthesis of factors suiting the demands of the study (see also Silverman, 1993). As Ackroyd (2004) comments social researchers adopting a critical realist stance may utilise research methods from both the qualitative and quantitative traditions, with ultimately the research methods chosen being those apposite to facilitate improving knowledge about social phenomena. The context in which this study takes place and the purpose of this study

requires that a critical realist approach is adopted and qualitative research methods used. It is argued that the aims and objectives of this research are best met by employing a critical realist approach as this lends itself to a focus on the political and ideological factors pertinent to this study of training provision for the unemployed and skills demands of employers. Moreover, it is important in this study to look at behaviour, experiences and perceptions, but equally there is a requirement to view the political context, underline ideological issues, and stress the importance of structures in society that may disadvantage the less powerful.

Although briefly mentioned above it is now important to offer an examination of the merits and drawbacks associated with qualitative and quantitative research.

6.3 Quantitative research and qualitative research – the good and the bad?

As Silverman (1993) points out the two opposing schools of social science, positivism and interpretative social science, are associated with two diverse versions of research. Positivism is associated with quantitative methods and the interpretative stance is most usually associated with qualitative methods. As discussed above typically the research approach and choice of research methods adopted by social researchers depends upon their epistemological understandings of the world. It is problematic that often qualitative and quantitative research is evaluated as either 'good' or 'bad' depending on the approach to research. For example, for positivists quantitative methods are superior to qualitative methods, and for interpretive or phenomenologists qualitative methods provide better quality data than quantitative methods. However, when conducting social research it is vital that researchers utilise the correct tools to achieve the aims and objectives of the research. Indeed preferred methods and adopting a qualitative or quantitative approach may be influenced not only by epistemological influences but also may be determined by the area of study. As Clough and Nutbrown (2002) argue, researchers over time and in different research, or even within the same research project, need not necessarily adopt a single research paradigm that underpins their approach to all questions they have

about at topic, but rather may use different paradigms. They argue that as social researchers 'we adopt research stances *as they are appropriate to our work.*' (ibid: 19, emphasis in original)

However, despite the reality that researchers may adopt both qualitative and quantitative approaches to research it is clear that there are significant differences between these two approaches. Qualitative research has been used by researchers from different theoretical perspectives, from ethnography to symbolic interactionism (Silverman, 2003) and comprises numerous research methods. While this range of perspectives means that there is debate regarding the nature of qualitative research, and the practices associated with it, in the main qualitative research focuses on subjective meanings and the construction of reality, it is concerned with individuals understandings and interpretations rather than the researcher's own beliefs and understandings, and the importance of social relationships is considered paramount (Sumner, 2006). Moreover, as Sumner argues, qualitative research is grounded in notions of the contested nature of social reality and as such suits perspectives that are critical in nature, such as critical realism. Overall however, regardless of the theoretical perspective one approaches qualitative research from, it is accepted that qualitative research should be conducted in a natural setting (Silverman, 1993).

Advocates of a qualitative approach to research argue that qualitative research can generate highly informative data allowing a great depth of analysis. In order to gain this data qualitative researchers utilise various different methods or tools, including, in depth interviews, participant observation (both overt and covert), life histories, discourse and conversation analysis, ethnography and case studies. Silverman (2000) points out that it is generally held that utilising qualitative methods to obtain research data results in a '"deeper" understanding of social phenomena' than can be gained from utilising quantitative methods. However, as Allan (1991: 180) points out qualitative methods and the resultant data is often criticised for being 'impressionistic' and 'non-verifiable'. These criticisms lead to questions regarding the reliability of qualitative data. Moreover, as Silverman (2000) argues the validity of qualitative data is also questioned due to accusations of 'anecdotalism' associated

with the analysis of and reporting of qualitative data. Due to the nature of qualitative data, for example the production of lengthy transcripts, representative snapshots are often presented as indicative of the data. Yet although there can be doubts raised about the reliability and validity of qualitative data, as Silverman (ibid) clearly sets out, these criticisms do not negate the importance or relevance of qualitative research and qualitative data, and indeed quantitative methods and data is equally criticised by qualitative researchers.

Whilst qualitative research is concerned with subjective meanings and values and the importance of social relationships when examining social phenomena, focusing on meanings and interpretations, quantitative research is concerned with discovering 'facts' about social phenomena. Using methods such as surveys, experiments, analysis of statistics, structured observation and content analysis (Silverman, 2000) quantitative researcher's focus on collecting data in numerical form in order to analyse it quantitatively (Garwood, 2006). However, researchers adopting a qualitative stance to research criticise quantitative research because it overlooks social meaning and does not take into account that social phenomena and the context in which they exist, the world, is socially constructed. Moreover, critical researchers argue that quantitative research gains research data utilising methods that do not acknowledge the status of the participants resulting in 'unequal power relations' being a feature of quantitative methods (Garwood, 2006). Nonetheless it is argued that quantitative research offers results that are more reliable and representative than those gained through qualitative measures. Although qualitative and quantitative methods can each be criticised for their weaknesses it is clear that their strengths mean that they are effective at measuring different things. Therefore, it is important that the methods utilised allow effective analysis of the particular social phenomena being researched.

It is clear that both qualitative and quantitative research have many advantages and disadvantages, however, ultimately, as pointed out above, decisions regarding which research approach adopted will be influenced by epistemology while also taking the practical consideration of 'best tool for the job' into account. This combination of

influences resulted in the approach adopted in this thesis. Critical realism is flexible with regard the utilisation of different research methods, as Ackroyd (2004) points out critical realists may utilise both qualitative and quantitative methods, ultimately choosing the method that is most suited to the particular research topic. Moreover, he further comments that researchers should be inventive with their choice of research methods rather than simply replicating the methods traditionally used to investigate topics. Nonetheless, he does point out that typically the majority of research conducted by critical realists is qualitative in nature. Echoing this statement this research is qualitative in nature. The subject matter of the changing nature of work, the demand for aesthetic skills and training for the unemployed is a new and relatively unexplored area, with links being made between aesthetic skills and exclusion. Therefore much of the research for this thesis is exploratory and as such qualitative methodology and qualitative tools were considered to be most suitable. It is argued that in an original area of enquiry it is appropriate to utilise qualitative methodology and methods in order to gain an in depth understanding of the social phenomena. At one stage in the research, however, an integrative approach is utilised and different methods, namely the focus group and survey methods, are used to gain information on the same subject. Yet overall the approach to research throughout this thesis is qualitative in nature and the researcher employs a variety of tools, arguably each being the best tool for the job.

6.4 Research methods

It is now appropriate to detail the various methods used to gather the primary data for this study, outlining the characteristics of each method and offering a justification of why each method was chosen to explore the particular research question. Maxwell (2005) makes the cogent point that selection of research methods depends not only upon the research questions you wish to answer but also on the effectiveness of various methods in different situations and with different topics. Reflecting Maxwell's comment different methods were utilised to answer different questions and with different groups of participants in this research.

6.4.1 Semi-structured interview method

The most frequently used method in this study was the interview method. In the interview method firstly the often time consuming process of access to participants needs to be addressed (how informants were selected and approached is outlined in detail later in this chapter. It is then important to arrange a date and time for the interview in advance making it clear how long the interview will last and then confirming these details in writing. The role of the researcher in the overall research project, in this case as research student, must be made clear at the outset of the research and interviews should be conducted in a manner that encourages participation and respects the feelings of the interviewee. It is important to note the impact of the researcher upon the participants in qualitative research. For example, it is clear that the interaction between researcher and interviewee in the interview setting can influence the data obtained using this method. Moreover, it is important to explain appropriately the aim of the research and assure interviewees of confidentiality to encourage full participation in the interview. Overall it should be the aim of the researcher to establish a free flowing dialogue with, hopefully, rapport between interviewer and interviewee, and to use appropriate body language and eye contact throughout.

The interviews conducted were semi-structured, providing in-depth information on particular topics while offering flexibility and allowing adjustments to the interview to take place when needed. As May (1997: 109) asserts '(I)nterviews yield rich insights into people's experiences, opinions, aspirations, attitudes and feelings.' However, as he goes on, the value of this method is very much dependant upon the effectiveness of the researcher, and the interviewer was alert to this throughout the interviews.

The interview method was used in several stages of the research; firstly interviews were carried out with the participants and trainer of a pilot aesthetic labour training course carried out by the Wise Group. Secondly interviews were carried out with employers in order to investigate the skill requirements of employers in the

interactive service sector. Finally, the interview method was also considered to be the most useful method to gain information on the provision of training for interactive service sector work for the unemployed. The majority of this last set of interviews were face-to-face semi-structured interviews, however, several potential participants noted that they were unavailable for face-to-face interview, due to time considerations, yet were willing to be interviewed via telephone. Therefore the face-to-face interview data was supplemented by several telephone interviews. Including the telephone interviews in the data achieved a greater number of responses, and thus enhanced the data from training providers. Unlike the telephone survey method, where specific questions are asked consistently in each interview, the telephone method adopted here was less structured and followed the format of the face to face semi-structured interviews, where possible and time allowing.

It is argued that the semi-structured interview method was the appropriate tool to use to gain information on the topics covered as this method allows specific questions to be asked and answered while also allowing detours into other areas and also allowing the researcher to obtain what May (1997) terms 'clarification and elaboration'. This method also allows for a depth of understanding to be gained and great detail to be obtained on topics. Moreover, as Davies (2006) points out the non-verbal data, such as gestures and facial expressions, gained from face to face interviewing enhances the qualitative data produced by the interview. Furthermore, as the interviews were not completely unfocused or unstructured it is argued that the data obtained was more amenable to analysis.

6.4.2 Focus group method

The focus group method has recently gained attention as a useful and worthwhile method of gaining good quality qualitative data in social research. Bryman (2001: 337) defines focus groups as 'a form of group interview in which: there are several participants (in addition to the facilitator/moderator); there is an emphasis on the questioning on a particularly fairly tightly defined topic: and the accent is upon interaction within the group and the joint construction of meaning'. Typically focus

groups comprise between six to eight participants (Morgan, 2006) who take part in a group discussion of a topic they preferably have some interest in or knowledge of. Using data generated by focus groups discussions provides the opportunity to explore issues on the basis of participant's own experience and understanding, a fact considered pertinent in this research. Importantly, as Bryman points out, it is the interaction between participants in the focus group discussion that differentiates this method from the interview method. Morgan (1997) similarly makes the important point that the valuable group interaction in focus groups stimulates discussion in a way not possible in individual interviews, by drawing on the beliefs, attitudes, feelings and reactions of the participants. The interaction between participants is in itself interesting to the researcher while the group dynamic of interaction may prompt participants to think about and discuss the topic in ways they would not do in other contexts. Moreover, focus groups also facilitate an exploration not only of *what* participants think but also *why* they do so (Morgan, Krueger, and King, 1998; Morgan, 2006).

In the focus groups conducted for this research the researcher took on the role of moderator. This role involves guiding the focus group discussion in order to gain information on the research topic while also allowing a free flowing discourse to develop. Ultimately the role of the moderator can vary between a more structured approach to a less involved role where the aim is to maintain the dialogue between individuals. In this research the focus groups were carried out with individuals not familiar with social research and therefore the moderator's role was greater throughout in order to maintain dialogue and gain as much information as possible.

While Morgan (2006) argues that it is possible to gain more in-depth data through the individual interview method than the focus group method it is argued here that the focus group method was the most suitable method for the topic being researched and best suited the participants involved. Having previous experience of conducting focus groups the researcher believed this method particularly suited the subject matter and took into consideration the feelings of the participants, that is, several groups of unemployed individuals who were at that time clients at the Wise Group. It

is extremely important when conducting research to fully take into consideration the willingness or otherwise of individuals to take part in the research. It was considered that the unemployed group has considerably less power over their participation than the other two groups of participants, namely the employers and the training providers, and therefore it was important to use a method that offers some control over the degree of participation in the research that individuals have. Also participants may perceive the focus group method to be less formal than, for example, individual interviews. In the focus group the group discussion activity may be preferable for participants than the question and response nature of interviews, which could be intimidating for participants who seek to give the 'right' answers. (Further ethical justification for choosing this method for this group of participants is discussed again in the section dealing with ethics relating to this research).

As Morgan (2006) warns it is important to be aware that focus group data is self reported and that because of the small numbers involved in the sample for this research it is not possible to generalise from the data. Nonetheless as Krueger (Morgan et al. 1998: part 6) cogently argues you are not supposed to generalise from focus group findings, and rather than gain 'breadth' of information the focus group facilitates 'depth' of information. And therefore it is argued that the merit in utilising the focus group method is that this method can ultimately provide raw data rich in detail, which would be hard to obtain using other methods.

6.4.3 Overt participant observation method

The participant observation method is a useful tool of enquiry in qualitative research. It involves the researcher taking part in the 'everyday life of a social setting' allowing her to document experiences and observations of the field (Coffey, 2006: 214). While participant observation should involve some participation in the activities being studied or interaction with the participants, the degree of participation and interaction can vary. Moreover, the research may be either overt or covert. However, conducting covert observation does raise some ethical questions regarding consent to participate. More practically, data from participant observation

is usually gained from field notes and by keeping a fieldwork diary. Furthermore, as in most research, access needs to be gained and the influence of the researcher's presence in the social setting needs to be considered. However, participant observation is a useful tool to utilise to see first hand what occurs in a particular social setting.

In this research the participant observation method was used to track a new training course for unemployed people. By taking part in the training course itself the researcher experienced the training just as the trainees did while also being able to examine the behaviour of the trainees and the trainer throughout the period of the course. It is considered that it was useful to the overall research to take part in this training as it allowed the researcher to immerse herself in the experience of the trainees on this course. Also utilising a fieldwork diary meant that valuable information regarding the content of the training course and participants reactions to the different elements involved in the training course was obtained. Moreover, interacting with the participants daily over a two-week period resulted in the formation of familiarity with the researcher, which it is argued, aided the subsequent attempt to gain feedback from participants regarding their experiences and outcomes achieved from the training course.

6.4.4 Survey method

In essence this study is qualitative in nature, but for data triangulation purposes it was considered useful to include a small survey at one point in the research. Gaining data through the survey method allowed for verification of the findings from the qualitative focus groups discussions. Moreover it is argued that utilising the survey method was practical and benefited the participants by offering them the opportunity to give information through the more confidential method of answering survey questions. The focus group method is very useful at generating good quality qualitative data, however, due to the nature of the focus group, which relies on group dynamics and the willingness of participants to take part fully, it was perceived that the survey method offered those individuals who participated less fully in the focus

group discussion to provide data through the survey method. The survey method allows the development of a broader picture regarding the participant's experiences and perceptions. However it is not the intention to generalise from the survey data, rather its main use is as a checking mechanism for the focus group data while also offering an opportunity for participants to feel they have contributed to the research even if they have not fully participated in the focus group discussion.

Survey methods are frequently used in social research, as they are a relatively cheap and quick method of gaining information regarding the characteristics and beliefs of the group being studied. Surveys can range in size from rather small numbers to very large-scale surveys, yet most surveys employ sampling methods in order to gain information from a representative sample of a group (May, 1997). The advantages of this method include a lack of interviewer bias, cost and effective data analysis utilising various computer packages. However, a well designed survey takes time to produce, surveys can suffer from low response rates and more substantively there is a limit to the type of research questions that can be answered through analysis of survey data.

In this section the various research methods used in the study are outlined and their use justified. This now leads to a discussion of the more practical issues associated with this piece of research.

6.5 The field research

6.5.1 Introduction: Timetable of research and important practical issues

This doctoral research was conducted over several years. Table 6 below details the chronological progression of the work. Importantly, the research was interrupted by two periods of maternity leave.

Table 6: Timetable of doctoral research

May 2000	Participant observation of aesthetic labour training programme
October 2000	Start of ESRC CASE Studentship: Induction to Wise Group and period of empirical research
March 2001 – October 2001	Maternity leave
November 2001 – October 2002	Desk based research
November 2002 – April 2003	Maternity leave
May 2003 – June 2007	Period of empirical research and writing up of thesis

It is important to note that several practical considerations were applied through each strand of research. Firstly, all participants were assured of anonymity and therefore the names of individuals and organisations that participated are not mentioned or have been changed. There are a few exceptions however. The Wise Group is identified as it was agreed between the researcher and the organisation that there was not a need for anonymity. Also the organisations that several of key informants are attached to are also mentioned by name, in order to give context to their comments, although the individuals interviewed are not named. Secondly, several issues relating to gathering the data were considered important. In particular it was considered important throughout this research, particularly in the research with the Wise group clients, that academic or complex language was avoided. In this sense the choice of qualitative research was wise as qualitative methods allow for modification to occur. Moreover, it is important to avoid interview bias and attempting to lead interviewees' answers and thus making use of open-ended questions, when possible, in the qualitative research aided this. A further technique employed in the qualitative methods was the careful treatment of sensitive or possibly uncomfortable topics. For example in the employers interviews the topic of 'the unemployed as potential employees' was left until near the end of the interview, where at this point it was hoped, rapport and trust had been gained such that the interviewees were comfortable disusing what may be a sensitive topic. Thirdly, the pros and cons of audio recording the interviews and focus groups were considered and ultimately it was decided that

the advantages of recording this data far outweighed any disadvantages. Therefore all qualitative data was audio recorded, and importantly, consent to record the data was sought beforehand with the offer to stop recording at any point during the interview process. The researcher subsequently transcribed the audio recordings verbatim, most usually soon after the interview or focus group had taken place. This tactic helped inform subsequent interviews and focus groups while also increasing familiarity with the data.

The raw data utilised in this research includes interview and focus group transcripts, observational data, field notes, a field work diary, and survey data. This is quite a variety of data, however it is the interview and focus group data that largely inform the empirical research reported in Chapters 7, 8 and 9. The data was obtained from three sets of participants. The focus of the thesis, to examine the impact of changes in the nature of work on unemployed job seekers access to work, informed the data collection. Diagram 4 below illustrates the three groups and the key data obtained.

Diagram 4: Data used to inform research
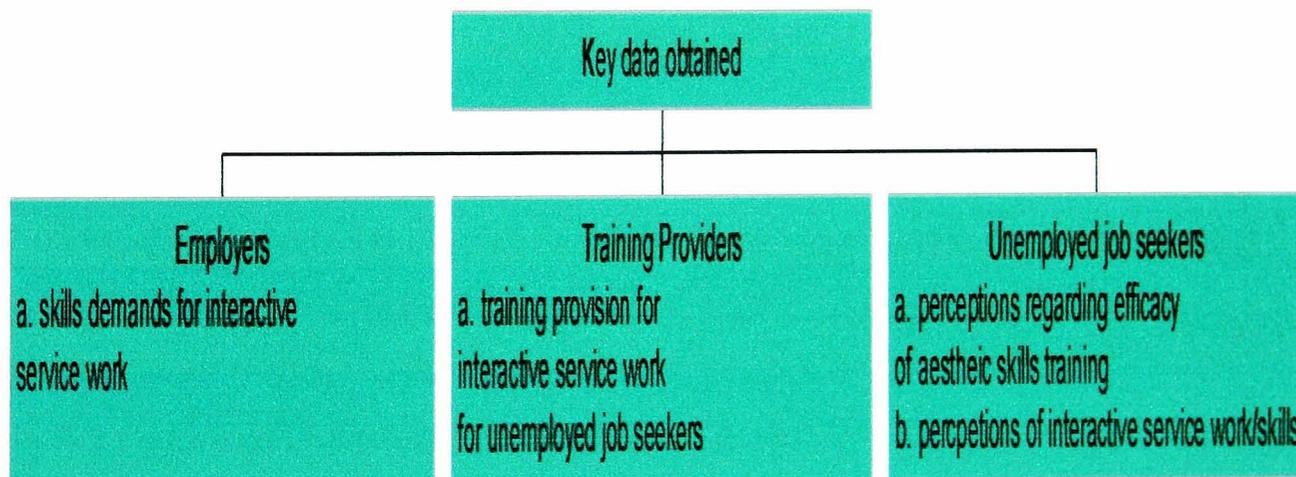
In total four distinct phases of original empirical research were conducted and are utilised to inform the findings presented in the latter half of this thesis. Table 7 below clearly illustrates the research area and the data collected.

Table 7: Details of empirical research conducted

Efficacy of pilot aesthetic skills training course	Employers' skills demands	Training provision for the unemployed	Unemployed job seekers perceptions of interactive service work and skills
Feedback from five participants of aesthetic skills training course	Twelve interviews with employers in the interactive service sector	Fourteen interviews, both face-to-face and telephone interviews, with representatives from organisations offering training for the unemployed	Two focus groups with New Deal clients and sixteen completed surveys
Participant observation data from aesthetic skills training course	Two interviews with key informants	Four interviews with key informants	Two focus groups with Intermediate Labour Market clients and fifteen completed surveys
Interview with trainer from aesthetic skills training course			Group discussion with seven Employment Zone clients

To aid the value of research it is important that there is transparency in the research process. In order to detail adequately and systematically the empirical research process that generated the primary data for this thesis the various research methods and strategies involved for each of the strands of research are discussed independently here. They are presented below in chronological order, with the first piece of research being the data gathering to assess the efficacy of the pilot aesthetic labour training programme offered by the Wise Group.

6.5.2 Pilot aesthetic labour training programme

The purpose of this first phase of research is to track the efficacy of the aesthetic skills training course offered by the Wise Group, in terms of the transfer of aesthetic skills and the development of an awareness of the utility of aesthetic skills in interactive service work. As Belt and Richardson (2005) point out although there are

a number of training providers offering training for work including the skills utilised in much service work there is little academic research concerned with examining these initiatives. Belt and Richardson address this gap by examining the outcomes of a pre-employment training initiative for call centre work. Following on from this work the data obtained from this strand of research is used to further address the lack of understanding concerning the outcomes of such initiatives.

It is important to track the Wise Group initiative (to examine the trainer and clients experience of the initiative and its outcomes in terms of skill development – the learning and transfer of aesthetic skills), which attempted to address the development of aesthetic skills in individuals and an appreciation of the utility of these skills in much work. Having been part of the original research team from the University of Strathclyde that informed the content of the training course at the Wise Group the researcher was ideally positioned to gain access to the training course and indeed, as highlighted previously, undertook a two week period of overt participant observation for the duration of the first pilot version of the training course at the Wise Group. The training courses were offered to clients at the Wise Group over the months May 2000 to July 2000. The participants for the first group were recruited from existing Wise Group clients from various departments, and it is important to note that these individuals were not necessarily seeking employment in the service sector. The researcher's position and presence in the group was explained to the participants and it is considered that this participation did not adversely affect the training course or its outcomes in any way.

In addition to the participant observation data this strand of the research involved the detailed field notes recorded throughout the duration of the two-week training course to supplement the semi-structured interviews, group interview, and written feedback from participants upon completion of the training course. It should be noted here however, that the number of interviews and the amount of feedback obtained from those who had participated in the training was quite poor. In total feedback, via a group interview, two individual interviews and written feedback from one individual, was obtained from five individuals who had taken part in the training course. It is

accepted that this is a relatively poor response. The problems encountered with gaining feedback included not being able to access contact details for clients who had subsequently moved on from the Wise Group, a refusal to be interviewed or meet to give feedback, and inability to offer feedback due to time restrictions (particularly for those who had successfully gained employment and had moved on from the Wise Group) and a large number not attending for interview. Despite these difficulties and the poor level of feedback the data obtained from those who did take part in the research was constructive.

The group interview with two current Wise Group trainees was conducted in the Wise Group building and was tape-recorded and subsequently transcribed. The two individual interviews with then ex-Wise Group clients took place in their place of employment. However, due to a busy work environment neither interview was recorded and due to time constraints on the individual's part both interviews were relatively short. Nonetheless, written notes of these interviews were produced. The main topics each interview covered included discussion around the perceived good and bad points of the training course, an examination of their experiences **of the** course and questions regarding any outcomes for participants of the course. Further data was obtained from written feedback, in the form of written notes regarding perceptions of the training course, obtained from one further participant of the training course. This individual had subsequently moved on from the Wise Group and was unable to take part in an interview. (See Appendix 1 for the Interview Schedule used.)

Finally, research data was also gained from regular discussions with the trainer regarding the training course prior to the commencement of the course, throughout the duration of the course and also a follow up interview several weeks after the end of the pilot course regarding the outcomes of the course. Like many of the participants of the training course the trainer had also moved on from the organisation when she was interviewed. The interview was recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. The main topics for the interview included the trainer's perceptions of good and bad points of the course and her views regarding

the efficacy of the course. (See Appendix 2 for the Interview Schedule used.) Table 8 below provides details of those who participated in this strand of research.

Table 8: Details of participants involved in research concerning the Aesthetic Labour Training Programme

Informants (Training course participants and course trainer)	Informant code (used to identify respondents when reporting and analysing findings in Chapter 8)	Feedback obtained
Female course trainer	CT	One-to-one interview
Female participant	TCP1	Group interview
Female participant	TCP2	Group interview
Male participant	TCP3	One-to-one interview
Male participant	TCP4	One-to-one interview
Male participant	TCP5	Written feedback

6.5.3 Employers

The purpose of the second phase of research is to assess employers' skills requirements for interactive service sector employees, with particular reference to the importance of aesthetic skills. This research also examines employers' recruitment and selection processes, perceptions of the unemployed as suitable candidates for employment in their organisation and views regarding the training of aesthetic skills. The aesthetic labour research has highlighted the nature and demand for aesthetic skills in much interactive service work. This doctoral research extends this work, employing a qualitative analysis of employers, in a range of organisations, skills demands.

This research involved conducting semi-structured interviews with employers in the interactive service sector and two interviews with key informants. (See Appendix 3 for the interview schedule used.) Table 9 below details the interviewees who participated in this strand of research. As highlighted in Chapter 4 Nickson et al. (2001) and Warhurst and Nickson (2007) argue that the demand for aesthetic skills is apparent in both the style labour market and in organisations outwith this. They point

out that the demand for aesthetic skills has filtered into organisations such as high street retailers and hotel groups, resulting in what they term a demonstration effect regarding the demand for and utility of aesthetic skills in interactive service sector organisations. Therefore a range of organisations offering distinct service styles were targeted for interview in order that the feedback obtained would be from a diverse selection of interactive service sector employers.

Table 9: Details of interviewees involved in research concerning employers' skills demands in interactive service work

Interviewee	Interviewee code (used to identify respondents when reporting and analysing findings in Chapter 7)	Organisation
Retail Manager 1	RM1	Large high street retail store
Retail Manager 2	RM2	Large high street retail store
Retail Manager 3	RM3	Large chain female fashion store
Retail Manager 4	RM4	Chain high fashion store
Café/Restaurant Manager 1	C/RM1	Independent restaurant
Café/Restaurant Manager 2	C/RM2	Independent café
Café/Restaurant Manager 3	C/RM3	Chain restaurant
Café/Restaurant Manager 4	C/RM4	Chain restaurant – family oriented
Hotel Manager 1	HM1	Large hotel group
Hotel Manager 2	HM2	Large hotel group
Hotel Manager 3	HM3	Boutique hotel
Hotel Manager 4	HM4	Boutique hotel
Key Informant 1	EmpKI1	Executive Director of Glasgow City Centre Partnership
Key Informant 2	EmpKI2	Director of Glasgow Employer Coalition

A list of organisations in the interactive service sector in Glasgow city centre was compiled with the researcher making use of existing contacts of Wise Group employees in order to gain access to some organisations and the key informants

while also drawing up a list of potential interviewees from a list of retail and hospitality organisations based in the city centre in Glasgow. Letters were then sent to the personnel managers/managers of these organisations informing them of the research and the Wise Group initiative and included a request for interview in order that the researcher could gain some insight into their recruitment, selection and training procedures. These letters were followed up by telephone calls to remind them of the request for interview and, for those willing to take part, to arrange appointments for interview. At this stage it was requested that the interview be audio recorded. The representatives of several organisations responded positively to the request for interview and agreed to the interview being recorded.

Twelve semi-structured interviews were undertaken with employers from three areas of interactive service work and employment, namely, retail organisations, café/restaurants and hotels, in the period November 2000 to February 2001. In each instance the manager or individual with responsibility for personnel was interviewed, and in each case the interview was conducted at the interviewees' place of work. Generally in the smaller establishments where there was no designated personnel manager it was the manager of the establishment who was interviewed, while in the larger organisations it was the Personnel Manager. The interview data from the employers was also supplemented by interviews with two key informants, namely the Executive Director of Glasgow City Centre Partnership and the Director of the Glasgow Employer Coalition. These individuals have a professional interest in service sector employment in Glasgow and have an awareness of the realties of work that employers and potential employees in such work face.

The employers and key informants were fully informed about the nature of the research and what their input entailed. Interview schedules were utilised in all interviews, however, interviewees did on occasion deviate from merely answering the questions listed on the schedule and in this way some important information, outwith that expected by the researcher, was gained. All of the interviews took place in the organisations premises, either in an office environment or in the bar or café

area. The length of the interviews ranged from between 30 minutes to 90 minutes and all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim.

Although it is argued that the sample of employers involved in this research are a sample of typical employers involved in interactive service work in Glasgow it is accepted that the majority of these organisations are large, employing many employees, and thus the sample is underrepresented regarding smaller organisations. Several independent organisations were included in the sample in order to provide some balance, however, it is clear that the majority of organisations involved are large. Furthermore, it was hoped that the number of employers involved in this research would be greater. However this research was conducted over the busy Christmas and New Year season (due to time restrictions with regard providing a report for the Wise Group, concerning employers skills demand, and the impending maternity leave of the researcher), and therefore, it is argued, this negatively impacted upon the number of employers willing or able to take part. Despite these limitations this phase of research provided much valuable data regarding employers in the interactive service sectors skills demands.

The main topics the interviews covered included: discussion of employers' 'ideal' employees; the importance of aesthetic skills and competencies at the point of recruitment and selection and at work; an examination of employers' views regarding training and developing aesthetic skills; employers' views regarding potential employees technical skills and work experience; employers' preferred methods of recruitment and selection for interactive service employees; and employers' views regarding the availability of suitable employees.

6.5.4 Training provision

The purpose of the third phase of research is to identify the extent of training provision for the unemployed in Glasgow for interactive service work in the retail and hospitality sectors, and to determine whether the training is geared towards the skills demands of employers in these industries. Firstly, therefore, it was necessary to

access documentary evidence from training organisations in Glasgow in order to determine the type and content of training courses available to the long-term unemployed. The list of training organisations included in this research was developed with the help of employees at the Wise Group who had knowledge of the various training organisations who offered training for the unemployed in Glasgow. Following the development of the list of organisations the researcher attempted to contact the training manager of each organisation that currently offered or had offered service sector training for the unemployed in the past. In total twenty organisations were contacted, with representatives of fourteen organisations agreeing to take part in either a telephone interview or face-to-face interview. Telephone interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim and generally lasted around twenty to thirty minutes. Face to face interviews were also recorded and transcribed verbatim and most lasted around thirty minutes. These interviews were also supplemented with four in-depth semi structured interviews with key informants that have many years experience in developing and delivering training initiatives for the unemployed in Glasgow. These key informants held senior positions in economic development agencies, including Scottish Enterprise, and in large training organisations for the unemployed. These interviews lasted between thirty and sixty minutes. Three of these interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim. One interviewee was reluctant to be recorded and therefore in this case detailed interview notes were recorded. Table 10 below provides a list of the codes used when reporting the findings of this research. Although the job title of the interviewees varied between organisations the main role of all 14 training provider interviewees manage or coordinate training for the unemployed, while the four key informants have years of experience regarding the development and delivery of training for the unemployed.

Table 10: List of codes used for training provider data

Interviewee	Interviewee code (used to identify respondents when reporting and analysing findings in Chapter 8)
Key Informant 1	TPKI1
Key Informant 2	TPKI2
Key Informant 3	TPKI3
Key Informant 4	TPKI4
Training Coordinator	TP1
Hospitality Training Client Manager	TP2
Training Manager	TP3
Training Manager	TP4
Training Coordinator	TP5
Training Manager	TP6
Training Manager	TP7
Training Coordinator	TP8
Training Project Manager	TP9
Training Manager	TP10
Training Coordinator	TP11
Training Director	TP12
Training Manager	TP13
Training Manager	TP14

6.5.5 Unemployed job seekers

The purpose of the fourth phase of research is to examine perceptions of interactive service work among the unemployed clients of the Wise Group, while also examining their understandings of skills. Many of the focus group topics and survey questions were based on research conducted by McQuaid and Lindsay (2002) and Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) who have conducted research into unemployment and barriers to work and unemployed job seekers views of service work. In total four focus groups and one group discussion was conducted with unemployed job seekers who were at that time clients at the Wise Group. (See Appendix 4 for the focus group schedule used and Appendix 5 for a copy of the survey.) Two focus groups were conducted with predominantly female Intermediate Labour Market (ILM) clients and

a further two with predominantly male New Deal Tailored Pathways (NDTP) clients. The group discussion was conducted with a group of eight males taking part in the Employment Zone (EZ) initiative. It was not possible to access the EZ group for the time required to set up and conduct a focus group, therefore in order to gain some feedback from this group the compromise of a short discussion at the end of one of their training sessions was agreed. This did prove to be a fruitful discussion as some of the issues raised in this group were significantly different from the findings from the other two groups.

Tables 11 and 12 below detail the composition of the NDYP group and the ILM group, detailing their training scheme, sex and age. No details regarding age were gathered from the EZ group, however, these clients were all males and it was perceived that the men ranged in age from around 30 years to 50 years. From these tables it is clear that the groups are distinct from each other, regarding age and sex, with commonalities within the groups. Data was gathered regarding the qualifications individuals possessed via the survey. It is important to point out however that from this data it was apparent that almost all of the individuals from the New Deal group had low qualification attainment, while the ILM females possessed qualifications, such as NVQ's, related to their training.

Table 11: New Deal Clients (NDTP)

Respondent code (used to identify respondents when reporting and analysing findings in Chapter 9)	Gender	Age
ND1	Female	18
ND2	Male	18
ND3	Male	18
ND4	Male	18
ND5	Male	18
ND6	Male	18
ND7	Male	19
ND8	Male	19
ND9	Male	19
ND10	Male	19
ND11	Male	19
ND12	Male	20
ND13	Male	21
ND14	Male	23
ND15	Male	23
ND16	Male	24

Table 12: Intermediate Labour Market Clients (ILM)

Respondent code (used to identify respondents when reporting and analysing findings in Chapter 9)	Gender	Age
ILM1	Male	20
ILM2	Female	22
ILM3	Female	22
ILM4	Female	23
ILM5	Female	24
ILM6	Female	24
ILM7	Female	24
ILM8	Female	25
ILM9	Female	27
ILM10	Female	27
ILM11	Female	32
ILM12	Female	35
ILM13	Female	36
ILM14	Female	44
ILM15	Female	48

As pointed out the three groups were made up of quite similar individuals, with the NDYP clients being mostly young males aged between 18 and 24 years, the ILM clients being mostly females aged between 20 and 48 years. However no information was gained from the all male EZ clients regarding age, however, these individuals appeared to range in age from approximately 30 to 50 years.

The researcher's joint working with the Wise Group facilitated access to the clients. It is argued that the clients involved in this research are fairly representative of unemployed individuals undergoing training for work in Glasgow. Indeed the varied client groups of the Wise Group are represented in the participants in this study. These three distinct groups were not deliberately placed together by the researcher but rather were placed together according to the particular training initiative they were undertaking by the representative of the Wise Group helping facilitate this research. There were approximately eight participants in each focus group and seven in the group discussion. It is important to note here that the participants had not chosen to take part in the research, but rather had been informed that the researcher

would like them to take part in the groups. Ultimately the participants in the groups comprised those clients who were present for training at the Wise Group that day. Therefore it was important to inform the clients that they were not required to take part, however, all clients expressed that they were happy to stay and be involved in the research. This positive attitude toward the research may stem from the desire of individuals 'having their voice heard', particularly as the clients were not offered any incentives for taking part.

It was considered important that the focus group environment was not intimidating or formal, and therefore the focus groups and the group discussion were conducted in the familiar environment of the client's usual training room at the Wise Group. Each focus group lasted approximately 45 minutes, as this was the time allocated by the trainers for the research. Obviously due to the nature of the focus group setting it was not possible to guarantee confidentiality to the participants; however, the researcher did request that individuals did not discuss what other participants had said in the focus group outwith the group. The focus group discussions were audio recorded and verbatim transcripts were produced.

Following the focus group discussions the Wise Group clients were asked to complete a short survey concerning some of the issues discussed in the focus groups and asking several new questions. In total 31 surveys were completed by the focus group participants, that is the ILM and NDYP clients. No surveys were completed by the EZ clients due to the time constraints with this group. The purpose of the survey data is twofold. Firstly it serves to triangulate the focus group data and secondly it offers those who did not take part fully in the focus group discussion to inform the research through their answers to the survey questions. It is not the intention to generalise from the survey data, nonetheless the information provided by this method adds to the research data and is useful.

As outlined in this section of the chapter a variety of methods were used in this study. The value of the data obtained in any research, however, depends upon what happens to the raw data after collection, that is, how the data is analysed.

6.6 <u>Data analysis</u>

As argued previously, in qualitative research it is not possible to completely remove the influence or impact of the researcher from the research. There is no such thing as the perfect method, as undoubtedly the researchers own reading and interpretation of data is an inextricable part of data analysis. As Mauthner and Doucet (2003: 415) argue, data analysis methods 'carry the epistemological, ontological and theoretical assumptions of the researchers who developed them' and as such data analysis cannot be presumed to be neutral in nature. Nevertheless, for a piece of social research to have authority it is important that the way in which the raw data is analysed is transparent. In this way there can be confidence in the interpretations made by the researcher, as the ways in which the raw data informed the research findings is clear.

Much of the literature surrounding the analysis of qualitative data strongly emphasises that analysis should be ongoing throughout the duration of a research project (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996; Gomm, 2004; Silverman, 2000). Indeed Gomm (2004) points out that researchers make the most important decisions regarding analysis of data by being analytically engaged with the research both during data collection and after data collection. Therefore, if this approach is adopted, the researcher can be more effective in gathering data, for example, by making decisions about the direction an interview will take during the interview or even being involved in what Gomm terms 'intuitive data processing' during the interview (ibid: 185). Moreover, as Silverman (2000: 119) argues analysing data continually throughout the research process overcomes issues such as playing 'catch up' by attempting to analyse all of the data towards the end of a project. In this research circumstances dictated that data was collected and analysed almost from the beginning of the project and then also throughout the project. For example, due to the requirement to produce reports for the partner organisation (the Wise Group) and the impending maternity leave of the researcher a large amount of data was gathered and analysed within the first six months of the project. However, it is important to revisit data and

this was certainly the case in this project as in order to produce the empirical chapters of this thesis the researcher was required to again examine and analyse the data.

As Crompton and Jones (1988) deliberate in their research, the decision to code or not is one that many researchers who have gathered qualitative data face. Mirroring Crompton and Jones's decision, the raw data collected in this research has been coded. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998) categorisation or coding of data is important as it makes raw data more manageable and ultimately categories have 'analytic power' in that it is possible to offer explanations and make predictions regarding categories. For example in this study the category or theme of 'the ideal employee' is developed from the interview data with employers regarding their skills demands (Chapter 7).

The analysis of the transcript data in this study involves thematic coding. According to Gomm (204) themes may either be apparent and suggest themselves through immersion in the transcript or may be inspired by previous work in this area, with both being the case in this doctoral research. Regardless of where the themes emerge from Gomm (2004: 189-190) suggests that it is then important to:

- Decide what the themes will be.
- Decide what will count as evidence of a theme.
- Code a transcript to indicate occurrences of themes.
- Proceed with analysis, drawing out commonalties in themes reported by different people, and how themes relate to one another.

Throughout these steps however it is essential to remember that, as Strauss and Corbin (1998: 101) point out coding is a 'dynamic and fluid process'. Although the sequential steps outlined by Gomm were utilised in analysing the focus group and interview data transcripts were not approached and examined by progressing through them from start to finish. Silverman (2000) highlights the danger of conducting analysis of transcripts by beginning at the start of the transcript and working through the document in a systematic manner. He argues that such an approach may be

problematic in that such analysis is very ad hoc. Rather, he suggests, a useful approach involves looking at the transcript data as a whole and identifying puzzles to be solved, working *'backwards and forwards'* through the transcript in an attempt to solve the puzzle (ibid: 131). Therefore it was a combination of Gomm's coding steps and Silverman's method of treating the transcript as holding the solution to puzzles that were employed by this researcher.

Another important issue in analysis of qualitative data is to have some understanding of how codes link to each other. Using Silverman's method working backwards and forwards through transcripts allowed links to be made between coded themes. Moreover, it is also useful to include non-verbal cues, such as nervousness of participants, hesitancy, nodding agreement, disagreement or anxiety. This non-verbal data adds meaning to transcript data and is important to include in analysis.

While making decisions about how to approach the transcript data is was also important to decide whether the research would be complemented by computer-assisted analysis of qualitative data (CAQDAS). There are many arguments for and against CAQDAS, indeed Kelle (1997) makes the cogent point that qualitative analysis of thousands of segments of text would be almost impossible without utilising computer aided analysis. However, it is important to note that the time and effort involved in learning how to operate qualitative analysis software may not be necessary if there is less data to analyse. Seale (2000) outlines some of the main advantages of utilising computers and software packages to aid analysis of qualitative data. He suggests that these advantages include speed (particularly when large amounts of data need to be analysed), added rigour, an aid to team research (for example consistency in coding) and improved sampling decisions, which can overcome issues of anecdotalism associated with qualitative research. He does point out however that following a computer assisted method of analysis is not always the best approach particularly for discourse analysis or conversation analysis where the amounts of data are usually relatively small.

There have been some doubts regarding the usefulness of software packages in analysing qualitative data. However, Kelle (1997) argues that the worries regarding the development of a new methodological orthodoxy resulting from the use of computers in the analysis of qualitative data is unfounded. However, he does recommend that software programmes such as NUD*IST, Nvivo and Ethnograph should not be referred to as data analysis tools but rather as data administration and archiving software. In this way the doubts about the usefulness of computer-assisted analysis of qualitative data may be minimised.

In this research the researcher conducted all of the interviews and focus groups personally, listened to them, then transcribed them and later read through them several times. Therefore, as outlined above the process of data analysis was already ongoing with the researcher becoming extremely familiar with the data, and indeed immersed in the data. Despite the obvious benefits in utilising a software package to aid analysis of data, such as NUD*IST or Nvivo, the scale of each section of the research meant that the amount of data was easily explored utilising the 'old fashioned' paper and pen method of systematic coding using coloured highlighters and margin notes. It was appropriate to weigh the positive and negative effects, in terms of time and efficiency between utilising computer software or the 'paper and pen method'. However, ultimately it was felt that it was appropriate, due to the scale of the research and the amount of data to be analysed, to utilise a familiar, tried and tested method rather than a new method.

The research data presented in the empirical chapters of this thesis draws upon patterns and themes that emerged through analysis of the raw data, and in many cases representative quotations are included in these chapters to highlight important points or elucidate further regarding the theme under discussion. As Crompton and Jones (1988: 74) point out presenting data in a coded way and discussing themes and topics in the empirical chapters allows all of the data collected to be represented in the findings. Then, as they suggest, the judicious use of selected quotations brings 'life and understanding' to the discussion.

However, it is important to note that with interview or focus group data there is the inevitable problem of 'selectivity'. Firstly as Miles and Huberman (1994: 56) argue 'what you "see" in a transcript is inescapably selective' and will ultimately depend upon such things as the researchers theoretical standpoint. Secondly, they further point out informants may operate selectively, either on purpose or not, regarding the information they provide or views they express. However, while this problem of selectivity must be recognised it does not negate the importance of transcript data in qualitative research.

Moreover it is important to note that analysis of data does not simply involve coding data, but rather moving from coding to interpreting data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996). In this piece of research it seemed that working with coded qualitative data aided interpretation of the information gained. Furthermore, in the analysis of qualitative data it is essential that the theoretical underpinnings of the study be utilised in order to make greater sense of the data and make connections between data (Silverman, 2000). Therefore in Chapter 10 of the thesis the connections between the data, informed by the theoretical approach to this study, are discussed fully.

With regard the survey data the number of surveys involved and their use, mostly as a device of triangulation and opportunity for 'reluctant' focus group participants to have a voice, in effect determined how they were to be analysed. It is important, as May (1997) rightly points out, that for statistical analysis of quantitative data to be legitimate data has to be recorded and analysed in a particular way. Therefore the data gathered by the survey method is not analysed statistically but rather is used to triangulate the focus group data, while also providing some useful background information on participants that was difficult to discover via the focus group method. Therefore, due to the scale of the survey and the intended use of the data, the survey data was analysed very informally utilising again the pen and paper method.

Having detailed the ways in which the data were analysed it is now important to address issues of validity, reliability and generalisability in this study.

6.7 Validity, reliability and generalisability

As Silverman (2005: 209) proposes when undertaking and reporting qualitative research it is vital to show 'methodological rigour' and this can be aided by addressing issues of validity, reliability and generalisability in social research. Yet it is important to note that, as Maxwell (2005) emphasises, validity is a 'goal' and is not guaranteed by the use of reliable methods, rather it is the evidence that the researcher uncovers that leads to valid conclusions. However, validity in particular, is related to the concept of 'truth' and often there is not one truth regarding social phenomena. Therefore it is important not to view validity as the 'Holy Grail' but rather aim to ensure that the conclusions reached in this research are clearly formed through an appropriate reading and analysis of the social phenomena.

Nonetheless it is important in any piece of research that validity, or the degree to which conclusions reached accurately represent the social phenomena being examined, is apparent, not least because this overcomes accusations of anecdotalism. Therefore at all points in the analysis of the data reasonable assumptions were made and appropriate conclusions were drawn. Silverman (2005: 213) does suggest that validity can be enhanced by approaching data analysis in quite practical ways, such as: approaching data critically in order to 'refute assumed relations between phenomena'; utilising the constant comparative method; comprehensive data treatment; analysis of deviant cases; and simple counting techniques or tabulations. In particular in this research an effort was made not to jump to conclusions, but rather find multiple sources of evidence for conclusions by constantly comparing evidence and attempting to incorporate all data into the findings, rather than purposively selecting data (to overcome anecdotalism), while also noting the frequency with which themes or issues appeared in the data. In this way an attempt was made to follows Silverman's advice and add to the validity of the research findings in this study. In particular, in the case of the data obtained from unemployed clients at the Wise Group the validity of much of the data obtained through the focus group method was crosschecked with the data obtained via the survey method.

While ensuring validity in research it is also incumbent upon the researcher to address issues of reliability in their work. Reliability in qualitative research expects that it is possible to reproduce the study and gain similar findings. However, this may be difficult as changes may occur over time and place leading to differences in outcomes. However, reliability also refers to consistency within a piece of research, in particular consistency in coding data (Silverman, 2005).

Moreover, Silverman (2001) argues that the reliability of interview data can be enhanced by audio recording the interview, following which the researcher should transcribe the interview in full and then utilise lengthy excerpts from these transcripts as evidence in the research report. He points out that transcripts offer an effective documentation of interaction, thus providing an accurate record of the research data and as such utilising transcripts enhances reliability. However the transcripts must record all of the data obtained, including pauses in conversation and even non-verbal data such as nodding agreement, displeasure or something said in an ironic tone or joking manner. Including non-verbal cues adds meaning to the data and should not be overlooked.

Following Silverman's (2001, 2005) advice the reliability of this study was aided by the use of interview guides, focus groups guides, also by producing field notes and by recording ongoing notes in a fieldwork diary and by audio recording and producing transcripts (where possible), including recording of non-verbal data, of interviews and focus groups. Furthermore the reliability of this study is enhanced by the addition of appendices at the end of the thesis where copies of the interview and focus group schedules used and a copy of the survey utilised can be found. Moreover, in order to increase reliability the researcher produced all transcripts and the use of lengthy excerpts from the data can be seen in the data chapters. Finally, all coding was conducted in a consistent manner.

Alongside validity and reliability, the generalisability of a study is important. In the quantitative tradition generalisability is usually achieved by adopting statistical sampling procedures, thus allowing inferences to be made regarding the wider

population and suggests representativeness of the sample (Silverman, 2001). However, it is important to note that, as Silverman (2001) suggests, for some qualitative researchers generalisability is not an aim, rather they value the descriptive value of the research itself. Yet, as Silverman (ibid) further argues, it is appropriate to generalise from qualitative data, however, if this is the aim then it is important that the population of the cases included in the study are representative of other cases. Indeed comparing the selected sample with the larger sample can ascertain representative regarding the population involved in the research.

It is accepted that the limitations of this study have consequences both in theoretical and practical terms. The former is related to the generalisability of the study. Firstly, it is argued that the samples of training organisations for the unemployed and employers involved in interactive service work involved in this doctoral research are typical and representative of other cases. Therefore the usefulness of these findings includes generalisability. However, with regard the unemployed job seekers it is important to note that the sample may not be representative of the unemployed population. Specifically the female sample was limited; it consisted mainly of women drawn from one training course at the Wise Group undertaking training for administration work, supplemented by a single additional female drawn from the NDYP group, the rest of whom were males. Therefore the female sample is potentially biased and the findings for female unemployed job seekers may not be generalisable to the broader female unemployed population. Secondly, a clear limitation of this research is that the research focused on training for work, the unemployed and employers skills demands in Glasgow. Therefore it would be useful to follow this research with further qualitative research involving unemployed individuals, training provision and employers in other cities.

More practically the research had to contend with limitations arsing from the accessibility of employers. The field work with employers was undertaken during a busy time of year for these employers with the result that fewer employers than might be desirable were able to participate in the research so that the employers' sample size was smaller than anticipated. However, although the samples involved in

this research were relatively small, a great deal of useful data was collected from all three sources, offering many insights and revelations into the perceptions of the three groups, namely, employers, training providers and the unemployed, that are valuable additions to existing work in this area.

Validity, reliability and generalisability need to be addressed if the researcher is aiming to produce research that is valuable and worthwhile. However, a very important issue that must be considered throughout any piece of research is the ethics of the study. It is appropriate therefore to now examine the ethical considerations involved in this study.

6.8 Ethical considerations

Ethics is a major consideration in any piece of research. Indeed the ESRC has recently announced a new 'Research Ethics Framework' for social science research. In order to ensure good practise and produce research of a high ethical standard the Council has identified several key principles that researchers should respect: integrity and quality should be paramount; participants should be fully informed regarding the uses of the research; confidentiality and anonymity should be ensured; research should be independent with no conflicts of interest; research participants should not suffer in any way because of the research; and finally participation in research should be voluntary and coercion must be avoided.

For this thesis the last two points are of particular importance. This researcher was keen to bear in mind the relative power individuals had over their involvement in this research. For the employers and the representatives of the training organisations the interviewees held the power as they had the choice to take part in the research or not. However, the research into the aesthetic labour training programme and the research with the unemployed clients, regarding perceptions of interactive service work and skills, involved the participation of clients of the Wise Group and their control over their involvement was quite different. It is important to state here that these

individuals had less power over their involvement in the research. With regard the research concerning the efficacy of the aesthetic skills training course the small number of participants who provided feedback to the researcher highlights that in many cases individuals did not want to take part and thus had power over their own decision. Yet it is important to note that those who did not take part were mainly individuals who had subsequently moved on from the Wise Group (although the low rate was also affected by the inability to contact individuals). However, those still with the Wise Group were encouraged by their trainer to take part and were given time out of their usual day to do so. In an attempt to ensure the participants had some control over their involvement in the research the researcher made great effort to inform participants that their participation and level of involvement was their decision prior to conducting any interviews. The researcher made similar efforts with the groups involved in the focus groups. Although these individuals were informed about the research and asked by their trainer if they objected to taking part the researcher made sure that prior to beginning the discussion individuals knew that if they were uncomfortable or did not want to take part they need not. On no occasion did anyone object to taking part, however, as is usual in focus group discussions, some individuals involved themselves more deeply in the discussion than others. The focus group method was in part chosen because of the option it offers participants, that is, they can be as involved or uninvolved as they desire. It is hoped that this choice of method makes the study of these 'powerless' or less powerful participants more ethical.

It is clear that the sample of employers interviewed is not representative of all interactive service sector employers and that the number of employers interviewed is small. Unfortunately the timing of this period of data collection impacted upon the numbers willing to take part. This period of research was over the busy Christmas season (November and December) and many employers contacted suggested that they were too busy to take part at that time. Nonetheless, despite the relatively small sample the qualitative data gained from these interviews is useful data in the study of interactive service sector employer's skills requirements. Yet one further possible weakness of this sample is that the majority of the organisations employed large

numbers of people. It would be interesting to examine any differences between employers of small or medium size organisations and larger organisations.

Similarly the research would have benefited from the inclusion of greater numbers of unemployed individuals, and unemployed individuals who are not clients at the Wise Group. The original aim had been to gain access to more individuals and for a longer time period, however the client's time at the training organisation was precious, they mostly adhered to a timetable and each hour was accounted for. Thus it was only possible to gain access to the groups for a short period of time and it was only possible to gain access to a few groups. Although the organisation were happy to provide contact details for ex-clients who could be approached and asked to participate in the research the researcher made the decision that this was not an appropriate method of gaining participants for the research. Ultimately it was also considered by the researcher that the training organisations commitment to the research had diminished due to changes in personnel and thus access to participants and commitment to the research was diminished.

Despite these limitations related to sampling and the representativeness of the data the research design utilised in this project has allowed an examination of a range of interconnected issues between the groups of individuals concerned and the researcher stands by the choice of methods used to generate data.

6.9 <u>Conclusions</u>

This chapter had detailed the methodological issues related to this thesis, both describing and justifying the theoretical underpinnings of the research, the research methods used and the method of data analysis employed. It is highlighted that a critical realist stance underpins the researchers approach to this research, thus allowing a focus on the structures and practices that impact upon social phenomena. Justification for adopting a qualitative approach to gathering and analysing the data utilised in this research is also presented, in particular pointing out that in new and

relatively unexplored areas of enquiry qualitative methods provide useful exploratory tools and methods of data analysis that can result in an in depth understanding of social phenomena. This chapter also outlined in detail the fieldwork conducted for this doctoral research, highlighting the practical issues associated with data collection and providing justification for the use of a variety of methods at different stages in the research. It is argued that each phase of research benefited from the particular methods employed, resulting in the collection of useful and worthwhile qualitative data. Following these more practical issues the issues of validity, reliability and generalisability of research are also highlighted, and it is argued that addressing these issues throughout the research process results in a study that has methodological rigour. Finally the ethical considerations important in this research are underlined, with, in particular, attention given to the good practice that needs to be adopted in order to produce research of a high ethical standard. Following these methodological considerations, therefore, it is now appropriate to discuss the findings of the research in detail. The following chapter therefore examines and presents the findings from the strand of research involving employers and their skills demands.

Chapter 7

The Skills Requirements of Employers in the
Interactive Service Sector in Glasgow: the Demand for Aesthetic Skills

7.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters of this thesis summarised and evaluated issues surrounding the labour market in Glasgow, the changing meaning of skill due to the shift to a service economy, and government policy to tackle exclusion from employment by focusing on developing skills in individuals to increase their employability. This literature highlights the shift in the nature of the economy and the resulting shift in the nature of much work. Moreover it was also argued that 'soft' skills, such as communication, social and interpersonal skills, are of heightened importance in an economy increasingly dominated by service work (Ashton et al., 1999; Grugulis, et al., 2004) Furthermore, Chapter 5 offered a detailed examination of the demand for and utilisation of aesthetic skills in interactive service work (Nickson, et al., 2001 and 2004, ScER, 2004; Warhurst et al., 2000, Warhurst and Nickson 2007). The aim of this chapter is to highlight the skills that are being demanded by employers in the retail and hospitality sectors in Glasgow for front line staff at the point of recruitment and selection. As Keep and Mayhew (1999) argue the 'personal characteristics or attributes' required in service work are often not formally demanded by employers yet they contribute to employability. It is therefore important to examine the importance of possessing and displaying aesthetic skills at the point of recruitment and selection in order to determine to what extent an individual's employability relies upon possession of these skills.

The interview data reported here was gathered from two sectors of service work, namely hospitality and retail. The focus was on employers' demands for interactive service employees, or front line staff, those employees who deal with customers face to face on a daily basis. These two sectors were chosen because it is argued that both

retail and hospitality work in Glasgow will continue to grow in the 'foreseeable future' and as such these 'growth sector industries ... will have an important role to play' in job creation (TERU, 1999: 3). Indeed it was expected that around 40,000 new jobs will be created in the retail and hospitality sectors up to 2006 (ScER, 2004). Moreover, in terms of job vacancies in April 2004 nearly 25 per cent of all job vacancies in Glasgow, totalling around 2,000 jobs, were in sales and customer service jobs (NOMIS online 2005).

As detailed in the Methodology Chapter this research involved conducting 12 semi-structured interviews with employers in the interactive service sector and two interviews with key informants. The employers interviewed were drawn from the retail sector, café and restaurants and the hotel sector, with a range of organisations offering distinct service styles included in order that the data would be from a diverse selection of interactive service sector employers. Importantly, the research involved organisations considered part of the style labour market and organisations outwith this labour market. As pointed out, many organisations involved in interactive service work appreciate and utilise the aesthetic skills of employees, not only those that can be considered style driven. As Nickson et al. (2001) and Warhurst and Nickson (2007) point out aesthetic skills are demanded by employers in the style labour market, encompassing organisations that are style led, and by employers in organisations outwith the style labour market, such as high street retailers and hotel groups. In this research the former organisations are referred to as 'style' organisations and the latter 'non-style' organisations. Due to the demonstration effect regarding the demand for aesthetic skills, highlighted by Warhurst and Nickson (2007), this research examines the demand for aesthetic skills in both 'style' and 'non-style' interactive service sector work in Glasgow. Moreover, the sample was equally balanced between the different service sectors. In each instance the manager or individual with responsibility for personnel was interviewed.

7.2 The importance of aesthetic skills to employers in the retail and hospitality industries in Glasgow

As noted earlier, a significant objective of this research is to assess the importance of aesthetic skills in applicants for the retail and hospitality sectors in Glasgow. It is important to determine the importance employers place on applicants possessing such skills at the point of recruitment and selection, as individuals lacking the skills demanded by employers at this point in the employment process will be unsuccessful in gaining employment. Importantly, research conducted on the unemployed in Glasgow has suggested that a large percentage of them perceive they do not have the 'appropriate skills and characteristics' needed for work in growth sectors such as hospitality and retail and that they express concern regarding employer prejudice towards the unemployed due to a lack of appropriate skills (TERU, 1999: 22). Moreover, Nickson et al. (2003) suggest that the demand for aesthetic skills is disadvantaging a large section of the population who lack these skills and are therefore denied access to this employment at the point of recruitment and selection. Indeed Warhurst and Nickson (2007: 116) argue that the demand for aesthetic skills can be associated with a 'new exclusionary potential' where discrimination on the basis of appearance occurs. Furthermore, Smith (2000) highlights that the unemployed often lack the skills required of service workers. Yet, as discussed, there are many employment opportunities in the growth sectors of retail and hospitality in Glasgow, and as such a clear understanding of employers' skills demands is required, partly in order to provide information such that those currently excluded may overcome this exclusion.

In order to examine employers demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service workers the interviews covered a variety of issues. Firstly employers were asked to describe their 'ideal' employee and to then describe the criteria they would use to judge how suitable an individual was for employment at the point of recruitment and selection and once they are actually employed. Employers were then asked to comment on whether they believed that it was possible to develop or enhance aesthetic skills in individuals through the process of training. The focus then shifted

to the level of importance employers place on potential employees' technical skills or work experience at the point of recruitment and selection. Following this employers were asked which methods of recruitment and selection they utilised to recruit employees involved in interactive service work. Finally employers were questioned regarding the availability of suitable employees for this work.

7.2.1 The 'ideal' employee

At the beginning of the interview each employer was asked to describe their 'ideal' employee for interactive service work in their organisation. There was a surprising amount of overlap in descriptions of the 'ideal' employee, regardless of industry type or style of establishment. In general, the employers suggested that their ideal employee is an individual who is keen to be involved in the service industry and who displays enthusiasm and commitment to customer service. Aesthetic skills are deemed to be integral to the ideal employee, as employers perceive they contribute to the customer service experienced by the customers. For example, the personnel manager of a chain retail store suggested that the ideal employees for their organisation are, 'lovely people who like serving and don't see anything wrong with that and yet who are genuinely pleasant, generally well spoken' (RM1).

Reflecting this comment the manager of a stylish boutique hotel highlighted that with regards an ideal employee what his establishment demands is:

> ...a confident personality and confident to be in the culture of the organisation...someone who takes pride in their own style. Whether that's sort of someone who's very smart or sort of funky and trendy...we wanted confidence and a bit of drive and enthusiasm for the product. (HM4)

Yet, while common themes suggested by the majority of employers included a commitment to service work, confidence, a good appearance and a nice manner individual employers expressed a preference for an ideal worker for their organisation, reflecting the importance of the style of the organisation. For example,

the manager of a café/bar that seeks to portray a stylish corporate image pointed out that an ideal interactive service worker in her organisation, 'would not be the traditional idea of a service worker, someone more individual. Mostly we employ young, lively, confident people.' (C/RM2) Indeed employers seemed very aware of the relationship between the particular style of their organisation and the style or image presented by their employees. This finding reflects Pettinger (2003) and Nickson et al. (2004) findings that the difference in corporate aesthetics in organisations is reflected in their preferences regarding the aesthetics of employees.

Furthermore, the difference between overtly stylish organisations and less style driven organisations demand for a particular aesthetic regarding employees was apparent in the data. For example interviewees representing the style organisations expressed demands for employees who are in terms of employees who are young, lively, funky, trendy and stylish (RM4, C/RM2, HM3, HM4). This language, used to describe ideal employees, points to the demand in these organisations for employees who display a particular aesthetic that fits with the service culture and overall style of the organisation. Employers from the non-style organisations were, however, less likely to mention 'style' and instead suggested that an ideal employees would be 'well presented' (RM1, RM2, HM1, HM2), thus highlighting the difference in both organisational aesthetic and appearance of employees between the style and non-style organisations. However, responses from all employers highlight that their idea of an ideal employee is someone who is well presented or stylish and well spoken and thus aural and visual elements of the individual are deemed integral to the ideal employee in both style and non-style organisations.

The majority of employers also suggested that the ideal employee is someone who is keen to be involved in the service industry and who displays enthusiasm and commitment to customer service. Employers suggested that this demand for employees who enjoy serving and who can display confidence is due, in part, to increasing levels of competition, which means that organisations have to compete for business though the quality of service delivered by front line employees. Increasingly, therefore, they suggest they are judged by the quality of their

employees. Therefore the employers seemed aware of the importance of the quality of service to organisational success.

Although employers were informed that this research was particularly concerned with the importance placed upon how interactive service sector employees 'look' and 'sound' this first topic regarding ideal employees was phrased in a very general manner and there was no explicit reference to aesthetic skills or appearance. Nonetheless the employers largely focused on three areas of importance, namely, confidence, a commitment to customer service, and the overall look and sound of employees regarding ideal employees. It is clearly a mix of these three components that, for the employers interviewed, comprise the ideal interactive service sector employee. This finding echoes ScER (2004) and Nickson et al.'s (2004) assertions that employee's attitudes and appearance are important to employers in the interactive service sector. Employers in this study appeared to be suggesting that employee's attitude, including their confidence and commitment to customer service, complements their physical appearance with both contributing to the 'ideal' employee.

7.2.2 The demand for aesthetic skills at the point of recruitment and selection

The research data highlighted the widespread demand for aesthetic skills during the processes of recruitment and selection, and underlined the importance placed by employers on potential employees displaying these skills at the point of entry to employment. With regard to the importance of aesthetic skills to employers at this point there were very similar demands made by employers across retail and hospitality, and within overtly stylish organisations to less stylish organisations. These findings reflect Hall's (1993a, 1993b) assertion that in much interactive service work, such as waitering, employees are required to give good service to customers by using their personality, their emotions and their body.

From the interview data it seems that employers assess potential employees regarding their appearance at the interview stage. As one hospitality personnel

manager suggested, 'It's not what clothes you're wearing [at interview], not designer stuff, because we provide the uniform. But what we have to think is once we've given you your uniform do we think your appearance will be presentable?'(HM4) Similarly, a restaurant manager commented that with regard to potential employees. 'If they look awful and sound awful then they would not be recruited in the first place... [they should be] ... well groomed, confident, genuinely interested in helping customers and able to do that'. (C/RM1)

Demands were similar in the retail sector as this personnel manager of a large retail chain store illustrates, '[Potential employees] need to be presentable, obviously got to be able to present yourself. Need to have a bit of confidence.' (RM2) And as another retail manager highlights, 'They [potential employees] have to be smart, to have made an effort. Tall, small, fat, thin, doesn't matter, but someone who does take pride in their appearance. Because they are representing the company.' (RM1)

However, criteria regarding appearance at the point of recruitment and selection were more explicit in some organisations. For example, the retail manager of a more style driven organisation suggested that, in part, criteria regarding the appearance of an individual was affected by the reality that once employed employees wear the retail stock, which stops at a ladies size 16. Therefore she has to, 'imagine what they are going to look like in the clothes, if they will be able to carry off the look and even if they can fit into the clothes. I mean that's important.' (RM3) This employers concern that employee were able to 'model' clothing stock meant that appearance criteria were quite stringent, particularly regarding dress size. This finding reflects Pettingers (2003) assertion that in clothing retail work branding is particularly important, with emphasis at the point of recruitment and selection placed on assessing the suitability of employees regarding modeling current stock. Potential employees' appearance and self presentation then is clearly judged at the point of recruitment and selection by employers, with more stringent criteria seeming to be placed on those seeking employment in style organisations, such as females who are size 16 or under, than the non-style organisations.

Employers also uniformly highlighted the importance of 'the smile' in interactive service work and suggested that potential employees need to be able to display their ability to smile at work during the recruitment and selection process. Interviewees suggested that the smile is a crucial element of good customer service and as such employees are expected to be able to display a smile in the majority of their interactions with customers. This demand for smiling employees suggests a demand for emotional labour also. As Hochschild (1993) notes employers demand skills related to the emotions of employees, yet the smile, as Witz et al. (2003) argue is represented physically and therefore the demand for smiling employees is a demand for both emotional and aesthetic labour. Indeed it is argued here that it is the physical display that represents the emotion that is demanded by employers, whether the feeling is real or not is of less concern to employers. Therefore it is the outward display or physical manifestation of emotion, the smile, which is important in this work.

Overall, employers in this study expressed their demand that potential employees possess and display aesthetic skills at the point of recruitment and selection. Interviewees referred to the importance of: appearance; style; image; personal presentation; confidence; grooming; attractiveness; 'looking right'; body size and weight; social skills such as communication skills; attitude; personality; and body language. However, expectation that potential employees possess aesthetic skills is not limited to visual aesthetics, aural aesthetics are also important to employers. This finding reflects Leidner's (1993) argument that both the visual and aural aesthetics of employees work is important in the interactive service sector and Hall's (1993a and 1993b) finding that the voice and body of employees is important in this work. For example, one hospitality manager noted the importance of accent and suggested that, 'being polite is quite crucial, not slang and not so colloquial that you can't understand it or that it's unprofessional' (HM1). However, employers did not expect potential employees to be 'particularly posh' (RM4), but there was an expectation that employees would be 'able to speak to customers politely' (C/RM3) and be 'fairly well spoken' (C/RM4). This demand for employees who display a particular aural aesthetic, in both style and non-style organisations, underlines Nickson et al's

(2001) assertion that it is not only an employee corporeality but also their voice and accent that are important to employers at the point of recruitment and selection, such that 'sounding right' is an important selection criteria.

However, particular accents were not deemed to be problematic and the majority of employers suggested that they happily employ Glaswegians for interactive service work. As a hotel manager highlighted, 'a Glasgow accent isn't a problem' (HM1). While the manager of a stylish up market restaurant pointed out with regard interactive service employees, 'We have quite a few foreigners. But em no you could be Glaswegian as long as you are fairly well spoken.' (C/RM1)

It is clear that employers include aural components in their descriptions of 'ideal employees' and with regard their expectations of potential employees at the point of recruitment and selection. Employers in this study clearly expressed a demand for employees who possess and display aesthetic skills, demanding interactive service sector employees who both 'look good and sound right' (Warhurst and Nickson, 2001). In this way employees are expected to be not only the 'face of the company' but also the 'voice of the company'. Yet the requirement for a well spoken Glaswegian may result in the exclusion of those who do not possess such an accent or those who habitually used colloquialisms and 'slang' language. In this case the demand for well spoken employees may operate as an exclusionary criteria regarding access to this work.

Moreover, the interviewee data concerning voice and accent also revealed another interesting finding. It seems that employers are aware of the performative nature of much interactive service work. The performative nature of this work is highlighted, for example, by Crang (1994) in his study of waiting staff, and in Van Maanen's (1990) influential study of Disney employees. Importantly, employers may be aware of the requirement to act at work, for example, as one hotel manageress pointed out: 'Staff do speak differently to each other, when they're on their breaks than they do on the phone or face to face with customers. It's a performance really, an act in front of customers' (HM4). According to another hotel manager employees in his

organisation were involved in acting in their role as interactive service workers, acting a certain way in front of customers and another way with fellow employees (HM2).

Interestingly, the interviewee data also revealed that while the majority of employers openly commented on their demands for aesthetic skills there were a few who remained uneasy about voicing their demands. For example, one hotel manager seemed slightly self-conscious regarding such demands:

> Embarrassed to say it, but yes you do have to look right. We don't just employ models here, not size ten and six foot tall. But you do have to look good, be presentable, clean and tidy, a contemporary look. Not too traditional ... we are trying to do something different from the chain hotels with this hotel so the staff reflects this image. (HM4)

Despite his unease regarding the organisation's demands this manager justifies them by implying that these demands are necessary for the overall image of the hotel. Similarly a restaurant manager suggested:

> It sounds terrible to say it but if they [potential employees] were not very well presented then we would not be inclined to hand out an application form, just because of the type of establishment this is, they have to be very well presented. (C/RM3)

However, it should be pointed out that both of these organisations are style driven, organisations where, as Nickson et al. (2001) point out, the demand for aesthetic skills is more prevalent. Therefore these employers' unease regarding their aesthetic skills demands may be due to the level of attention given to the aesthetic skills of employees and more stringent selection criteria according to the possession and display of aesthetic skills at the point of recruitment and selection

Why are aesthetic skills important?

It is important to consider why the employers interviewed in this study demand aesthetic skills. In the interviews employers were asked why it was important for front line employees to possess aesthetic skills at the point of recruitment and selection and then be able to display these skills at work. Typical comments from employers highlight the importance that employees reflect the overall image of the organisation. These skills are essential in employees, as one hotel manager points out:

> Because we are putting them in front of customers … and they've got to be very smart, very polite, very well mannered. And we've got to have people with those traits … I think that you've got to have confident, young, almost middle class people here who give the right image of [the organisation]. And that is the business we are in and I don't think it will ever change. And I don't think any hotelier in their right mind would disagree with that, that you go for the well mannered youngsters that are going to carry it off. (HM3)

This manager's preference for young, 'almost middle class' employees underlines Hancock and Tyler's (2000) assertion that social identity, which is formed by aspects such as an individual's social class, ethnicity, gender and age, are important in contemporary labour markets where the role of the body is central in the workplace. Furthermore as Nickson et al. (2003) and Warhurst and Nickson (2005) argue many of the aesthetic skills demanded by employers in the interactive service sector may be skills possessed by the middle classes, evidenced by the fact that employers, in the style labour market at least, draw upon the population of middle class younger people, particularly students, as they are perceived to possess the required skills for this work. Indeed later in the interview the manager noted that the majority of his front line staff are students, and his comment above indicates the perceived link between the required skills and social class. Indeed Keep and Mayhew (1999) also highlight the link between possession of aesthetic skills and class background. This demand for middle class employees for front line interactive service work, has as

Warhurst et al. (2004) point out, worrying implications for the reinforcement of class divides because, as Warhurst and Nickson (2005: 8) argue, '"middle-classness" becomes key in both getting and doing' interactive service work.

Clearly this demand for skills related to social class or background has implications in terms of access to work and a lack of required skills, many of which seem to be linked to 'middle classness', will affect the employability of working class individuals who lack these skills. In this way unemployed individuals from working class backgrounds may be missing the growth of opportunities in retail and hospitality work, and instead these positions are being filled by those from middle class backgrounds, including students. Yet, it is important to note that the employer who mentioned the requirement for middle class employees is representative of the more style driven organisations included in this study. Therefore, it is argued, his demands regarding aesthetic skills are likely to be more apparent and rigorous. Nonetheless many of the employers, both from style and non-style organisations, pointed out that they employ many students in front line service positions. Therefore, clearly the student population is a source of employees for many organisations involved in interactive service work, possibly due to the perceived possession of the required skills for this work by this population.

Importantly the demand for aesthetic skills seems, in part, to be driven by the link between the aesthetics displayed by employees and the image of the organisation employers aim to project. The general opinion of employers was that it is important that employees 'reflect the image' of the organisation and 'represent the company'. Employers place importance on employing individuals who look good and sound right, as these employees are integral to the overall image or style displayed by the organisation. Employees are viewed as part of the product offered by the organisation and thus they should reflect the quality of this product. Therefore employers are aware of the link between service quality, which includes the 'performance' of employees, and commercial success. Indeed, Warhurst et al. (2000) argue that employers demand aesthetic skills due to the perceived commercial utility of these skills. The performance of employees in the organisations utilised in this

thesis were intended to reflect the style of the organisation, and as Warhurst et al. (2000) argue, are deliberately intended to appeal to customers senses in order to improve the service encounter. As noted in the IRS Employment Trends (2000) the crucial reason that employers give for regulating the appearance of employees is the importance of 'image'. Moreover, as Mills (1951: 182) highlights, when the nature of work involves 'selling and servicing people' then the personal traits of employees have commercial relevance and indeed become 'commodities' in the 'personality market'. As argued previously the demand for personal traits is obviously not new, but as more and more work concerns selling and servicing people more and more work will require employees who have appropriate personal traits or soft skills such as aesthetic skills.

Yet it is important to note here that the interview data provided evidence of a demand for different styles of aesthetic, regarding employee's appearance, in different organisations. There was a demand for appropriate aesthetic skills in both style and non-style organisations, however, different organisations demanded different styles of aesthetic, for example, family oriented restaurants demanded less overtly stylish or 'trendy' employees, but rather preferred a more 'conservative look' (C/RM4). Yet, in the style driven organisations the demand was different, as one manager of a style hotel points out, potential employees were required to portray a 'contemporary look' that is 'not too traditional' because: 'We are trying to do something different from the chain hotels with this hotel so the staff reflects this image' (HM4). While the manageress of another boutique style hotel suggested the demand for employees who possess appropriate aesthetic skills reflected the style of the hotel: 'We are a very modern hotel and we want very modern people to work here' (HM3). Employers therefore require interactive service employees who reflect the particular 'style' of the organisation. For the style organisations the style was most usually described as non-traditional or modern, and therefore they demanded employees who were not 'traditional' service workers but were 'modern' (HM3), 'individual' (HM4) and 'stylish' (RM4). While for the non-style organisations aesthetic demands seemed to be less specific with the demand for 'presentable' (RM2) or 'smart' (RM1) employees.

The above findings chime with Nickson et al's (2003) assertion that different organisations have different aesthetic appeals, for example, the style of a restaurant in a boutique hotel and the fish and chip restaurant Harry Ramsden's. As employees are expected to reflect the overall aesthetic of the organisation it then follows that due to different organisational aesthetics there will be a demand for quite different personal aesthetics in employees. The demonstration effect highlighted by Warhurst and Nickson, (2007) regarding the demand for aesthetic skills underlines the less stringent but still present utilisation of employees' corporeality and embodied competencies in organisations outwith the style labour market. Therefore, the differences in required organisational aesthetic may result in the difference between the demands of employers in style organisations and non-style organisations in this research. With, as stated above, the demand for aesthetic skills more rigorous and apparent in style organisations than in non-style organisations.

Therefore the interviewee data provides evidence that employers place importance on the aesthetic skills of employees due to the link between the overall image or aesthetic of the organisation and the image presented by employees, and the resulting positive impact this has on commercial success. Yet, employers noted several other reasons for the demand for aesthetic skills. For example, one hotel manager suggested that the demand for a specific appearance or image presented by potential employees, which was included in their person specification at the point of recruitment and selection, was influenced by the perceived link between attractiveness and confidence. He suggested that more attractive people are more confident and that these are qualities that the hotel hoped to display, confidence and attractiveness. As he pointed out:

> [appearance and image] were important to us. I mean I would never say that we are either sexist or ageist. It is just a very contemporary look. It isn't the perfect figure or the perfect look. We went for just normal looking staff. But we had the philosophy, and unfortunately it is true, that the better looking a person is the more confidence they have. So that was part and parcel of the whole person specification. And it was at the forefront of it. You know it

wasn't just at the back of our mind. And that was relayed to all the managers. You know we have a lovely product here and we want confident people. The worst thing in the world is when you walk into a restaurant and you see old grannies with their sort of maid's uniforms on. We are a very modern hotel and we want very modern people to work here. (HM3)

Moreover employers also suggested that the possession of the appropriate aesthetic skills demanded by an organisation enhances employees' ability to conduct their work. As one restaurant manager points out: 'If employees know they look the part then they will feel comfortable and more capable of doing their job.' (C/RM1)

Furthermore, a few employers also expressed the view that it was vital that potential employees possessed appropriate aesthetic skills at the point of entry due to these employers inability to develop or enhance these skills once individuals were in their employment. For example, a personnel manager from a large retail chain pointed out:

> We can train and develop them [with regard technical skills associated with the job], but if they can't speak properly or they're not that bothered about their appearance no matter how much effort you spend [regarding training or development] they won't be able to do it [the job]. (RM2)

The evidence presented here highlights that regardless of the style of the organisation employers place great importance upon potential employees' possession and display of appropriate aesthetic skills at the point of recruitment and selection for employment in the interactive service sector in Glasgow. Moreover, the employers interviewed in this research were concerned about potential employees' personality, confidence and attitude towards service work, indeed these were all highly valued by employers. The demand from employers for employees who possess the right attitude and appearance appears to a result of employer's understandings of the link between business success and quality employees. As the results of a survey by Nickson et al. (2004) underline, over 90 per cent of employers involved in interactive service work suggest that the image and appearance of interactive service sector

employees adds to effective business. However, it is important to also examine the demand for aesthetic skills beyond the point of recruitment and selection.

7.2.3 The importance of aesthetic skills beyond the point of recruitment and selection

According to the employers interviewed in this research the aesthetic skills of employees continue to be of great importance beyond the point of recruitment and selection. Employers point out that alongside training for the technical aspects of work there is a focus on 'grooming' and 'self presentation' for employees. Indeed, the induction courses run by most employers include specific reference to standards regarding grooming and presentation and standards of dress. For example, the manager of a chain hotel drew attention to the induction process all new members of staff are required to progress through where there is a focus on the presentation and appearance of employees and the importance of adhering to uniform dress codes (HM2). Other employers also pointed out that they have in place rules or guidelines regarding appearance. For most employers these standards are detailed in the employee handbook where guidelines for employees clearly state the organisation's policy towards the appearance of employees. Indeed, for another large hotel group their 'image policy' is deemed a 'core skill' for employees. This manager points out that due to the importance of presenting the image of the hotel as prescribed in the employee handbook 'employees are made aware of the importance of our image policy in initial training and after this' (HM1).

Moreover, the aesthetics of individuals is obviously of ongoing importance for employees as the majority suggested that employees experience feedback regarding their appearance. Indeed most employers suggested that they would definitely enforce their standards regarding aesthetics, appearance and presentation, and employees are not allowed to ignore these standards. For example, in one retail organisation which traded on its stylish image management will, 'clamp down on the person and make sure they understand the standards we expect. I mean it just doesn't look right if the staff are not well groomed and wearing the correct uniform' (RM3).

Similarly, as the manager of one style hotel stated with regard enforcing appearance standards:

> Yes if they are not right, yes they will be pulled up on it. If they look bad enough, the guys are under no illusions, they would get sent back, no matter how much pressure we were under [in terms of staff shortages]. We have got set standards and if they don't adhere to them then they will get sent home and told to get changed. (HM4)

Furthermore, employers suggested that the standards that were in place not only benefited customers and employers but also positively impacted upon employees' experience of work. Maintaining the appearance standards was considered important in 'giving you confidence to deal with the customer' (C/RM1) and 'to fit in with the whole concept of the place and feel good about yourself' (HM3). As the manager of a large retail chain store pointed out with regard employees' appearance:

> We don't ask them to put on a particular colour of lipstick or whatever. But we do ask them to make the most of themselves, to wear a bit of make up and make sure their hair looks good. If they look good the customers will react to them better and then they will be able to enjoy their work more. So it benefits them as well. ... They need to look presentable and smart. If they don't they will be asked to go home. (RM2)

However, most employers reported that generally they do not have a problem with employees deviating from the organisations rules regarding appearance, suggesting that employees understand the appearance rules, accept them and are therefore very unlikely to deviate from these rules. As the regional manager of a large hotel chain points out: 'We recruit to that policy and therefore we don't have many problems with people adhering to these standards' (HM1). Also, as the manager of a stylish café illustrates with regard the appearance standards in their organisation:

They [employees] have to be smart and they have to have polished shoes and they have to be tidy. Their hair has to be tied up. The men have to be clean-shaven. Sensible jewellery. And if they do not adhere to these guidelines then we have to say. But it is quite amazing really because they know this is such a nice place and everybody does actually make an effort. So very rarely do you have to take someone aside and maybe say to them. (C/RM2)

The evidence suggested by employers indicates that they very rarely experience difficulties regarding employee's adherence to the rules or standards regarding appearance and presentation. This finding suggests that employees understand the standards expected of employees regarding appearance and presentation and are likely to adhere to these standards.

The evidence presented here underlines Nickson et al's (2001) assertion that aesthetic skills are not only significant to employers at the point of recruitment and selection but importantly are vital in carrying out the work effectively once in employment. Also employers, arguably, may not have much difficultly in ensuring adherence to their standards regarding appearance and grooming because, as Nickson et al. (2000) argue, through the processes of recruitment and selection employees are successfully screened for the possession of and ability to display suitable qualities.

7.2.4 Training aesthetic skills

Employers were asked if they believed training employees to develop appropriate aesthetic skills was possible and desirable. While most employers suggested that it is impossible to train or develop the 'right personality' and attitude towards interactive service work, they were confident that training in terms of an appreciation of the importance of appearance, grooming, voice and style could successfully produce employees who display the aesthetic skills they demand. The majority of employers pointed out that initial training in these areas by external organisations, such as training organisations for the unemployed, would benefit many potential employees and help employers.

However, there was a noted difference with regard training aesthetic skills between the non-style organisations and the style organisations. Many employers, particularly those from the non-style organisations, pointed out that they would welcome the provision of training for aesthetic skills being provided by training organisations for the unemployed. They suggested that individuals who had experience of such training would be in a better position to access work in their organisation if they were able to display an awareness of the importance of these skills at the point of recruitment and selection. Moreover, they suggested that they would be unable, due to limited resources, or reluctant, due to difficulties providing this training, to conduct specific training for aesthetic skills once employees are employed. With these employers there was a definite preference that employees displayed and possessed the appropriate aesthetic skills at the point of recruitment and selection. Yet majority of employers from the style organisations suggested that they would be willing to put in 'the time and effort' required to train 'the right person' in aesthetic skills suited to their particular workplace. For example one hotel manager suggested that his organisation delivered training regarding: 'how to wear the uniform...the grooming process. Yes we can train these kinds of things' (HM3). While a fashion retail manager pointed out that:

> Our training involves very much a focus on developing the girl's potential. You know, how well they could look in the uniform with the right accessories, hair and make up. Our training covers these aspects and it is considered very important. (RM3)

As Warhurst and Nickson (2007) point out, the soft skills required by employers in the interactive service sector, such as attitude and appearance, are recruited rather than trained. Yet, as they also point out, there is evidence that organisations do offer training with regard these skills, although the need for this training may be minimised due to the filtering process at the point of recruitment and selection.

The interview data suggest that most employers believe that training and developing aesthetic skills is both desirable and possible, with a preference reported, particularly by non-style organisations, that this training occurs at the pre-employment stage.

7.2.5 The importance of possessing technical skills or work experience at the point of recruitment and selection

From the interview data it seems clear that when recruiting front line employees who deal with customers, employers are emphatic in their opinion that potential employees should possess aesthetic skills rather than technical skills. A number of respondents suggested that one of the main reasons for this requirement is that they are confident in their organisations ability to train employees in technical skills. Indeed, employers expressed a preference to train employees to do things 'their way' with regard to the technical operations of the job. For example, one restaurant manager suggested that with regard the serving techniques or drink preparation skills employees 'might come with bad habits or not do things the way we like them done here' (C/RM1). While a hotel manager pointed out that, 'Practical skills were important for the job they would be doing. But if they didn't have them it was a case of training them up for it' (HM4). Having to train these practical skills was 'not a problem' for this manager. Similarly, another hotel manager suggested that:

> Experience is not always necessary; in a hotel like this fifty per cent of the job is all about the skills you need to do the job and fifty per cent is all about your attitude and personality. If you get the right per cent of the second half you can train the first half. It is very easy to do that. It's very easy to train a person how to pour a bottle of wine, or tell them about wine. So it's more important that they have the right attitude. (HM3)

However, the interview data also suggests that it is not only employers from the style organisations who express a preference for softer skills over technical skills and experience. The personnel manager of a non-style retail chain advised that 'appearance and attitude' (RM2) are much more important than technical ability at

the point of recruitment and selection. This view was reflected by employers from the hospitality sector with the personnel manager of a large hotel group pointing out that a recent change to their recruitment and section process had resulted in their interviewing procedures being 'all about behavioural aspects and appearance.' Furthermore, the employers interviewed in this study tended to agree that applicants for front line positions do not need to have previous work experience in that particular service industry. Employers did view previous customer service experience, in any sector of work, positively; however, it was not regarded as essential.

These findings underline employers in the interactive service sector's preference for the 'right personality' and the 'right appearance' rather than qualifications (ScER, 2004). The findings also underline Nickson et al's (2004) cogent point regarding employer's preference for employees who possess the appropriate soft skills of attitude and appearance rather than technical skills or previous experience of this work at the point of recruitment and selection. Like the employers interviewed in this study the employers from Nickson et al's study expressed that they then prefer to train the technical skills required for the job in-house. Moreover, the interviewee data also reflects the results of studies into the recruitment and selection criteria for call centre employment. Callaghan and Thompson (2002) found that in call centre work employers focus more on determining the social characteristics and competencies of potential employees than assessing their technical ability, while similarly Belt et al. (2002) found that social skills are more highly valued by employers than technical skills, previous work experience or qualifications in call centre work.

Overall then the employers interviewed expressed a preference for employees to posses the correct appearance, manner, attitude and personality, rather than technical skills or specific and related work experience. Moreover, the data highlights that the majority of employers are very reluctant to address aesthetic skills training in their training for employees. Interviewees expressed these views regardless of the industry or style of organisation they represented.

7.2.6 Methods of recruitment and selection of employees

The importance of aesthetic skills to employers was clearly underlined by their preferred methods of recruitment and selection. Employers in this study suggested they use referrals from Jobcentre Plus as a method to recruit skilled or professional staff, such as chefs or accountants, yet are unlikely to recruit front line employees using this source. Surprisingly newspaper advertising was considered unpopular as employers suggested this method did not allow them to attract the 'right kind of people' for the job, often resulting in an unsatisfactory 'quality' of applicant. A few of the style organisations however found that advertising in a particular newspaper, an up market quality newspaper, especially at busy times like over the festive season, was productive. This fact resonates with Nickson et al's (2001) finding that a boutique style hotel advertised for front line waiting staff in the Sunday Times as they expected the reader to be the kind of individual that would possess the skills they demanded.

Although referrals from Job Centre Plus and newspaper advertising were quite unpopular methods of recruiting front line staff interviewee suggested that more informal methods, such as advertising in the premises, were a more effective method of recruiting employees. Interviewees suggested that using these methods resulted in applications for employment from individuals who are better suited to the organisation as they are aware of the 'style' of the organisation. As one café manageress pointed out recruiting from the customer base through advertising on the premises resulted in 'applications from people who understand the style of the place because they frequent this café' (C/RM2). Indeed, this restaurant manageress pointed out that she recruits most of her employees in this way.

Another successful recruitment method is word of mouth recommendations from existing employees. It is argued that this method also results in applications for employment from individuals who have prior knowledge of the expectations regarding employees, due to pre-existing knowledge of the organisation, obtained via current employees. A restaurant manageress suggested that utilising word of mouth

recommendations enables her to recruit individuals who are 'a better fit of person for our organisation' (C/RM1)

Furthermore several of the employers request that potential employees provide a photograph alongside a completed application form for employment. Employer's reasons for requesting a photograph vary. The majority of employers point out that photographs are useful for security reasons or are used to aid identification of employees in organisations that employ many staff. However, a few of the employers from the style organisations suggested that they are used as a tool to help select employees based on 'how they look'. Interestingly, although a few employers pointed out that they do not ask for photographs with applications for employment they frequently receive them. Again this tended to be in the style organisations. This highlights that applicants for employment are aware of the importance of appearance at the point of recruitment and selection to these employers.

Moreover, while some employers do not ask for a photograph with application for employment they stated that they prefer to hand out applications for employment to applicants face to face thus allowing the employer to see the applicant prior to application. As one restaurant manager (C/RM1) noted, if someone walks in off the street to apply for a job and 'they look right' then they are given an application form to complete. However, 'if they were not well presented' they would not be offered an application form. Therefore although this establishment does not request photographs with application for employment clearly potential employees are judged in terms of their aesthetics at the point of application.

Moreover, the manager of a style hotel described a clear example of the demand for aesthetic skills during recruitment and selection, exemplified by the method of recruitment and selection. This manager had to recruit hundreds of employees in time for the hotel opening and found that he received thousands of applications for employment. He did not have the time to interview all applicants therefore he used the photographs he had requested with application forms to 'screen' applicants. Subsequently the completed applications forms were then used to again 'screen'

applicants. Applicants were being judged on their appearance, via the photograph and even via the application form which asked several questions relating to appearance and a person specification. As this hotel manager stated:

> We asked for pictures, we asked for height we asked for health, we asked for weight, etc. Just to get the right fit of people … It was a very difficult process that we had to go through and all of the people that we thought just didn't fit the person specification from their application form were discarded. (HM3)

The person specification was a detailed overview of the 'style' or 'type' of person who the hotel management believed to be their ideal employee, and importantly, this specification was relayed to all managers in order that they utilised this specification in their recruitment in order to ensure that the standards required of employees was consistent across the organisation.

Overall what seems to have emerged from this discussion around the preferred methods of recruitment and selection is that employers utilise the methods that allow them to efficiently and effectively recruit employees who are 'suited' to their organisation. This finding emphasises again that employers demand a close fit between the employee and the organisation. However, it is important to point out that the style organisations are more likely to utilise the more informal methods of recruitment and selection. Many of the non-style organisations tended to use advertising to recruit front line staff. However, these employers' demands regarding the display and possession of appropriate aesthetic skills were apparent at the point of recruitment and selection, where, as stated previously, a filtering process results in the employment of those individuals with the required soft skills of attitude and appearance.

7.2.7 The availability of suitable employees

The interviews emphasise that, in general, employers have difficulty in recruiting suitable employees, particularly front line employees. Employers also suggest that

they have particular difficulties recruiting full time staff and employees who want to pursue a career in the industry. Most employers pointed out that they believe there is currently a problematic perception of the retail and hospitality industries in that potential employees do not view this work as suitable for a long-term career. Interviewees suggest that there is a view of interactive service work as transient, with little opportunity to pursue a career in the industry. Moreover, several employers pointed out that negative perceptions towards 'serving' work also impact upon the availability of suitable employees. Therefore, several respondents noted, many of the organisations front line workers consist of students who work part-time and do not remain with the organisation long term. Many employers state that this situation is problematic for them and therefore they are keen to change negative perceptions of their industry in order to attract suitable full-time employees who are keen to pursue a career in the organisation. The perceptions of unemployed job seekers towards interactive service work is examined in detail in Chapter 9, however, it is worth noting here that research has indicated that interactive service work is unpopular with male unemployed job seekers, due to issues such as the skills required for this work, and the nature of 'serving' work, but also due to the quality of this employment (Lindsay and McQuaid, 2004; Nixon, 2005). It is interesting to note that none of the employers interviewed in this study mentioned the possibility that the negative perceptions of their industries were influenced by wage levels or work conditions and unsocial working hours often associated with much service work, rather blaming negative perceptions of work in their industry and overall negative perceptions of 'serving'.

As stated, due to difficulties recruiting suitable staff many of the organisations reported that very often students are employed in front line service positions. As one hotel manager sums up:

> We do employ students who work part time, but we do have difficulty getting full time staff who want to make this their career. There is a problem with how this industry is perceived. It's not seen as a proper job. I would like to change this. I think local people could make a successful career out of this

industry but we don't seem to be able to get them. And I can see this issue becoming more of a problem over the next few years. (HM4)

Similarly, the Director of Glasgow City Centre Partnership, who has great experience and knowledge regarding the recruitment difficulties employers in the city centre face, underlined that there is a problematic perception of service work as 'inferior or subservient serving work' among much of the population, particularly males (KI1). Therefore, he suggests, it is the student workforce who occupy many of the interactive service sector positions in the city centre. Moreover, reflecting the prevalence of students working part time, particularly in the style organisations, the manager of another style hotel underlines: 'It's mostly students who work the front of house here. And it works. The people that we have got are very good' (HM3). This manager clearly relied on the student workforce to obtain suitable front line staff. When this employer was asked if people other than students, for example, people moving from unemployment into employment, would make good front of house employees in his organisation he suggested 'only if they were the right fit for us', and further pointed out:

> Not being snobbish or anything, but we come under the area of Springburn Job Centre, and some of the applicants from there just don't fit. I mean I feel sorry for them but at the end of the day we've got to put them in front of the customers and they've got to be very smart, very polite, very well mannered. And we've got to have people with those traits. (HM3)

The inference here is that people from Springburn, an area to the north of the city which experiences problems regarding high unemployment and economic inactivity levels, would not be suitable front line employees. Therefore, as highlighted earlier employers, particularly those from style driven organisations, perceive that there is a link between being middle class or a student and the possession of appropriate skills for employment in their organisation. Consequently those considered to lack the required skills are excluded from this work. And therefore the growth of opportunities in retail and hospitality work, particularly in style driven organisations,

are denied to individuals from working class backgrounds due to a perceived lack of necessary skills.

The employers from the non-style organisations seemed to have difficulty recruiting suitable employees also and stated that they too employed many students in front line service positions. Indeed the regional manager of a large hotel chain (HM1) pointed out that their organisation was currently undertaking work in secondary schools to raise and enhance the profile of hotel work in order to make this an appealing choice of occupation for young people. This manager noted that there are 'serious problems' regarding how interactive service work in general is viewed in the UK, as opposed to other European countries and worldwide. It is these negative perceptions of serving work and a lack of knowledge regarding what is involved in this work that he suggests is problematic and makes it difficult for the industry to find a sufficient amount of suitable employees.

7.3 Conclusions

This chapter has sought to consider specifically what skills employers in the interactive service sector are demanding at the point of recruitment and selection while also offering some insight into employers notions of the ideal employee, employers views regarding the training of aesthetic skills, the relative importance of technical skills versus aesthetic skills and issues surrounding the methods used to recruit and select employees and the availability of suitable employees.

According to the interviewees the ideal employee for front line interactive service work displays commitment to customer service work, confidence and aesthetic skills. Employers' suggested that in a situation of increasing competition between organisations they focus on the contribution front line employees make to quality service. The research reported here underlines employers' demands for the right attitude and appearance. Reflecting the findings reported by Nickson et al. (2004) the employers interviewed suggested that it is not only employee's appearance that is

important but also their personality and attitude, and in particular employees' confidence and attitude to serving work.

Regarding employers' skills demands it is clear from the interviews that there is an ongoing demand for and utilisation of aesthetic skills in interactive service work in the organisations involved in this research, with a specific demand that these skills are displayed at the point of entry to employment. Employees are judged, regarding their suitability for work, at the point of entry with a focus on the possession and display of aesthetic skills. Thus the data strongly suggests that possessing and displaying aesthetic skills contributes to employability. As Nickson et al. (2001) point out, physical appearance is the most apparent manifestation of aesthetic labour, however, they argue, there is more to the concept than merely appearance. Many of the elements they consider to be important in work involving aesthetic labour were apparent in the demands expressed by employers in this study. Age, personality, voice, class, appearance, behaviour, accent, and corporealness were all regarded as important by the employers interviewed, both at the point of recruitment and selection and in the carrying out of work. Overall the research data revealed that employers from both style and non-style organisations are demanding employees with appropriate aesthetic skills. However, as suggested by Warhurst and Nickson (2007), the demand appeared to be more explicit, rigorous, and specific in the style organisations. The data suggests that employee's aesthetic skills are important to employers as employees reflect the image of the organisation.

Furthermore, the evidence presented here highlights the importance placed on aesthetic skills once employees are carrying out work in their organisation. While the employers suggested that they expect employees to maintain standards of appearance and image in work they reported that they did not have many difficulties with employees breaking rules and regulations regarding appearance and image.

The research data presented in this chapter also identified employers' preferences for employees who display appropriate aesthetic skills and attitude at the point of recruitment and selection rather than employees with technical skill and work

experience. Employers reported that they were confident in their ability to train the technical skills needed to carry out the work, but were less confident regarding their ability to develop the attitude and appearance standards they demand. Moreover, employers suggested that although it is impossible to train individuals to have the right personality and attitude towards service work, they were confident that training aesthetic skills in individuals is both desirable and possible. However, they suggested a preference that employees present themselves at the point of recruitment and selection with these aesthetic skills in place. This implies that the aesthetic skills training needs of individuals should be addressed prior to seeking employment. Indeed several employers suggested that it would be both beneficial for their organisation, and the sector in general, if training initiatives offered training for the unemployed which focuses on developing the clients' aesthetic skills.

It has also been argued in this chapter that employers often use quite informal methods of recruiting interactive service employees. Advertising 'in-house' and word of mouth recommendations were popular methods as they ensured the right fit of employee for the establishment. A further interesting finding was the reported difficulties employers have in recruiting suitable employees for interactive service positions. Many of the employers employed students on a part time basis but suggested that they would prefer more full time employees who would pursue a career within the organisation. Employers in style and non-style organisations blamed their difficulties in finding employees on poor perceptions regarding service work, and in particular, on negative perceptions of serving.

One outcome, apparent from the interviews, of this increasing demand for soft skills related to appearance and attitude concerns who is being employed in this work and who is excluded from this work. As Nickson et al. (2003) and Warhurst and Nickson (2005) cogently argue the skills employers in the interactive service sector demand, specifically aesthetic skills, may be related to class background, with those from the middle classes and students in particular possessing and displaying the required skills. As Nickson et al. (ibid) point out and as highlighted in this chapter the student population are a vital source of employees for interactive service sector work and

their presence in this work may be resulting in a displacement effect such that unemployed individual who could be accessing the growth of opportunities in the retail and hospitality sector are excluded from this employment due to a perceived lack of required skills. Therefore it is vital to understand the skills requirements of employers in this work in order to attempt to provide solutions to exclusion from this work.

Whether soft skills, such as aesthetic skills can be classified as skills in the traditional sense or not it is clear that possession of the right attitude and the right appearance contributes to employability. The demand for these skills also has implications regarding skill formation systems. Therefore it is important to determine the focus of training provision for the unemployed for work in the interactive service sector to determine if this training is geared towards employers' skills demands. This is the focus of the following chapter.

Chapter 8

Training Provision for Interactive Service Work
for the Unemployed in Glasgow

8.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter the skills demanded by employers in the interactive service sector in Glasgow were examined. This highlighted that there is a demand for soft skills, including aesthetic skills, by employers, and that potential employees should possess and display these skills at the point of recruitment and selection. However, it is clear that some sections of the population may not posses these skills. Therefore, this chapter is concerned with assessing the availability of apposite skills training for the unemployed to meet the skills demands of these employers. As discussed in Chapter 5 the government is keen to address unemployment by providing training to enhance individuals' employability, and to address skills deficits in the unemployed. Therefore, it is important that training initiatives positively impact upon the employability of individuals by offering training that is geared towards labour market demands, and specifically, employer's skills demands. It is argued that if training policies are 'properly integrated with other economic policies and adjusted to labour demand of enterprises, raising skill levels can not only increase hiring of disadvantaged groups but also raise labour productivity' (Silver and Wilkinson, 1995: 290). It follows then that training provision may impact not only at the individual level, by enhancing employability, but also at the national level. However, the role of training organisations for the unemployed to successfully overcome some of the barriers to employment in individuals may not be fully effective if training courses are not addressing the skills needs of employers or the unemployed. Consequently, in the Glasgow context, it is important to examine the focus of training provision for employment in the growth sectors of the service sector, in particular, training to develop the skills employers in the retail and hospitality sectors are demanding.

As stated previously, while it is not clear to what extent aesthetic skills lend themselves to being developed in individuals through traditional methods of skill attainment, such as through VET, it is important to recognise that employability is determined, in part, upon possession of these skills. Belt and Richardson (2005) point to the existence of pre-employment training for the unemployed for service work yet comment that there is a lack of research examining the effectiveness of these initiatives. Belt and Richardson partly address this gap by examining call centre training for the unemployed, while evidence presented in this chapter assesses the efficacy of a pre-employment training programme aimed at addressing the development of aesthetic skills.

The first half of this chapter considers the focus of training provision for the unemployed for interactive service work in the retail and hospitality industries by examining interview data from training providers, key personnel from several local economic development agencies and Scottish Enterprise. Moreover, in the second half of the chapter the efficacy of the aesthetic skills training programme for the unemployed is examined utilising interview data from course participants and the course trainer, along with observational data.

8.2 The focus of training provision for the unemployed in Glasgow

Glasgow has undergone huge changes in the labour market over the last few decades. The shift in the economy experienced at a UK level and in Scotland is clearly apparent in Glasgow, with the city being described as an 'exemplar' of previously industrial based cities attempts to transform themselves and reinvent themselves as 'post-industrial' service centres (Warhurst and Nickson, 2001). Following the decline in manufacturing and heavy industries there has been a huge growth in service work. Nonetheless Glasgow suffers from a plethora of social and economic problems. not least a high unemployment rate and very high economic inactivity rates. Indeed Glasgow is the most deprived council area in Scotland (SLIMS. 2003). Moreover. despite the growth in service work and a buoyant labour market there are urban areas

in Glasgow were high unemployment levels occur alongside difficulties of recruitment and job retention in the service sector (Shuttleworth and McKinstry, 2001).

As discussed in Chapter 5 the UK government has attempted to overcome unemployment by increasing the employability of the unemployed, yet, as is argued in this thesis, they utilise a fairly narrow supply side definition of employability. In this way government policy focuses on the individual factors of employability and it is therefore unsurprising that there is an abundance of training organisations and economic development agencies across Glasgow offering training for the unemployed through initiatives such as the New Deal, the Modern Apprenticeship Scheme, Training for Work, Skillseekers, Employment Zone and Action Teams. While some of these organisations offer only one or two specific training courses the majority of training organisations and training initiatives offer a very broad range of training courses. For example the unemployed can access training in areas as diverse as forklift truck operation and care work. However, there is much overlap between organisations with different organisations offering the same or very similar training, in part due to the focus placed on training that results in a qualification that is accredited according to industry specifications. For example, the desired outcome of much training is the acquisition of SVQ's.

With regard to the extent of training offered for service work there is an abundance of training offered for care work and call centre work. Where an organisation offers service work training this training most usually involves care or call centre training courses. The training providers interviewed cited several reasons for the focus on these areas. Firstly, they suggest these are the areas where there is a demand for employees from employers. For example, the majority of interviewees suggested that there is a great demand from employees for call centre employees. Indeed as the training manager of one organisation pointed out 'There is a great demand [from employers] for people with the appropriate IT and people skills that are required in call centre work. Therefore we offer onsite training and have our own call centre training section that is increasing in size.' (TP1) This demand from employers is

unsurprising considering the growth of call centre work in Glasgow. Indeed call centre work is considered a growth industry in Scotland with around 46,000 call center jobs in Scotland in 2000 (Warhurst and Lockyer, 2001). Similarly the opportunities to work in care work in Glasgow are growing and as such employers are seeking potential employees via training organisations. Thus it is clear that there is a demand from employers for call centre and care work employees, and that many employers utilise training organisations to aid recruitment of these employees.

Secondly, interviewees suggest that there is a demand for call centre and care work training from the unemployed clients. According to the interviewees many of their clients are keen to take part in this training and are keen to pursue employment in call centre work and care work. For example the training manager of one organisation suggests that there is a 'great demand for call centre training due to the opportunities in Glasgow for this work' (TP9), while another interviewee highlights that job opportunities in both 'call centres and care work, like nursing homes, attracts people to training for this work.' (TP6) Yet another training manager pointed out that training for care work has increased due to the 'professionalisation of care brought about by the impact of the Care Commission, which has resulted in an expansion of this provision in Glasgow and thus a demand for more and more qualified individuals to enter this employment.' (TP3) Moreover, she argues: 'This area of work [care work] is perceived as more attractive by the clients, and employment in this area is perceived as better than service work such as retail or hospitality or even call centre work.' (TP3)

Thirdly, training providers point out that their training courses benefit from existing links between the training organisation and employers from call centre organisations and those involved in care work. Interviewees point out that these links have led to the development of work placement opportunities for clients, a factor which, they argue, enhances the quality of the training they offer. The interviewees further highlight that gaining a work placement is a factor that positively contributes to the overall job outcomes of the training, with individuals who have secured a work placement being more likely to then progress to employment, either with the

employer they experienced the work placement with or with another employer. The positive impact of close links between employers and training provision and the utility of work placements is underlined by this statement from a training coordinator: 'A big part of our success is that we work with local employers and offer work experience in a "real work environment". That helps the training course no end, and it's a tried and tested method.' (TP8)

Finally, many of the interviewees stated that the successful outcomes of call centre and care work training courses is high, with around 60-70 per cent of clients who participate in these areas of training moving into employment. As one interviewee argues, the high success rates associated with training for call centre and care work results in the training being labeled 'effective' (TP11) and thus the organisation is able to 'achieve further funding and ongoing support for these courses because effectiveness is measured in terms of creating successful job outcomes'. (TP11)

Thus, from the evidence presented above, there appears to be some degree of fit between employer demand, demand from the unemployed and training provision for call centre and care work training. However, despite the extent of training provision for care work and call centre work there is very little evidence of training provision for employment in retail and hospitality. Although care work and call centre work are undoubtedly growth areas of employment in Glasgow the retail and hospitality industries have expanded and are expected to continue growing. As Warhurst and Lockyer (2001) point out one in ten jobs in Scotland are in a shop, and the distribution, hotel and catering and repairs sector is one of the largest in Scotland. Moreover, almost one quarter of all job vacancies in Glasgow are in sales and customer service jobs (NOMIS online, 2004). A few training organisations do offer hospitality training programmes but interviewees suggested that the number of clients who progress through these courses is small and the demand from employers is low. Yet Glasgow is the third most popular UK city destination with a resulting increase in customer facing hospitality jobs (TERU, 1999). Indeed the 'Glasgow: Scotland with Style' campaign in 2004 highlights attempts to market Glasgow as a vibrant dynamic location that has successfully transformed into a 'post-industrial'

city. Furthermore, despite Glasgow's reputation as a retail centre second only to London in the UK (Experian 1998 cited in TERU, 1999), there is little evidence of retail training for the unemployed in Glasgow. One organisation did have a retail training section in place when the research was initiated, however, this training was not offered when a second contact was made in order to examine the nature and extent of this training.

Examination of the research data regarding training provision for the retail and hospitality sectors offered to the unemployed in Glasgow suggests that there was little training offered for these sectors and where it was in place it was not geared towards the skill demands of the employers in these industries as identified by employers interviewed in this study and highlighted by the work of Nickson et al. (2001), Warhurst and Nickson (2001) and ScER (2004). There is a serious issue, related to the demand for aesthetic skills, concerning who is being employed in growth areas of employment in Glasgow. Nickson et al. (2003: 194) point out that employers in the style labour market are drawing upon 'younger people from middle-class suburban areas, especially students' as they are perceived to have the necessary skills for this interactive service work. Thus groups of individuals, those from working class, often inner city areas, are being overlooked as potential labour in the 'new' economy of services in Glasgow. It is therefore appropriate to examine why there is very little retail and hospitality training and why the skills demanded by employers are not being incorporated into training provision for these areas.

8.3 Why there is very little training for interactive service work

It is important to note that the attempt by government to increase skill levels and increase employability is occurring in the context of a great deal of debate regarding the skills that are needed for much work today. As Crouch (2004) argues skill formation systems may function less effectively during periods of sectoral change. Moreover, he points out that there is less certainty regarding the skills required for work in the services now dominating the global economy. Also, as Lindsay and

McQuaid (2004) contend, while policy makers view the growth of the service sector as an opportunity for employment creation that may well reduce unemployment levels there is evidence of high unemployment existing alongside problems of recruitment and retention in the service sector.

Clearly then the growth of the service sector has associated problems regarding recruitment and retention and, on the skill formation side, uncertainty regarding the skills required for work. As argued above there is little training provision for the unemployed in Glasgow for retail and hospitality work, and the training that is in place is not particularly geared towards the skill demands of employers. From the research data it is clear that there are three main reasons for the lack of appropriate training provision for retail and hospitality employment. The first concerns the poor success rate of such training, the second the lack of demand from the unemployed for this training and the third appears to be a lack of understanding in training organisations regarding the skills demanded by employers in much service work.

8.3.1 The poor success rates of retail and hospitality training – as measured by job outcome rates

Across the training organisations there was one constant reported by all interviewees: the poor job outcomes associated with retail and hospitality training courses. Essentially the success rate of clients gaining employment following a period of training for retail or hospitality work is very low. As a result of these low job outcome levels many of the organisations have scaled down this training or indeed withdrawn these courses altogether. For example, in 2000 a large and very successful training organisation operated a service sector training division within which clients were offered retail training and hospitality training. However, the retail training ceased in 2001 and by 2004 the hospitality training had also ceased and now this organisation will only offer hospitality training if approached by an employer requesting specific training. For example, the training organisation was asked to provide a tailored training programme for hospitality employees that an employer required for the opening of a large hotel in the city. The training course developed by

the organisation offered hospitality training, a work placement with the employer and a guaranteed job upon completion of the training course. Disappointingly, however, the training manager of this organisation reported that despite the guaranteed job outcome upon completion of the training, 'overall only about 25 per cent of the trainees moved into employment in the hotel.' (TP2) This result appears to be indicative of the low job success rate associated with much retail and hospitality training in Glasgow.

Reflecting the poor job outcomes levels for training courses for interactive service work the training manager of another organisation reported that the job outcome level for customer service training did not compare favourably with the almost one hundred percent job outcome level achieved by their manufacturing training course. Furthermore, due to the poor job outcomes this organisation had experienced with retail and hospitality training specifically this organisation no longer offers any training for this work. As the training manager underlines: 'If you compare the outcomes for these two types of training then it is clear that the manufacturing course is doing something right, the outcomes are high, almost perfect, but the outcomes for retail and hospitality just could not compare. Our success rates were so low [for the retail and hospitality training] that we did not pursue funding in order to offer this training.' (TP14)

An important point highlighted by several interviewees is that the success of training courses is often dependent upon the level of involvement of employers, who are likely to both inform the content of the training and provide work placements. Yet there is little evidence of joint working between employers from the retail and hospitality industries in Glasgow and the training organisations interviewed in this research. This comment by one training coordinator reflects the statements made by many of the other interviewees: 'We just don't have the links with the employers out there, you know they don't approach us and it's hard to get them involved and maybe take clients for work placements.' (TP12) This is unlike the training courses offered for call centre work and care work where it was clear from training providers that there were well established and favorable links with employers, which the training

providers feel contributed to the superior outcomes associated with this training. As stated in the previous section training providers are aware of the positive outcomes associated with better links between employers and their organisations, and indeed recognise that these links are one of the reasons call centre and care work training is relatively successful. Indeed, the training providers interviewed suggested that all training benefits from the involvement of potential employers in, for example, developing appropriate training and providing work placement. However, it was apparent from the research data that these links were not well developed with regard to retail or hospitality employment, and employers did not have any input regarding the content of training courses, apart from the rather unique situation reported above where one employer requested a tailored training course to aid their recruitment of many staff for a hotel opening.

Interviewees suggest that another factor influencing the job outcome levels for retail and hospitality training concerns the quality of the jobs being offered to the unemployed clients. The data highlights that even upon completion of training clients are offered jobs with poor pay, conditions and long hours, and resultantly, the interviewees argue, clients are less likely to accept this employment. For example, one training manager points out: 'The quality of the jobs they [the clients] get offered are really poorly paid kind of entry level positions, and they really are looking for something a bit better in order to make it worth their while coming off benefits.' (TP13) Moreover, several of the interviewees also suggest there is a discrepancy between the type of service job position that employers seek to fill via the training organisations and the type of service job the unemployed clients hope to attain. For example, interviewees suggest that employers are offering clients work placements or employment in areas of hospitality such as room attendant or kitchen porter while the unemployed who do express an interest in hospitality are keen to move into reception work or front line positions, such as waitering or waitressing work. Therefore it is argued here that this discrepancy between the positions employers are offering the clients and the positions the clients are willing to accept employment in adversely affects the success levels of retail and hospitality training, which in turn contributes to the lack of training provision offered in these areas.

Furthermore, the interviewees highlighted that there is a perception disparity regarding service work that influences the job outcome level of training. Several training personnel pointed out that some clients put themselves forward for retail or hospitality training without having an understanding of what this work entails. For example, one training manager suggested that 'some clients believe service work is one thing and the reality is it is another' (TP2). He further suggested that of the small number of clients who do put themselves forward for customer service training for retail or hospitality work many are attracted to what they perceive to be an 'easy option'. He pointed out that upon discovering what customer service work actually entails many clients withdraw from the training:

> ... this client who was initially interested in training for hospitality work who refused to remove her piercings and modify her appearance, as would be expected in the industry she said she was interested in working in. She then asked to change training course to call centre training where she would not have to change herself [visually at least] in any way. (TP2)

Therefore some courses suffer from high drop out rates as trainees discover the realities of the work they have expressed an interest in. This lack of understanding on the clients' part is obviously problematic for the training provider.

It is argued here that overall the poor success rates of retail and hospitality training, caused by factors such as lack of employer involvement in the training, the quality of jobs offered upon completion of training and a lack of understanding of what this work entails, contribute to the lack of training provision for retail and hospitality work in the organisations included in this research.

8.3.2 Lack of demand from unemployed for retail and hospitality training

The research highlights that another reason for the lack of training provision for the retail and hospitality sectors is a lack of demand for this training from the unemployed. Overall interviewees from the training organisations reported that

generally clients are not interested in training for areas such as retail and hospitality work, with several reasons cited for this situation. It is important to note here that the findings presented in this chapter refer to training provider's views of the factors that influence their client's choice of training and preferred job. The views of the unemployed clients themselves, regarding their perceptions of customer service work, are presented in the following chapter.

Firstly, interviewees suggest that wages, job conditions and job security are the factors which unemployed clients perceive as important when determining potential areas of employment, and significantly, clients perceive hospitality and retail work to be associated with poor wages and conditions, little job security and few opportunities for career progression. As pointed out in the previous section the quality and nature of employment offered to clients upon completion of training is often perceived negatively by clients and therefore, as training providers suggest, clients refuse this work and therefore these perceptions influence the success rate of the training. However, the research also highlights that, according to training providers, the perceived quality of retail and hospitality employment prior to training impacts upon the level of demand for this training. The research highlights that clients expressing a preference for service sector work often opt for training for call centre work, which they believe compares favorably in terms of pay and conditions compared to retail and hospitality work. Indeed, one training manager argued that the hospitality industry may be suffering because many of his clients '... view call centre work as being a better quality job, [than hospitality jobs], which pays more, offers a better working environment, more regular hours and some job security.'(TP7) Overall interviewees argue that the quality of work in retail and hospitality influences clients' decisions regarding the training course they access. This finding underlines other work that highlights that much work in the service sector is characterised by low pay and part time work and is often temporary in nature (Danson, 2005; Nolan and Slater, 2003; Warhurst et al., 2005). Moreover, the interviewee's opinion that unemployed clients seek job security and a 'better quality job' reflects the work of Byrne (1999) and Smith (2000) who draw attention to the importance of job security and wage levels that make employment a credible option

compared to welfare. Similarly Atkinson (1998) argues that the quality of employment, in particular remuneration and work conditions, are particularly important in determining whether employment can overcome exclusion. Therefore, according to the interviewees, client's perceptions of retail and hospitality work as low pay, poor quality, insecure and temporary in nature results in a lack of demand for this training.

Secondly, the research highlights that training managers believe clients are uncomfortable with the idea of working with the public on a day-to-day basis. As one key informant puts it, 'clients are not equipped to, and do not feel comfortable enough to work in the service sector.' (TPKI4) As argued in the previous chapter employers in the service sector demand confident employees and according to another training manager many clients do not have 'the confidence to deal with people on a day to day basis'. (TP4) Moreover, interviewees also suggest that there is little demand for retail or hospitality training from unemployed clients as the clients themselves believe they do not possess the skills employers are looking for and thus do not put themselves forward for this training. As another training manager pointed out:

> Many of these individuals, they don't see themselves as being particularly good with people, certainly not customers. They don't think they have the ability to deal with customers, particularly if it was a customer complaint situation. (TP2)

This finding echoes the results of a study of unemployed individuals in Glasgow that discovered that many of them believe they do not posses the skills and characteristics required for hospitality and retail employment, and consequently they self select away from this work and effectively exclude themselves from this type of employment (TERU, 1999). Moreover, Lindsay (2005) also argues that a 'real or perceived lack of interpersonal skills' required for work such as retail and hospitality work results in unemployed job seekers excluding themselves from these occupations. It is unsurprising therefore that there is little demand for retail or

hospitality training from the unemployed clients, despite the reality that these are growth areas of employment in Glasgow.

According to training providers a third factor that impacts upon the lack of demand for retail and hospitality training from the unemployed is the widespread perception among clients that service work has a low status among the population. Several of the training managers suggest that unemployed clients also view serving work, including retail and hospitality serving work, as being low status work. In particular, they point out, the status of such work is particularly low among male clients. As one training manager suggests: 'Young men in particular just will not put themselves forward for this kind of training [retail or hospitality training] because I think they still think of it as female work, you know serving and waiting tables that kind of thing.' (TP6) This finding is to be expected considering previous work on this area. For example, McDowell has drawn attention to the nature of much work in the service sector requiring social attributes that are 'an affront' to males 'sense of themselves as masculine' (2004: 49). Nixon (2005) also discovered that the unemployed males in his study indicated strong preferences for work they deemed to be masculine, and rejected interactive service work as they deemed this to be feminine work. There appears therefore to be a link between the status particular jobs are deemed to possess and the perceived masculinity or femininity of the work, as gauged by the unemployed clients. Thus the perceived low status of serving work impacts upon the demand for training from the unemployed clients in this study.

A few of the interviewees also suggest that there is a further factor that impacts upon the demand for retail and hospitality training by their unemployed clients, namely the 'filtering process' that the unemployed go through prior to placement with the training organisation. These interviewees argue that very few clients are referred to their organisations for retail or hospitality training in the first instance. They suggest that decisions are made, by professionals other than the training managers, regarding an individual's suitability for particular training and ability to gain employment in certain areas prior to the client's referral to the training organisation. For example, one key informant (TPKI2) points out that many clients are referred for warehousing

work as they are judged to be lacking the necessary skills for customer facing service work, and therefore warehousing work is perceived to be a better option for them. Importantly this decision regarding appropriate training for the individual is made before clients reach the training organisation. Emphasising the problematic nature of these judgments one training manager (TP4) also points out that clients are being judged on their pre-training abilities rather than for the skills they may be capable of developing through training in his organisation. However he suggests, once a client is referred for a particular course it is very difficult to change this even if that client may be well suited to retail or hospitality work, for example.

A final factor that is highlighted by interviewees as impacting upon the demand from the unemployed clients for retail and hospitality training is that clients appear to have a lack of awareness regarding growth areas of employment and where the employment opportunities are in Glasgow. One training manager pointed out that clients have little understanding regarding the sectors where employment opportunities are to be found and that therefore her job 'might need to include a focus on persuading unemployed clients to broaden their career ideas' (TP3); while another training manager suggested that increasingly his job remit is to:

> Educate the unemployed regarding the employment opportunities out there and the realities of the labour market at present. Where the real areas of growth are. Find out where the real growths are occurring, not just concentrate on the areas we see all the hype about. (TP7)

This interviewees comment highlights that there is not only a lack of knowledge regarding the labour market and skills demanded by employers in the unemployed client group but also by those involved in developing and delivering training.

It is argued here that, according to training providers, there are several reasons for the lack of demand for retail and hospitality training from unemployed jobs seekers including: perceptions of the quality of retail and hospitality work; a perceived lack of skills; the perception of service work as low status, 'female' work; the filtering

process through which clients are placed on training courses: and a lack of awareness, on the clients part, regarding the growth of opportunities in retail and hospitality work. It is important to note, however, that these are the views expressed by training providers regarding their client's perceptions. Research examining the perceptions of unemployed job seekers regarding interactive service work, training and skills is examined in detail in the following chapter.

8.3.3 A lack of understanding in many training organisations regarding the skills demanded by employers in much service work

It was highlighted in the previous chapter that the employers interviewed in this study reported that they have difficulties in recruiting the 'right' employees and expressed a demand that potential employees have aesthetic skills in place at the point of entry to employment. Resultantly, there is scope for training organisations to bridge the gap between the skills deficit in groups of unemployed people and the skill demands of employers. However, according to the interview data it appears that a number of personnel in training organisations do not fully understand the skills demands of employers in the service sector and further, may not understand where the job opportunities are. This lack of understanding impacts upon the employability of clients because, as Lindsay and Sturgeon (2003) suggest, employability is not only linked to skills but also to an awareness of job opportunities. The nature of the labour market in Glasgow, as that in other cities, is ever changing, and the extent to which it is understood by those attempting to provide an appropriately skilled workforce may be in some doubt. As the senior director of an economic development agency based in Glasgow advises, 'Organisations, such as us, do not understand the labour market at present, let alone any future demands or needs it is likely to develop.'(TPKI1)

More specifically, across the training organisations involved in this research there was little awareness of the demand for 'soft' skills or aesthetic skills by employers and the content of training courses reflected this, with issues such as self-presentation merely comprising a very small component of some customer service training. As one training manager illustrates:

We do address presentation skills within some courses, but this is only a small element of the training. We look at [in the training] technical competency and issues such as food hygiene and safety at work, but yeah we do cover personal appearance to a certain extent. (TP10)

This training manager is referring to training for retail and hospitality work in a major out of town retail centre. While she appeared to highlight the importance of technical skills training she seemed to underestimate the importance of training for soft skills, including aesthetic skills, pointing out that training for these skills is focussed on less than training for technical skills.

Moreover, while several interviewees accepted that employers demand qualities such as 'looking good' and 'sounding right' in employees involved in customer service work they underlined that developing an awareness of this demand or indeed attempting to provide apposite training had not been their role to date. As one training manager points out: 'Offering or including training for presentation skills or people to people skills is not part of our training remit.' (TP13)

Yet several of the interviewees did point out that highlighting the importance of personal presentation is an element that is covered by most training courses, particularly for those where the work involves interaction with customers. However, this element of the training is covered very briefly alongside other 'key' areas such as health and safety, attendance and time keeping. For example one interviewee pointed out that training with regard personal presentation skills is included in their training for service work yet comprises only one half day session in an eight week course (TP4). Underlining this lack of attention to developing personal presentation skills another training manager indicated that clients do not receive in depth training with regard personal presentation skills as: 'there is just not the time to do this, there is a lot to get through in the course in the time we have them [the unemployed clients] with us.' (TP9) These interviewees' responses seem to emphasise that there is a lack of understanding in many training organisations regarding the importance

employers place on employees possessing appropriate interactive service sector skills, such as social and aesthetic skills, and therefore little attention is given to developing these skills through training. This lack of understanding regarding employer's demands is problematic because, as argued in Chapter 3, there is much evidence underlining the importance of soft skills in service work (Belt et al. 2002; Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Hall, 1993a, 1993b; Hochschild 1983; Keep and Mayhew, 1999; Leidner, 1993; Taylor, 1998). Further, as argued in Chapter 4, there is a specific demand from employers involved in retail and hospitality work in Glasgow for employees who possess aesthetic skills (Nickson et al. 2001). Moreover, the evidence presented in the preceding chapter emphasises the demand for aesthetic skills and competencies to be displayed by potential employees at the point of recruitment and selection for employment in interactive service work in Glasgow. Therefore possession of these skills clearly impacts upon employability and consequently should be an issue that is addressed in training courses aimed at increasing the employability of unemployed clients.

The lack of understanding in training organisations regarding the demand for social and aesthetic skills is clearly problematic, yet may not be unique. As highlighted previously, Crouch (2004) stresses that skill formation systems are most effective when demands regarding skills are stable and less effective when there is less certainty regarding skills demands due to sectoral change. As argued, the UK has undergone a sectoral shift and as such there is uncertainty regarding skills demands. This uncertainty may impact upon the effectiveness of systems of skill formations, such as government training for the unemployed. As McGregor and McConnachie (1995) point out training initiatives in the 1980s suffered from a lack of awareness of the skills needs of local employers, while vocational training programmes in the 1990s similarly suffered from an ongoing lack of awareness of employers' recruitment and training needs. Equally further research also points out that training providers may not be addressing the lack of skills in the unemployed that are apposite for employment in growth areas, such as retail and hospitality work (TERU, 1999). There is also evidence that training providers may lack a comprehensive understanding of employers' skills demands. Belt and Richardson (2005) argue that

in the case of the pre-employment call centre training initiative they examined employers demanded social skills and a basic technical ability for employment while the training providers emphasised the importance of developing IT skills. Belt and Richardson argue therefore that in this case the soft skills mismatch remained unresolved and consequently advise that there is a need for greater and more effective communication between training providers and employers in order that training providers understand the skills demands of employers.

The lack of understanding in training organisations regarding the skills demands of employers in interactive service work clearly influences the availability of suitable training for this work. Moreover, more generally there was little evidence that training providers viewed the growth areas of retail and hospitality in Glasgow as areas that could offer employment opportunities to clients and this may have influenced training provision.

Furthermore, the majority of training offered by the organisations is qualification driven focusing on the client working towards and acquiring qualifications such as N/SVQs. Yet, as pointed out in the previous chapter, the employers interviewed in this study suggest that possession of such qualifications is not a prerequisite for employment in front of house positions in their organisations. Indeed, there is evidence, as argued in the previous chapter, that employers in the retail and hospitality sectors of the service sector are increasingly demanding non-technical skills at the point of recruitment and selection. Furthermore a study by Sianesi (2003) assessing the individual wage gain of possessing a qualification concludes that there in fact negative wage returns for the possession of apprenticeship qualification and lower level vocational qualifications such as N/SVQ Level 1 and 2. In particular, this study found, this negative effect is stronger when these qualifications are obtained through Government training initiatives. Sianesi's research proposes that attaining such qualifications via this route could result in individuals being perceived in a negative light by potential employers or 'that the skills acquired are not tailored to the requirements of firms and the labour market.' (ibid: 14)

Overall, there was little evidence of training for retail and hospitality work available to the unemployed in Glasgow. The research indicates that there are three main reasons for this, the poor job outcomes associated with the existing training, a lack of demand from the unemployed for this training and a lack of understanding regarding the realities of the labour market and employers skills demands by training organisations. An interviewee with many years experience developing and providing training for the unemployed in Glasgow believes that previously unemployed individuals are capable of pursuing a career in growth areas of the service sector, such as retail and hospitality. Therefore, he considers, the lack of suitable training for such work as problematic for both the unemployed and employers in Glasgow. He further argues however, that there is a soft skills deficit in many individuals who are attempting to gain access to employment or who are actually in employment and thus, unemployed clients going through training for employment would benefit from an effort to develop their soft skills, including aesthetic skills and competences. He points out that 'it is difficult to train soft skills, but necessary, and doing that [successfully training soft skills] would be an enormous step forward regarding addressing the needs of the unemployed and employers in Glasgow' (TPKI1). However, as evidence reported in the previous chapter suggests pre-employment training should address the demand from employers that aside from soft skills potential employees should display confidence and hold a positive view of serving work. This mix of social and aesthetic skills, confidence and positive attitude to the work appear to be the criteria that employers use to select suitable employees and as such pre-employment training initiatives need to be both aware of these demands and subsequently incorporate them into training for retail and hospitality work.

Analysis of the evidence draws attention to the three main reasons behind the lack of suitable training for the retail and hospitality sectors in the organisations included in this research. It is clear that despite the opportunities for employment in these growth industries the success rates of training for this work are poor (a factor that affects the number of training courses offered for these areas), there is a lack of demand from the unemployed clients for such training, and also there is a lack of understanding in many training organisations regarding the skills demands of employers in these

industries. However, one specific pre-employment training course was developed with the aim of equipping clients with the necessary skills for work in retail and hospitality employment, focusing on the skills demands of employers in these industries. As Belt and Richardson (2005) point out, academic research suffers from a dearth of work examining pre-employment training initiatives, particularly training for service sector employment. There now follows a review of this training course.

8.4 A review of the efficacy of the aesthetic skills training programme

The omission of training for the unemployed that addresses the skills demanded by employers in interactive service work, in particular aesthetic skills and competencies, was addressed by the Wise Group in 2000. The training course offered by the Wise Group was developed in collaboration with a research team from the University of Strathclyde. It was initially intended that after an assessment of the pilot training course this training would run continuously, with provision expanded across the country. While this outcome was not achieved, with the course being withdrawn after only several months, it is nonetheless important to assess the efficacy of this pilot training course.

The aim of the training course was to enable individuals so far excluded from employment in interactive service work to develop an appreciation for and understanding of the skills and competencies that employers from this work are looking for at the point of recruitment and selection. Secondly, it was hoped that the training would not only enhance individuals' employability at the point of recruitment and selection, but also enhance their capacity to sustain that employment and even progress within this type of work. The Wise Group considered this training to be pertinent in Glasgow due to the growth of interactive service work and the reality that as the study by TERU (1999: 22) found 'a sizable proportion of the unemployed do not believe that they have the appropriate skills and characteristics to secure employments in growth sector industries' and in effect, exclude themselves from growth industries in the Glasgow economy. This training was viewed as a route

through which the unemployed clients could enhance their ability to gain employment in interactive service work.

The general objectives of the training were stated to be:

- To improve presentation skills of trainees
- To build confidence level of trainees
- To enhance perception of trainees
- To boost motivation of trainees

'Presentation skills' referred to the trainees' ability to present themselves for employment with an emphasis on how employers judge potential employees appearance at the point of recruitment and selection. It was also considered important to build the confidence of trainees as the Wise Group clients are either unemployed or long term unemployed and it was believed they might lack confidence regarding their ability to gain employment and a general lack of confidence in dealing with other people. It was also considered important that trainees received an opportunity to enhance their perception of themselves and of their suitability for work, while also informing them regarding the realities of much work in the interactive service sector, where an employee's appearance and attitude are important. Finally it was hoped that upon completion of the training course trainees would have improved motivation to gain employment and have greater confidence in their ability to successfully present themselves for employment.

Although the training course literature did not specifically mention the objective of developing an appreciation of skills and characteristics needed for interactive service work it was expected that trainees would develop their awareness of and appreciation of the aesthetic skills demanded by these employers by covering the following topics in the course:

- what do aesthetics mean?
- role play techniques

- presentation skills

- breathing, posture and stretching exercises

- self esteem

- self presentation and good grooming.

The participants for the initial aesthetic skills training course were recruited from existing Wise Group clients from various departments, and it is important to note that these individuals were not necessarily seeking employment in the service sector. There were approximately ten participants in the group and the group was balanced in terms of gender composition, and also comprised a wide age range. Subsequent versions of the course were then offered to clients who were seeking employment in either hospitality or retail employment. Three more courses were conducted, however, it is important to note that these subsequent versions were shortened in length and had fewer participants. The majority of the data used to inform this chapter is drawn from research involving participants from the initial training course.

The feedback from participants of the training course highlighted several issues. Firstly several outcomes of the training were noted, including an increase in confidence among the group, an understanding of the performative nature of much work in the interactive service sector, the importance of personal appearance in work where there is interaction with customers and an understanding of some of the skill demands of employers in the interactive service sector. However, the research data also drew attention to elements that participants felt the course lacked. The chapter now moves on to examine in detail each of the outcomes reported by the participants.

Firstly, feedback from participants suggested that the training course was effective in increasing their confidence, one of the main objectives of the training course. Generally the participants pointed out that while they may have lacked confidence in their ability to find employment and in their ability to interact with customers and fellow employees at work prior to the training they reported an increase in confidence levels due to their participation on this course. One participant suggested that a highlight of the course was 'confidence building. I got used to dealing with

people again. This is important because I need to deal with customers again' (TCP1). While another participant pointed out that the 'the group work, the socialness of the course' (TCP2) helped to build her confidence regarding interactions with other people. The course succeeded in developing confidence in part because of the participant centred approach it utilised. As one participant pointed out 'letting you come out and take part at your own time' (TCP3) was important and valuable. Overall the participant's articulated that the course encouraged them to think positively about themselves, as one interviewee summed up 'basically it taught us to like ourselves.' (TCP3) As stated, one of the main objectives of the course was to build confidence levels in the participants and the trainer understood this objective. She pointed out:

> The skills I was trying to transfer were mainly confidence and self-esteem. I think hotels and that want to train themselves. And every hotel does things differently. So I think the confidence was the basic thing and afterwards they [the participants] could build on that. As a trainer I was trying to transfer confidence and self esteem. People skills as well. Being able to see yourself as an equal to everyone else in the room.... I think the people and confidence skills are needed for a base, for a foundation. I think the rest of it is just icing on the cake. But the basic, you've got to know that you're up to it. Believe that you're up to it. (CT)

Secondly, the research data highlighted that the performative nature of much work in interactive service sector employment was addressed by the content of the course. For example participants were involved in role playing exercises, received the opportunity to choose, rehearse and record a song together, focused on posture and breathing exercises and took part in a presentation to the group named 'Be someone else for the day'. Including these elements as integral to the training highlights that the course sought to develop an appreciation for and understanding of the importance of performance and self-presentation at work. Further, the participants almost unanimously suggested that the highlights of the course were the performance and presentation elements of the training and the majority of participants took part

enthusiastically in the training exercises. One participant summed up the feelings expressed by most participants: 'the role-playing. I was nervous at first but just switched on a front and put on a mask and just did it.' (TCP4) Although many of the group were uncomfortable initially with these types of exercises as the course progressed they gained more confidence in their ability to 'perform'. Moreover, several of the trainees pointed out that concentrating on performance and role-playing was a good technique to aid their preparation for interviews.

Thirdly, it was important to determine if the participants and the trainer believed first of all if it was possible to develop an awareness of the importance of aspects such as personal appearance at work and how to deal with customers and secondly if the participants had developed this awareness and an ability to present their aesthetic skills through their participation on the course. Most participants and the trainer pointed out that it is possible to develop an awareness of personal appearance and presentation that enhances interaction with customers and indeed overall the participants suggested that they were much more aware of the importance of these aspects of work following the training. As one male participant pointed out: 'I know how to behave differently at work. I mean I still speak in a kind of monotone but I am more aware of it now and try not to.' (TCP4) Similarly, highlighting the gap between non employment and employment regarding confidence and self presentation one female participant who progressed to work as a receptionist suggested: 'After not working for a long time you forget how to dress, how to deal with people on a day-to-day basis. The course helps with that kind of thing.' (TCP1) And as one male trainee who had gained retail employment upon completion of the course sums up:

> I realise that personal appearance is important, I didn't bother before but now at work I do. I mean I still wear my biker jacket and that but not while at work. I need to look right and my voice is important. I think I have developed an awareness of these things in myself and that they are important in work. (TCP3)

However, although the participants seemed to recognise the importance of appearance and voice at work, and had made efforts to display this at work, the trainer was not able to say whether this was a result of participation in the training course. As she pointed out: 'I did not know them [the participants] before the course so I couldn't say on any difference pre and post course.' (CT) This statement highlights the difficulties in measuring outcomes from this type of training. Usually trainers only have contact with the participants for the duration of the course, and in this case that was for two weeks. However, although the trainer was unable to comment on any development regarding trainee's understandings of the importance of appearance and voice at work the trainees themselves responded that the training course had enhanced their appreciation of the importance of appearance and voice at work.

Analysis of the research data highlights that both the trainer and the participants understood to some extent the aspects of employees that are important to employers in the interactive service sector. When asked about the importance of 'looking good' or sounding right' at work both the trainer and the participants made the connection between working with people and the importance of looking good and sounding right. As the trainer points out: 'I think looking good and sounding right are important anywhere where you are working with people. Whether it's your colleagues at work or the general public. They are definitely important.' (CT) Similarly participants pointed out that looking good and sounding right is important in 'all jobs where you have contact with people' (TCP4), and that 'you know how to speak to different people that come in, it's service' (TCP1). Some participants also recognised the importance of the impression employee's offer of the organisation: 'These things are important in every job. Particularly when you are working with people. Because you're the first person that they [customers] see and they're going to make an impression of you the first time they see you'. (TCP2)

Overall participants pointed out that upon completion of the training course they had a greater awareness of employer's demands for employees who look and sound right in interactive service work. While the evidence from this research highlights that

training has an impact on developing individuals awareness of the importance of aesthetic skills it is important to note that it has been argued that aesthetic skills are related to social characteristics such as gender, age, class and ethnicity and as such may not be amenable to change through training (Pettinger, 2003). Yet even if it is not possible to develop aesthetic skills through training the research evidence from the Wise Group study underlines that training can enhance employability by facilitating the development of existing skills and characteristics that individuals possess and by highlighting their usefulness in the labour market.

Following on from the above point Smith (2000: 319) points out that attempts to integrate the unemployed into the labour market by focusing on attaining new skills may not be effective as the skills the unemployed 'lack are more often not those acquired through education or training but those related to the forms of conduct and dispositions required in service sector employment'. However, the outcomes of the training offered by the Wise Group emphasises that employability may be enhanced through the development of an awareness of the conduct and dispositions required by employers. Whether the unemployed, or indeed any individuals, are attracted to work that requires a disposition for service work is another matter and is related to the issues discussed in Chapter 4 concerning the implications of the demand for such skills and to issues around perceptions of service work and the quality of much of that employment.

Overall participants were positive about the usefulness of the training course offered by the Wise Group. However, the participants did stress that generally the training course would have benefited from the inclusion of an opportunity to participate in mock interviews for service sector employment and the chance to experience more one to one time with the trainer. Moreover, more specifically, many of the participants suggested that the training course should have involved more training on grooming and personal presentation skills. In addition there was also a view that meeting or visiting potential employers would be beneficial as it would allow them to familiarise themselves with the kind of establishments they would be seeking employment in. Furthermore, participants of the shortened version of the original

two-week training course described the course as being a 'crash course' and the majority argued that the course was so short in duration that they feel they did not benefit fully from the training. However, despite these few criticisms and suggestions the majority of participants enjoyed the training and believed it had enhanced their understanding of the realities of interactive service work. Indeed several of these trainees had since moved into employment, many in the retail or hospitality sector and the trainer suggested that participation in the aesthetic skills training course had contributed to their success in gaining this employment.

The initial aim of this strand of research was to track the Wise Group training course, to assess the efficacy of the training programme in terms of the extent to which the training can develop aesthetic skills in participants. This would have involved examining the outcomes of the training regarding participant's recruitment and selection experiences, job tenure and career trajectory in order to assess how their employability had been affected by participation in the training programme. It was originally anticipated that the training programme would progress from being a pilot programme, with provision expanded across the country. However, the training programme was withdrawn after only a few months. It is suggested that this withdrawal of the training course was the result of two factors. Firstly, staffing changes occurred at the Wise Group that resulted in the member of staff who had overseen the devolvement of the training course moving to employment outwith the Wise Group. This departure resulted in the organisations commitment to this course being reduced. Secondly, the aesthetic skills training course received very negative media coverage from a tabloid newspaper in Glasgow, which, as a senior Wise Group employee later informed the researcher, impacted upon the organisations subsequent decision not to proceed with the development of the aesthetic skills training. Therefore due to the withdrawal of the training programme one of the original objectives of the research had to be altered. As only a very small number of trainees actually progressed through the course and into employment in the retail and hospitality sectors, with no follow up research conducted on their subsequent experiences in the labour market, it is not possible to offer any insight into the

employability and employment sustainability of participants following participation in this training.

Nonetheless the pilot version of the training course was successful in meeting its aims. The research underlines that participants grew in confidence, developed a greater awareness of aesthetic skills and an ability to utilise them in work, and also gained an insight into the performative nature of much interactive service work. These findings highlight that such training may be an effective way of preparing those lacking the skills and knowledge to access interactive service work for this employment. Therefore, it is argued, pre-employment training focusing on the development of soft skills can enhance access to interactive service work. As Belt (2003: 17) argues, upon completion of a pre-employment call centre training course trainees 'accepted that they would need to change the way in which they presented themselves verbally, visually and in written form, in order to get a job' in call centre work. Similarly participants who undertook the aesthetic skills training course developed a better understanding of the need to focus on their appearance and voice in order to access retail or hospitality work.

8.5 Conclusions

The aim of this chapter has been to assess the availability of apposite skills training for the unemployed that meets the skills demands of employers in interactive service work in the retail and hospitality sectors in Glasgow. It is important that training initiatives positively impact upon the employability of individuals by offering training that is geared towards labour market demands, and specifically, employer's skills demands. Smith (2000: 322) argues that the success of welfare to work programmes, such as training for work initiatives, will ultimately be determined by both the economic incentives to work and importantly the 'quality of the jobs'. While is it extremely important to highlight these issues, particularly the poor quality of much work in the service sector and understand that much needs to be done to enhance the employment conditions of this work, it must also be recognised that at

present government policy is committed to supply side measures of increasing employability and enhancing skills to overcome exclusion from employment. Therefore, in a restructuring economy, it is important to understand employers' skills demands and to ensure this information is used to enhance the success of government initiatives, such as the plethora of training courses for the unemployed. In this way training organisations for the unemployed will be better equipped to offer appropriate training specifically geared towards the development of skills apposite for much work in the growth sector industries of retail and hospitality. As McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) argue, employability is dependant upon a plethora of factors, and that while policy repeatedly focuses on attributes of the individual and the responsibilities of the individual regarding employability, external factors such as the effectiveness of training provision, impact greatly upon individuals employability. As such it is essential that training provision for the unemployed is effective.

The interview evidence highlights that training provision for interactive service work for the unemployed in Glasgow focuses on training for call centre or care work. Training providers suggest that there is a demand for this training both from employers and unemployed job seekers, resulting in a number of organisations offering this training. Moreover, training providers suggest this training is very apparent, as there are high job outcome levels associated with this training, due in part to the enhanced quality of this training as a result of employer involvement. However, the interview evidence from training providers suggested that there are very few training courses for retail and hospitality work offered to the unemployed in Glasgow, and that, specifically, where such training does exist it is not geared towards employer's skills demands. The data suggests that there are three main reasons for this: the poor job outcome levels of previous and existing courses for retail and hospitality; the lack of demand from the unemployed client group for this training; and a lack of understanding regarding the skills demanded by employers in these sectors.

The poor success rate, as measured by job outcomes, of much retail and hospitality training is obviously problematic and evidence suggests success rates are influenced

by several factors. Firstly success rates are linked to the effectiveness of training and the evidence suggests that the success of training depends upon joint working and greater employer input in the development and implementation of training. Indeed, training personnel seemed to be united in their view that the success of training courses is greatly influenced by employer input, both in developing the training course and in providing work placements. Yet, there is little employer involvement in training for retail and hospitality work. Therefore the poor job outcomes suffered by retail and hospitality courses could be addressed in part by greater involvement from employers regarding these courses, and thus putting in place training courses that are specifically geared towards the skills demands of employers in the growth sector industries of retail and hospitality. However, the quality of employment offered upon completion of training is another factor that influences training success rates, and as such it is clear that even very effective training does not guarantee job outcomes if the employment offered is perceived to be poor quality and thus this employment is not taken up by the unemployed. Moreover, it is apparent that the success rates of retail and hospitality training courses is affected by the high drop out rate from these courses, which, it is argued, is caused clients lack of understanding regarding the realities of interactive service work,

Moreover, the interview evidence underlines that there is little training for retail and hospitality work due to a lack of demand for this training from unemployed job seekers. It is suggested that there are several reasons for this lack of demand. Firstly it is apparent that the quality of employment offered for retail and hospitality work is a factor that, according to training providers, puts off unemployed clients, with the majority of clients suggesting a preference for call centre work or work outwith the interactive service sector. Moreover, according to the training providers, unemployed job seekers appear to be self selecting away from retail and hospitality occupations due a perceived lack of appropriate skills, a view of serving work as low status or 'female' work, and a lack of awareness of job opportunities in the growth areas of retail and hospitality. Additionally, it is argued that alongside self-selection away from these occupations, judgements regarding client's suitability for this work are

often made prior to allocation of training. In this way some clients are effectively excluded from training for interactive service jobs.

In addition, the interview evidence highlights that there is very little appropriate training for interactive service work in the retail and hospitality sectors due to a lack of understanding in many training organisations regarding the skills demanded by employers in this work. Therefore, it is argued, training organisations would benefit from a better understanding of the realties of the labour market and employers skills demands. The research revealed that training providers did not appreciate the growth of opportunities in the retail and hospitality sectors that would provide employment opportunities for their clients. Moreover, the majority of training providers seemed to lack an appreciation of the importance of soft skills, including aesthetic skills, to employers in this work. As Belt and Richardson (2005) argue, training providers do not fully understand the skills demanded by call centre employers at the point of recruitment and selection and similarly the evidence here emphasises that training providers do not appreciate the demand for soft skills, including aesthetic skills, for interactive service work in the retail and hospitality sectors. While the training providers accepted that aesthetic skills are important in this work they indicated that developing these skills was not their remit. And therefore the soft skills mismatch remains.

More generally this research also suggests that much training for the unemployed is qualification driven, which is problematic, as research has shown that many interactive service sector employers are not demanding qualifications at the point of recruitment and selection for front line work in the retail and hospitality sector, but rather demand 'soft' skills, and in particular aesthetic skills (Belt et al. 2002; Callaghan and Thompson, 2002; Hall, 1993a, 1993b; Hochschild 1983; Keep and Mayhew, 1999; Leidner, 1993; Nickson et al., 2001; ScER, 2004; Taylor, 1998). Yet there remains the question: to what extent could the aesthetic skills demanded by employers be developed through training initiatives? A report by ScER (2004) recognises that it may be problematic to integrate aesthetic skills into current VET provision due to difficulties surrounding methods of quantifying or measuring

aesthetic skills. Keep and Mayhew (1999: 10) also make the important point that it is more difficult to provide training which results in qualifications or certifications of outcomes for 'softer' skills and that indeed many of these 'personality traits or attitudes [which] may only be partially amenable to change and enhancement through traditional VET'. The extent to which aesthetic skills can be developed is also highlighted by Pettinger (2003: 168) who argues that 'skills' related to aesthetics are 'reflections of particular forms of capital structured via gender, age, class and ethnicity, not free-floating "skills" but firmly rooted in social characteristics'. Evidently it is not yet clear to what extent aesthetic skills lend themselves to being developed in individuals through traditional methods of skill attainment such as through VET.

However, the research concerning the efficacy of the aesthetic skills training course suggests that it may be possible to enhance unemployed job seekers' understandings of the use value of aesthetic skills in the workplace and in this way enhance their employability. A change in the focus of training, away from traditional vocational outcomes or qualification outcomes can be successful, as the results of the Wise Group aesthetic skills training programme highlights. The outcomes resulting from the training suggests that clients had developed a greater awareness of aesthetic skills and an ability to utilise them in work, alongside an understanding of the performative nature of much work in this sector. Therefore, pre-employment training, such as that offered by the Wise Group may offer a route to interactive service sector employment for those previously excluded from this employment or for those who self selected away from this employment as they believed they did not possess the skills employers demand.

It is argued here that there is scope for the mismatch between the focus of training provision for the unemployed and the skills demands of employers in the interactive service sector to be overcome by offering apposite pre-employment training. However, the effectiveness of pre-employment training and an understanding of employers' skills demands are not the only factors that impact upon the reality of moving unemployed individuals into interactive service work. Quite obviously, and

as indicated in this chapter already, the perceptions unemployed clients have of interactive service work in the retail and hospitality industries is critical. The next chapter therefore considers this issue.

<div align="center">**Chapter 9**</div>

<div align="center">**The Other Side of the Story: Unemployed Job Seekers' Perceptions of
Interactive Service Work, Skills, Employment and Training**</div>

9.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses upon the perceptions and understandings of unemployed job
seekers regarding interactive service work, skills, employment and training. It has
been suggested that there is little research into unemployed job seekers' views of
specific areas of interactive service work (Lindsay and McQuaid, 2004). This chapter
attempts to address this lack of research. The chapter makes use of both focus group
and survey data generated from clients of the Wise Group. Three distinct groups of
individuals took part in the research, a group of mostly female clients from the
Intermediate Labour Market[12] (ILM) training programme, a group of mostly young
males from the New Deal Tailored Pathways[13] (NDTP) training programme, and a
group of older males from the Employment Zone[14] (EZ) initiative.

The chapter begins by examining the unemployed job seekers' perceptions of
interactive service work, in order to determine how likely this work, which provides
significant employment opportunities, can be considered a route to employment for
those currently unemployed. Client's specific attitudes to different areas of work are
also studied in order to determine whether some areas of interactive service work are

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[12] The Wise Group are pioneers of the ILM model, which offers a waged period of employment in
specially created temporary jobs, while also providing skills training, personal development and job
search activities. The main objective is to overcome unemployment, but this programme can also
result in outcomes such as providing a local service.

[13] The NDTP programme was introduced in 2002 as a pilot programme across 17 districts in the UK,
of which Glasgow was one. The aim of the NDTP programme was to offer a more flexible version of
the New Deal for Young People (NDYP) by providing the client with a package which could include
periods of training, work experience and subsidised employment, aimed at meeting the specific needs
of the client and employer. The goal of the pilot was to provide a New Deal service with improved job
outcomes, in terms of both number and pace.

[14] The EZ initiative was developed to improve the job prospects of individuals living in designated
Employment Zone areas, by increasing skills levels and enhancing access to work. The EZ areas are
characterised by low skill levels, and high unemployment and economic inactivity levels among many
of the population.

viewed more positively or less positively than others. Following this discussion the chapter then presents an analysis of the respondents understanding of skills, in particular their awareness of employers' skill demands and their own skills. Finally, there is a consideration on links between clients past work experiences, their training and future work preferences, including an examination of perceived barriers to gaining employment.

Examination of the data suggests that there are a multitude of factors that influence unemployed job seekers' perceptions of work and skills. Yet despite the relevance of these factors in the debate surrounding employability and training for the unemployed, the views of the job seekers themselves are very rarely taken into account. However, it is important that these views and opinions are understood and recognised. That is the focus of this chapter.

9.2 Unemployed job seekers' perceptions of interactive service work

In this section the findings regarding unemployed job seekers' perceptions are presented sequentially as follows: perceptions of interactive service work generally; perceptions of retail work; perceptions of hospitality work; perceptions of call centre work; perceptions of work in the style labour market; and a summary and comparison of these findings.

9.2.1 Perceptions of interactive service work generally

As highlighted in the previous two chapters there appears to be a mismatch between the skills demands of employers in interactive service work and the focus of training provision for the unemployed in Glasgow. Obviously this is problematic if training is viewed as the solution to increasing employability and overcoming unemployment. However, there is a third, often overlooked, element involved in this situation. It is vital to examine unemployed job seekers' perceptions of employment in interactive

service work, and to also assess how likely is it that they would consider participating in training for this employment, if apposite training was available.

The predominantly female ILM clients overwhelmingly rejected interactive service sector employment in the retail, call centre and hospitality sectors. Moreover, they pointed out that they would not consider entry-level jobs in these areas. Several pointed out that they were too old to consider entry-level positions, or employment in the sector in general, as they considered much interactive service work was suited to younger people. For example, one client suggested: 'A lot of these kind of jobs they're really for younger people, people starting out with no responsibilities, you know your first job, that kind of thing.' (ILM12) This was reiterated by another client who pointed out that: 'you find that younger people, younger people than me, tend to be employed working with the public like that.' (ILM9) Interestingly, this female is 27 years old yet her observation is that customer service employees tend to be younger than this age.

Furthermore, many of this group highlighted that they were seeking a wage of £200 or more per week and they believed that they would be unlikely to earn this wage in interactive service sector employment. Overall this group preferred administrative work and training that would result in employment in an office environment and they showed a marked preference for this kind of work over interactive service work that involves dealing with customers on a day-to-day basis. A few of the women had previous work experience in bar work and hairdressing, however this past work experience seemed only to strengthen their negative view of interactive service work. Highlighting this negative view is the following comment from one client, a female in her mid thirties who had worked in a bar when in her twenties:

> I think years ago I could put up with all the bad stuff that goes with serving the public, but now I just couldn't do it. I was happy enough working in the bar, a local bar, when I was younger, but now, now I just couldn't cope with the customers day after day. (ILM13)

Overall these clients believed that there were few opportunities in interactive service work to pursue a career, and that rather this work was a good 'stop gap' (ILM9) while they combined paid employment with family commitments. For example, one participant (ILM14) discussed how she was employed as a bar maid for several years as she was able to undertake this work while her children were cared for by their father in the evenings upon his return from work. She suggested that this job was poorly paid, offered no career progression and was not personally fulfilling, yet the unsocial hours and extra money suited her at that time. However, now that her family are older and her childcare commitment had lessened she emphasised strongly that she would not consider hospitality work in the future. She states: 'I just could not go back to that kind of work, it's as we said a stop gap, it's good when it suits you, but it's not what I'd choose now.' (ILM14) Indeed of the three areas of interactive service work discussed in the focus groups hospitality work was the least popular among the predominantly female ILM group.

When asked to consider the areas that currently offered job opportunities the ILM participants reported that there were many vacancies in administration work and call centre work and there also seemed to be an awareness of the expansion of service work in Glasgow. However, their reluctance to consider interactive service work is in part explained by their perceptions regarding the quality of this work. Overwhelmingly the ILM clients considered interactive service work to be poorly paid and of poor quality with little opportunities for career progression. The majority suggested that an advantage of this work is that employees are not closely supervised on a day-to-day basis and that this employment is fairly secure. Additionally, most of these participants pointed out that qualifications are not necessary to access this employment and moreover it is relatively easy to access this employment in Glasgow. Therefore it does not to seem to be an issue of feeling unqualified for this work or perceptions that gaining this employment is difficult that contributes to their reluctance to attempt to access interactive service sector work.

The second group of participants were involved in the New Deal Tailored Pathways training initiative (age 18-24) and overwhelmingly comprised of young males, with

only one female out of 16 participants, with the majority of participants aged 18 and 19 years. Overall these individuals suggested that they did not view interactive service work very positively and would only consider this work 'if the money was good' (ND5). A few participants did comment on the social nature of this work as a positive aside to this employment, however, they overwhelmingly expressed preferences for other work such as construction, warehouse work and landscaping. The main drawback to interactive service work for these males was the interaction with customers, which they all viewed in a very negative light and one even described as 'torture'. Their negative perceptions of service work was underpinned by their belief that they would not be allowed to defend themselves in this work and that they would have to therefore tolerate 'demanding customers'. As these clients highlight, there is an acknowledgement of the power the customer may hold over the employee: 'The customer's always right and then you're not gonny be able to stand up for yourself' (ND13) and 'Yeah they [customers] can have you chasing about after them and there's nothing you can do about it' (ND3). Indeed, summing up the sentiment apparent across the two focus groups of New Deal clients this client describes his past experience dealing with customers:

> I don't like dealing with customers. I used to do it in the car wash and it was torture. They sometimes just treat you like dirt and I mean you canny exactly say anything back to them or you'll get the sack. (ND10)

This group viewed even voice-to-voice interaction negatively, as they were unenthusiastic about call centre employment also, again citing problematic customers as the factor that puts them off this work. Overall this group expressed the view that interactive service work was not particularly well paid, yet despite this they pointed out that the main problem they had with this employment was not the wage levels but the required interaction with customers. For example, as one participant commented: 'It's dealing with customer's innit. It doesn't matter how much money you get its not gonna stop you losing your temper.' (ND12) Overall these young males, both those with previous experience of this work and those without, believed that they would be unable to cope with dealing with customers on a day-to-day basis. It did seem

important to this group that they gained employment that they liked and that gave them some sense of satisfaction.

Several of this group had previous experience of interactive service work, from working in McDonald's, car valeting and fashion retail employment, and these individuals seemed slightly more willing to undertake further interactive service sector work than those with no experience of it. However, these individuals made it clear that they did not intend to pursue a career in the interactive service sector but would take this employment while looking for other work. Also those with previous experience of interactive service work stressed their desire to try different kinds of employment, and expressed their need 'for a wee change' (ND2) or to 'do something interesting for a change' (ND10).

When asked where the job vacancies are in Glasgow the majority cited IT and call centre employment. However, there was agreement that there were opportunities for interactive service sector work. Mirroring the views of the ILM group, the New Deal clients also considered much interactive service work to be 'a stop gap job'. They also did not perceive this work as offering a career and discussed the added responsibility and stress of supervisory roles and management with very little added remuneration to compensate. The availability of discounts, particularly in retail employment, was not seen as a particular benefit of this employment and would not entice them to seek this employment. As one participant noted regarding his past work experiences: 'Yeah they had good discounts in [Fashion Retailer] but that doesn't come into it. Good discounts but rubbish job.' (ND8) The required shift work, working weekends and the length of shifts, alongside the unfulfilling nature of much interactive service work were further reasons cited for the unpopularity of this employment among this group. Although a few of the group suggested they would be willing to work in the interactive service sector if remuneration was sufficient, overall participants did not seem to prioritise wage level over quality of employment. For example, one participant commented: 'If the job is not the best then money might come into it. But not if it's a job you like, then money's not that important.'(ND10) And as another commented when asked if wage level was particularly important to

him: 'Naw. You just don't want to work in a job you don't like.'(ND3) Moreover, even at the age of 18 and 19 these individuals believed they were too old for entry-level jobs in the interactive service sector. Interestingly not only did they highlight that they would not consider entry level jobs in this work they also pointed out that employers are looking for younger employees as they would be able to pay them less money. Furthermore, the majority perceived interactive service work to be insecure work, and the participants agreed that this work does not require that potential employees possess qualifications at the point of recruitment and selection.

The third group of participants in this research comprised a group involved in the Employment Zone initiative. Individuals in this group were longer term unemployed, that is, more than 18 months, were all males, and the majority were aged over 35 years. Most of these individuals had previously been involved in trades and manual work and stated unanimously that they rejected the idea of working in the interactive service sector. The interaction with customers integral to this work was the main factor that impacted upon their negative view of this work; however, they also believed this work was poorly paid and insecure. Moreover, they commented on the 'young' nature of much interactive service work, with one participant summing up the feelings of the group when he stated that this work 'suited the young'. Indeed, none of this group had experience in serving work or interacting with customers. Overall they believed that they would be unable to access an interactive service job despite their view that there are many jobs of this nature in Glasgow. This group seemed to be particularly aware of the changes in the labour market in Glasgow, with the dearth of opportunities in manual and trade occupations and the abundance of service jobs.

Despite fundamental differences between the demographic make up of the three groups the participant's perceptions of interactive service work were remarkably similar. Regardless of age or gender the majority of the individuals perceived interactive service work generally in a very negative light and expressed that they would be unlikely to pursue employment in such work, with the exception of a few young males with previous experience in retail or serving work. However, even this

small number of individuals highlighted that a return to interactive service work was not their preferred employment. Across the three groups there was a general reluctance to deal with customers on a day-to-day basis. Moreover, remuneration does not seem to compensate for unsatisfactory work, with the New Deal clients, in particular, expressing a preference for a job they enjoy and feel is fulfilling.

9.2.2 Perceptions of retail work specifically

Only a few participants in the survey reported that they would consider entry-level retail employment and all of these respondents were young males from the New Deal initiative. A few individuals from this group had past work experience in retail but they did not have a positive view of this work suggesting the work was 'boring' (ND2, ND8, ND10), with shop floor work being particularly unpopular. The few individuals with retail experience pointed out that they preferred not to deal with customers and therefore favoured working in the stockroom or behind the scenes as opposed to being on the shop floor. One participant highlighted that with regards his retail experience, 'the stockroom's ok, there's always work to do and you're on your own. But on the shop floor there's nothing to do.' (ND8) Those with experience of retail employment also complained that remuneration for this work is very poor, with their experiences of a monthly wage at minimum wage level particularly problematic. As one respondent notes: 'Retail's bad as its monthly pay. You canny survive on minimum wage if it's monthly pay and all the retail jobs I've had have been monthly pay.' (ND2) Moreover, this group considered that there is a lack of career opportunities in retail employment, for example this comment from one participant, '...there's no career in retail, stuck working a till' (ND7), and this comment from another participant 'I don't fancy the work itself, just selling jeans.' (ND9) The sole female in the New Deal group (ND1) suggested that she would consider retail employment, yet had not been offered this option when referred for training. This may be because the organisation does not offer specific training for retail work. However, this client pointed out that she was happy with her current option of childcare training. Overall the perception of retail work among this group was quite negative, as one client summed up:

You don't want to work in a job you don't like. The Job Centre push you into it, into retail, and you don't want to do it. Because I've done it in the past and I'd get a job in it no bother. But I don't want to do it. (ND8)

Moreover, both the ILM and the Employment Zone clients' perceptions regarding retail work generally reflected those of the New Deal clients. However, aversion to retail employment appeared to be stronger with no-one stating that they would consider entry-level employment in the retail sector. Furthermore no-one in these two groups had past experience of retail work.

Therefore within the groups involved in this research it is clear that those more likely to put themselves forward for retail employment are young males aged 18 or 19, and in particular within this group, those who have had past experience of retail work.

9.2.3 Perceptions of hospitality work specifically

The responses of the New Deal clients highlighted that the majority would not consider an entry-level position in hospitality employment, with the figures mirroring their figures for retail employment with only a few individuals suggesting that they would consider this employment. One client pointed out that he had past experience of working as a commis chef but stated that he 'wouldn't want to do that job again. Wouldn't want to work in kitchen or out the front really.' (ND3) For this individual, and several others who agreed with him (ND2, ND5, ND9), the required interactions with customers in front line hospitality work makes this work unpopular. However, as reported above, hospitality employment is the most unpopular of the three sectors questioned in the survey for the predominantly female ILM clients. Without exception the ILM clients expressed that they would not consider entry-level hospitality employment. In the focus group discussion they highlighted their dislike of this work. For example one participant suggested: 'I just would not even consider that kind of thing [front-line or entry-level hospitality work]. It's just not something that I'd enjoy doing' (ILM5). While another participant, with past experience of bar work, pointed out that she is 'way too old for that work now. I mean that's really for

younger people.' (ILM13). This view of hospitality work, in particular. as work for 'younger' people, was also held by others in this group (ILM9, ILM12). It must be noted however, that the ILM clients had chosen their training option and were at that time participating in on-site training at the Wise Group that aimed to enhance their ability to gain employment within the area of office administration. Moreover. clients from the Employment Zone group also reported that they would not consider entry-level hospitality employment. However, the discussion revealed that a few of the men would consider employment such as hospital porter, highlighting that a small number of participants did not rule out interactive service work completely. The job of hospital porter does involve interaction with the public, yet the males who suggested that they would consider this job did not state that they would find dealing with the public problematic. Therefore, it is understood that for some of the Employment Zone client's work involving interaction with the public would be an option they would consider.

9.2.4 Perceptions of call centre work specifically

Among the New Deal clients call centre work was the most unpopular occupation. Overwhelmingly these clients stated that they would not consider entry-level employment in a call centre. Several participants pointed out that they would have difficulty dealing with customers over the phone. As one client pointed out regarding demanding customers: 'I'd still lose the rag with them down the phone.' (ND3) A few of the men from the Employment Zone group indicated that they might consider call centre employment; however, this was not their preferred employment. Nonetheless several of these individuals again did not seem to mind work that involves interaction with the public, in this case, voice-to-voice interaction. While the ILM clients rejected outright retail and hospitality employment, a few individuals indicated that they would consider call centre employment. As one respondent pointed out:

> Call centre work isn't so bad [as bad as retail or hospitality work] because at least in a call centre you're dealing with people over the phone. As long as

you're not expected to make cold calls to people. Just working in customer services wouldn't be too bad. (ILM6)

Many of this group have a background in administration work and possessed IT skills and expressed confidence in their ability to carry out call centre work, which possibly explains their preference for this work over retail and hospitality work.

9.2.5 Perceptions of work in the style labour market specifically

Participants were then asked specifically if they would consider employment in what Nickson et al. (2001) term the 'style labour market'. The style labour market was described to participants as employment in stylish or modern hotels, designer or fashion shops and trendy cafés, bars and restaurants. The most negative responses came from the Employment Zone group who underlined that they believed they were too old to work in these kinds of organisations, and indeed had no desire to be involved in this employment. There was an equally strong negative view of this employment stated by the ILM clients. Their perception of this work included that the hours of work are problematic and that wage levels are low. They too pointed out that often employers in these organisations are looking for younger employees. As one participant, in her early twenties, pointed out: 'Definitely in these kind of places they want young people.' (ILM3)

However, the New Deal clients expressed a more positive attitude towards this employment. Approximately half stated that they would consider employment in the style labour market in hospitality services. Retail employment in the style labour market was less popular than hospitality. A few of the individuals who suggested they would consider this hospitality employment highlighted that they had past work experience as kitchen porter or commis chef and this knowledge of the hospitality industry generally appeared to positively impact upon their perception of hospitality work in the style labour market. As one client suggested: 'Yeah I've worked in that kind of place, in the kitchen, but yeah a bar job or something in there would be ok.' (ND3)

Nonetheless, half of the New Deal clients rejected style labour market employment with the main reason given being their dislike of interaction with customers. There was a concern that customers in the style labour market would be particularly hard to deal with, as they would 'look down' (ND1) on the employees, with several participants referring to customers as 'snobs' (ND1, ND5, ND12, ND13). One individual who throughout the discussion had expressed that he would consider interactive service work pointed out: 'I don't mind serving people...I wouldn't mind being a waiter, but if they were expecting you to talk posh then I want to speak the way I speak. I'm no gonna disguise my accent for anybody.' (ND7)

Furthermore, although several of the New Deal clients suggested they would consider employment in this sector they too expressed reluctance to conform to the required behaviours and to display the required attributes or characteristics. These individuals showed an awareness of the role employees are expected to play in interactive service employment in the style labour market, yet rejected conforming to this role.

9.2.6 Summary and comparison of findings regarding participants' perceptions of interactive service work

There is much information offered in the above sections, and it is useful to summarise these findings in table form, allowing more straightforward comparisons to be made across the groups, drawing out similarities and highlighting differences between them. Table 13 below therefore summarises the findings regarding the unemployed jobs seekers' perceptions of interactive service work.

Table 13: Participants' perceptions of interactive service work

ILM clients	New Deal clients	Employment Zone clients
Poor perception of ISW: • poor pay • slight dislike of dealing with customers • little opportunity for career progression (a stopgap job) • poor quality jobs • for younger people	Poor perception of ISW: • poor pay • for many – great dislike of dealing with customers • little opportunity for career progression (a stopgap job) • no job satisfaction/ unfulfilling • shift work and long hours • requires young people for entry level positions • insecure employment	Poor perception of ISW: • poor pay • dislike of interaction with customers • poor quality jobs • insecure employment • demands young employees
Positives regarding ISW: • growth of opportunities • fairly secure employment • easy to access jobs • no qualifications required	Positives regarding ISW: • social nature of work an advantage for some clients • no qualifications required	Positives regarding ISW: • growth of opportunities
Experience of ISW? A few clients had experience in hospitality work	Experience of ISW? A few clients had experience in retail and hospitality work	Experience of ISW? No experience of ISW
Future work preference: Majority preference for administration work	Future work preference: Preference for construction/warehousing/ landscaping work	Future work preference: Preference for manual work or portering/security work
Perception of retail work: • negative perception of this work • majority would not consider this work	Perception of retail work: • majority had negative perception of this work – poor pay, interactions with customers, boring, no career • however more than half would consider	Perception of retail work: • negative perception of this work • unanimously would not consider this work

	this work, but preference for back of house position, i.e. work in storeroom	
Perception of hospitality work: • unanimously would not consider this work • least popular of three areas of service work	Perception of hospitality work: • majority would not consider this work • around one third would consider this work	Perception of hospitality work: • unanimously would not consider this work
Perception of call centre work: • a few would consider this work • perception that skills they possess and work experience suit this work	Perception of call centre work: • unanimously rejected this work • least popular of the three areas of service work • dislike of dealing with customers, voice to voice interaction	Perception of call centre work: • a few of this group would consider this work
Perception of work in the Style Labour Market: • very negative view of this work • would not consider this work • poor wages and long hours • employers seeking young employees	Perception of work in the Style Labour Market: • around half of this group would consider work in hospitality in SLM, but retail less popular • some positive views related to past work experiences in hospitality • definite awareness among this group of employers skills demands in SLM • half of the group would not consider due to interaction with customers demanded and employers demands regarding 'role' employees need to play	Perception of work in the Style Labour Market: • unanimously rejected this work • employers seeking young employees • perception they are not suited to this employment

Each of the three groups were composed of quite distinct groups of people: the females (apart from one male) aged between 30-40 years training for administrative work in the ILM group; the males (apart from one female) with an average age of 18-19 years in the New Deal group; and the older males comprising the Employment Zone group. In many ways it was an advantage that these groups were distinct as views within and across the groups did not vary much and therefore the perceptions of the groups are quite clear. However, often focus group discussions with a more mixed group of individuals can reveal more surprising findings. Nonetheless, when the data from all three groups is examined it is apparent that, despite the age and gender differences across the groups, these individuals have very similar views regarding interactive service work.

As highlighted in Chapter 4 although there is little research into unemployed job seekers' views of specific areas of interactive service work, there is evidence that unemployed job seekers hold very negative views of interactive service work generally (Helms and Cumbers, 2004: Lindsay and McQuaid, 2004; Lindsay, 2005: McDowell, 2004; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2002; Nixon, 2005; TERU, 1999). The findings reported in this chapter reflect previous findings, in that generally, the unemployed job seekers involved in this research reported possessing very poor perceptions of work in the interactive service sector.

With regard the effect of age on individual's perceptions of interactive service work McQuaid and Lindsay (2004) note that older males hold more negative views of this work and are less likely to consider entry-level employment in this work than younger males. However, the evidence presented here indicates that the young males involved in the New Deal training also expressed very negative views of interactive service work. Moreover, while it may be expected that the older participants, in the ILM and Employment Zone groups, might point out that younger people were more suited to interactive service work it was surprising that the New Deal clients, the majority of whom were under 20 years old, also pointed out that younger people would be more successful in accessing entry level positions in interactive service work. There was a general opinion across all three group that work in the interactive

service sector was suited to young people and that young people had the necessary skills to carry out this work. However, the definition of 'young' appears to be below the age of 20 years.

Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) also suggest that younger job seekers, that is age 18-24 years, are more likely to consider undertaking entry-level employment in the service industry than those aged over 24 years because they may have a more open attitude towards service work than older males, who may perceive it to be female in nature or 'women's work'. As discussed above there was little evidence of the participants in this research viewing interactive service work as female work, but rather is seemed to be viewed as 'young' work or work for younger people. However, Lindsay and McQuaid also make the important point that the low pay associated with service work is likely to have less of an impact on younger people generally, particularly if they do not have the financial and family responsibilities that older males may have. Yet, although the New Deal clients in this study did hold more positive views of work in the style labour market than older clients, in general there was a rejection of interactive service work among the younger New Deal clients that reflected the perceptions of the older males and the females involved in the study.

More specifically, regarding the impact of age and gender differences upon perceptions of interactive service work, the data reveals some interesting findings. For the mostly female ILM clients the least popular of the three areas was hospitality work and the area a few of these clients would consider was call centre work. There was a perception among this group that the work skills and work experience they possessed made call centre work the most appealing option. Similarly, while the older male Employment Zone clients rejected hospitality and retail work a few of these clients suggested that they would consider call centre work.

However, the younger, mostly male, New Deal clients expressed quite different preferences from the other groups. For these individuals call centre work was the least favoured option in interactive service work, with clients expressing a dislike of dealing with customers over the telephone. For these clients hospitality work was

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also rejected by the majority, with only around one third of these clients suggesting that they would consider hospitality work. However, despite expressing very negative views regarding this work, around half of the New Deal clients pointed out that they would consider retail work, expressing a preference for back-of-house retail work where interaction with customers was not necessary. The interactive component of back of house jobs such as storeroom assistant is minimal; therefore despite expressing a slight interest in retail work it is important to note that it is non-interactive service work in the retail sector that appeals to these clients. This finding reflects Nixon's (2005) assertion that the young men in his study expressed preferences for manual work or what he terms 'back shop' work, where supervision levels are low and employees are not judged on aesthetic or cultural attributes.

Lindsay and McQuaid (2004: 309) found in their study that there was a perception among job seekers of interactive service work being 'women's work'. However, the males in this study, the New Deal and Employment Zone clients, and the female ILM clients did not suggest that interactive service work demanded female characteristics or involved 'women's work'.

There are some interesting findings related to the client's perceptions of employment in the style labour market. Although across the groups there was a negative perception of this work some of the New Deal clients pointed out that they would consider this work, particularly in the hospitality sector of the style labour market. Yet, as described above, many of the New Deal clients rejected conforming to the standards or expectations of employers and customers in the style labour market, thus making this employment unattractive to them. Therefore, there was a mixed opinion regarding this work. Nixon (2005) points out that the participants in his study lacked the necessary interactive and communication skills required for interactive service work, such as work in the style labour market, which made them feel unable to carry out the work. However, as stated, it was found here that around half of the New Deal clients suggested that they would be willing to enter employment in the style labour market. For these males there did not seem to be a feeling that they were unable to do the work required because of a lack of necessary skills, but rather, that those that

excluded themselves from this employment did so because of a dislike of the work. As stated previously, in part this dislike of the work is a result of the nature of the work. Interactive service work requires interactions with customers and this is problematic for many of the individuals in this study. Indeed, both the males involved in Nixon's study and this study suggested that interviewers and customers 'look down' on them because of their accent and personal presentation, factors that may affect their perceptions of this work. Yet, overall the New Deal clients expressed more positive perceptions of work in the style labour market than clients from the other two groups, the older males and older females.

One further finding concerns the influence of previous work experiences on perceptions and attitudes towards interactive service work. There were differences between groups regarding previous experience of interactive service work, with the New Deal clients having the greatest experience, the ILM clients having some experience and the Employment Zone clients having no experience. These experiences or lack of experiences may influence perceptions towards interactive service work. In particular the past work experiences of some New Deal clients in interactive service work suggested that the social nature of this work was a positive aspect of this employment and it is interesting that several of these individuals were less likely to completely disregard the possibility of working in this area in the future. This finding echoes Lindsay and McQuaid's (2004) and Lindsay's (2005) assertions that unemployed job seekers who had experienced regular employment in service work previously were also less likely to disregard the idea of working in the service industry in the future.

Another factor that impacts upon unemployed job seekers' views of interactive service work is the quality of the work. Evidence suggest that unemployed job seekers' view this work as being unstable and low paid (McQuaid and Lindsay, 2002), and as Felstead et al. (2007) highlight the generic skills, such as aesthetic skills, required for this work are not financially rewarded. Moreover, Lindsay (2005) suggests that unemployed job seekers view this work to be low skilled, low paid and lacking in opportunities for career progression. The majority of participants in this

study reflected these views, suggesting that the quality of employment, including remuneration, hours and opportunity to progress and maintain a career in this work were problematic and impacted upon their view of this work.

Factors such as the quality of work and a perceived lack of skills required for this work clearly do impact upon job seekers' views of interactive service work. As the TERU study highlights the growth service industries of call centre, retail and hospitality work are not attractive to the unemployed due to a perceived lack of the skills necessary for this employment and because of the quality of these jobs (TERU, 1999). Moreover, as Lindsay (2005) suggests it is a combination of a preference for familiar occupations, perceived skills gaps and the quality of interactive service work that impact upon job seekers' perceptions of this work. However, evidence from the data gathered in this thesis suggests that the required interaction with customers that is involved in this work also influences unemployed job seekers' perceptions of interactive service work. Indeed, as reported previously, individuals from all three groups in this study expressed a dislike of dealing with customers on a day-to-day basis at work. Therefore it is clearly not only the issues of skills and work conditions but also the *nature* of the work itself that impact upon unemployed job seekers' perceptions of this work. Other research has highlighted that the nature of interactive service work, as work that involves possessing 'female skills' (Nixon, 2005) or attributes that are an 'affront' to males 'sense of themselves as masculine' (McDowell, 2004:49) contributes to males negative perceptions of this work. However, the unemployed job seekers in this study, both male and female, reported that it is the required interaction with customers that informs their views regarding the nature of this work, and impacts upon their very negative perceptions of it. The female ILM clients expressed a preference for work that does not involve dealing with customers on a day-to-day basis and the older male Employment Zone clients pointed out they had no experience of dealing with customers. Moreover, the young male New Deal clients expressed a great dislike of dealing with customers, pointing out that this was the main factor that influenced their negative perceptions of this work. This group even viewed voice-to-voice interaction with customer negatively. As one New Deal client observed with regard interactive service work in general:

It's all right money; it can be good [regarding pay levels in interactive service work]. It's dealing with customer's innit. It doesn't matter how much money you get it's not gonna stop you losing your temper. Maybe if you were 16 but not long term. (ND12)

Quite clearly, from the evidence presented in this chapter and other similar research, there are many issues that affect unemployed job seekers perceptions of interactive service work, from the quality of the work to the nature of the work. However, as skills are increasingly the focus of policy interventions to overcome unemployment it is important to examine job seekers' understandings of skills, both skills demanded by employers in interactive service work and their understanding of their own skills. Therefore these issues are the focus of the following section.

9.3 Skills: unemployed job seekers' understandings of skills employers demand for interactive service work and their understandings regarding the skills they possess

Despite their overall rejection of interactive service work the ILM clients highlighted the importance of many non-technical skills for this work. Almost every participant noted in the questionnaire that communication skills and interpersonal or social skills such as reliability, flexibility and listening skills are the important skills in this work, alongside possessing technical skills such as IT skills. However, physical appearance or personal presentation were not mentioned by these groups as skills required in interactive service work. Even in the focus group discussion participants did not mention the importance of 'looking good' or 'sounding right' in interactive service work. Reflecting their answers in the questionnaire they highlighted the importance of: 'having good people skills' (ILM1); of being able to 'handle customers' (ILM13); and 'being good with people, listening, that sort of thing. But also being reliable and willing to work long hours or unsocial hours' (ILM8). Therefore there seemed to be a lack of understanding of the demands of employers regarding the importance of aesthetic skills and characteristics in interactive service work. In part this was

surprising due to the past work experience of a small number of individuals who they had been involved in bar work and hairdressing.

However, the ILM clients clearly understood that both soft and hard skills are important in much work. When asked to write down the skills they possess participants not only outlined their qualifications and work experience but also listed many soft skills, such as communication, timekeeping, hard working, honesty, reliability, adaptability, flexibility, and listening skills. The ILM clients differed from the New Deal and the Employment Zone groups in that the majority of these individuals possessed NVQs and SVQs, mostly in administration, which they had gained through their participation in training at the Wise Group. However, despite possessing qualifications they also valued their soft skills and understood the importance of some soft skills to employers in the interactive service sector. Yet, even though they were very forthcoming regarding reporting their non-technical skills individuals did not report that they possessed personal presentation skills or indeed any aesthetic skills. It is possible that although these individuals showed an awareness of soft skills they do not perceive aesthetic skills, such as personal appearance, voice and accent, to be skills that are required in work.

The New Deal clients seemed to have some understanding regarding the combination of skills important to employers when employing interactive service sector employees. Like the ILM clients responses these individuals believe that non-technical or soft skills are important in this work. They emphasised the importance of skills such as patience, people skills, ability to work under pressure, timekeeping, hard working, and interpersonal and communication skills. However, the majority also understood the aesthetic skills requirements of this work. Not only did they state that age, manner, cleanliness, personal presentation and being smart or well dressed were important they also believed that being well spoken or polite were vital in interactive service work. For example, several of these individuals highlighted the importance of personal presentation in this work: 'You need to be smart sort of well turned out' (ND1); 'It's important that you look good. like the shop or whatever looks good' (ND3); 'They [employers] want you to turn up well dressed. clean. tidy.

And you need to kind of talk well, you know, not slang, no swearing that kind of thing' (ND9). As stated previously a few of these individuals had experience of interactive service work or back-of-house work in the hospitality industry and as such may have a realistic understanding of the skills required for this work. Moreover, they highlighted that you do not need qualifications to access this employment. Therefore there seemed to be a very real understanding of the demands made by employers in much of the interactive service sector regarding desired skills and characteristics.

With regard their perceptions of their skills the overwhelming majority of New Deal clients reported in the focus groups that they possess interpersonal skills. Yet when asked to write down the skills they possess only a few reported that they possess social skills such as friendliness, reliability or team working. The majority also do not possess any qualifications and when questioned in the questionnaire regarding their work skills they merely described their previous work experience. Therefore, despite a very clear and well articulated understanding regarding the skills demands of employers in the interactive service sector these individuals did not perceive that they possessed the appropriate skills for this employment. In fact while they listed many skills when asked about employer's skills demands their responses to the question concerning their own skills were brief and in some cases left blank.

Nixon (2005) found that the young unemployed males in his study also rejected interactive service work and he suggests that this group lacked the interactive and communication skills necessary for this work. Interestingly, the New Deal clients interviewed in this study showed a great awareness of the necessary interactive and communication skills for interactive service work, and indeed were able to vocalise this well in the focus group, however, very few reported that they possessed soft skills such as presentation, interpersonal and communication skills. Therefore there may be a belief among this group, similar to those in Nixon's study, that they do not possess the necessary skills, the skills employers are demanding, for interactive service work.

The long-term unemployed Employment Zone clients reported that the skills employers in the interactive service sector are looking for in employees are both technical or hard skills and non-technical or soft skills. They reported that there is a demand for technical skills such as silver service waiting skills, operating tills and a knowledge about food and drink. However, they also pointed out that employers in many organisations are looking for young employees, who would be willing to work unsocial hours and accept a low wage, but who employers deem good potential employees due to their age. The overwhelming consensus among this group was that interactive service work is for young people and that employers want young people, aged early to late twenties, in the roles that involve interaction with customers. However, these clients did not articulate what skills these young people possess specifically that makes them more attractive to employers and thus more suitable for interactive service work.

As stated above the individuals from the long term unemployed group were mostly males aged over 35 years with much work experience in manual work or possession of trade specific qualifications. Although they were able to effectively describe their past work experiences, technical skills and qualifications like the New Deal clients they had difficulty reporting non technical skills. In fact very few of these men reported possessing soft skills such as communication or interpersonal skills.

What is apparent from the above findings is the awareness that the New Deal clients possess regarding the skills demands of employers in the style labour market. Both the ILM and Employment Zone clients underlined the demand for young employees in this work, however, they did not explain specifically the characteristics or skills that young people possess that make them more attractive employees for employers involved in the style labour market. On the other hand, the New Deal clients highlighted that employers were looking for particular skills, with employees expected to perform a role in this employment.

Overall then the ILM clients highlighted the importance of employees possessing both hard and soft skills, or technical and non-technical skills, to employers in the

interactive service sector. They also expressed that they possessed both hard and soft skills. However, these clients did not mention the importance of aesthetic skills, such as personal presentation or physical appearance, to employers in the interactive service sector, or suggest that they possessed such skills. It may be the case that these individuals do not perceive aesthetic skills to be 'skills', despite including soft skills such as interpersonal skills and social skills in their discussion of important skills.

These findings do not reflect the findings from the New Deal clients. This group articulated very clearly and gave much written feedback on the skills they believed employers in the interactive service sector demanded from employees. There was a consensus view that qualifications were not necessary for this employment but that soft skills and in particular aesthetic skills were required. Indeed these individuals pointed out that personal appearance, age, manner, voice and accent were all characteristics or 'skills' that employers demanded. Several of this group did have previous experience in the interactive service sector and as such may then have developed a clear understanding of employer's demands. However, despite the articulation of very clear ideas regarding employer's skills demands these individuals were less able to express an understanding of the skills they possess.

Like the ILM and New Deal clients the Employment Zone clients also highlighted that employers in the interactive service sector demand hard and soft skills. Due to time limitations it was not possible to probe further with the Employment Zone clients what specific skills many 'young' people have that make them preferred employees for employers. It would have been interesting to discover what skills these older males associate with young people. With regard the skills they possess this group were able to list hard skills, such as qualifications, technical skills and past work experience, yet did no mention that they possessed soft skills.

It appears therefore that there are marked differences between the groups regarding both their understanding of employers skills demands and the skills they, as potential employees, possess. The New Deal clients were the only participants who understood the demand for aesthetic skills from employers in the interactive service sector, yet

these individuals, despite several of them having previously worked in the sector, did not suggest that they possessed such aesthetic skills. However, as the previous section shows, whether individuals fully understand the demands of employers regarding skill for employment in the interactive service sector or not does not impact upon individuals perceptions of this work. Overwhelmingly the individuals involved in this research rejected interactive service work as possible future employment despite only the New Deal clients reporting the demand for aesthetic skills in this work. Therefore it may be that it is not only the demand for aesthetic skills that makes this employment undesirable, but also issues around the quality and nature of the work. This is an interesting finding as there is evidence of perceived and actual skills mismatches regarding the skills unemployed job seekers possess and the skills demands of employers in interactive service work (Lindsay, 2005; Nixon, 2005; TERU, 1999). Although there was evidence of a definite lack of understanding among the ILM and Employment Zone clients regarding the skills requirements of employers in the interactive service sector, many of the New Deal clients reported an awareness of the required skills yet displayed a reluctance to conform to the required standards of appearance demanded by employers in interactive service work. Indeed, among the New Deal clients who suggested they would consider interactive service work, particularly in hospitality in the style labour market, there was not a suggestion that they lacked the required skills but rather they expressed a reluctance to conform to employers required standards, such as changing or moderating your voice or accent.

It is important to note that throughout the data from the three groups of unemployed job seekers individuals did not mention that they lacked the required skills for interactive service work. Importantly, examination of the data provides evidence of a lack of understanding regarding employer's skills demands, particularly in the ILM and Employment Zone clients. Therefore it seems that many of these individuals do not understand the skill demands of these employers and therefore would be unlikely to report that it is a lack of the required skills for this work that impacts upon their negative perceptions of it. Where there is some evidence of an awareness of employer's skills demands, that is among the New Deal clients, this awareness is

accompanied by a lack of awareness of their soft skills, including aesthetic skills. Yet, these individuals do not suggest that they lack the skills required for this work, but rather those with a negative perception of this work suggest a reluctance to conform to employer's standards. The findings regarding skills are not straightforward. As stated there is evidence that suggests that perceived and actual skills mismatches impacts upon unemployed job seekers' views of interactive service work (for example, Lindsay, 2005), however, the extent to which unemployed job seekers actually do understand the skill requirement of these employers needs to be examined in future research in order that there is a fuller understanding regarding unemployed job seekers' perceptions and understandings of skills.

While it is important to determine unemployed job seekers' views of interactive service work and their understandings of skills it is also important to examine further their job preferences. Often future employment is determined by past work experiences or training and therefore in the next section attention is given to participants past employment experiences and the training they are undertaking in an attempt to understand more fully their job preferences.

9.4 Unemployed job seekers' employment and training: past, present and future

It is now appropriate and useful to set participants views regarding interactive service work in context by examining issues of employment and training. Specifically this section of the chapter will outline the areas clients have previously been employed in, the training they are currently undertaking and an examination of future work preferences.

9.4.1 Area of previous employment

There was a variety of past work experiences reported by the focus group participants, with commonalities in past employment within the groups. For example

the New Deal clients, who were mostly young males, had very similar past work experiences, although they cited a range of occupations. Several had experience of service work such as kitchen porters and retail employment and catering. There was also a common experience of working as a van boy or a car valet. A few of the clients did have experience of interactive service work, however, the majority had experience of work such as warehousing, labouring and security work. In some ways the work experiences of these younger males reflected the work experiences of the older long term unemployed group. The past employment experiences of this latter group included labouring and security work, although a few of the men, the older men within this group, had previously worked as tradesmen in the shipyards. These male experiences of employment differed greatly from the female ILM clients. Individuals from these groups mainly reported that their past work experiences involved clerical or administration work, and as discussed above a few of the women had service work experience in hairdressing and bar work. It is clear therefore that the employment patterns of the participants in this research reflect gender norms regarding employment patterns, with only a few of the younger males having experience of service work. It is important to now look at the training these clients are now undergoing, determining if their previous work experiences have influenced their decisions regarding training.

9.4.2 Current training

It was hoped that it would be possible to gain some information on client's perceptions of the current training they were undergoing. However, this proved problematic. The Employment Zone clients do not usually undergo training during their period with Employment Zone, unless the training can be completed during their course. None of the individuals in the Employment Zone group involved in this research were undertaking training with a training provider, but rather were being equipped with general job search skills and obtaining support in their search for employment. Therefore as these individuals were not undergoing specific training for work there is no data from this group regarding training.

The above situation was quite similar with regard the New Deal clients. The clients that participated in the research had only been involved with the Wise Group for a few weeks and were currently undergoing a period of induction to the organisation and therefore their specific training had not begun. They were therefore unable to offer any opinions on the effectiveness of their training. However, they did offer insights into their reasons for choosing certain courses and pointed out what they perceived the aims of the training to be. The majority of these clients were referred for warehousing or landscaping training and expressed that they were happy with this placement. Generally they had asked to be referred for courses that linked directly to their chosen area of future employment. However, there were a few incidences of clients who were unhappy with the training they had been referred for, suggesting that they were being offered training for a specific area, not because they hope to find employment in that area in the future, but because they had past work experience in that area and supervisors had taken that into account in their referral. For example, one client pointed out: 'I've been put down for retail because I had retail experience but I want to do the landscape course and I can't get it changed.' (ND8) This situation was obviously problematic for these clients. Several of these clients also reported that they were seeking a change from past work experiences, aiming to try different areas of work, and their choice of training course reflected that.

A few of these clients also pointed out that it was extremely difficult to change training course once referred for a particular course, despite the client notifying their supervisor prior to the commencement of the course regarding their aim to change courses. As this client discussed: 'It's a nightmare to get it [the training course] changed. I keep on telling my PA [personal adviser] and they say they'll do something about it but now we're two weeks in [to the training] and I'm still down for the wrong course. (ND5) These practical difficulties aside the majority of these clients were about to participate in training that matched their chosen area of future work and they hoped that the training course would provide them with the skills, qualifications and work experience necessary to gain employment. These aspirations are congruent with the aim of the training offered by the Wise Group, where a focus

on training for work and work experience for unemployed clients is a route either to gaining employment, entering education or accessing further training.

The ILM group participants were able to provide some feedback regarding training as these clients had been working with the Wise Group for several months. The ILM model offered by the Wise Group offers clients a period of employment at the Wise Group in their chosen area (although work areas available are limited), and in this case the clients were working in administration. The purpose of the training in the ILM model is to allow clients to develop a record of work, to gain skills and to generally make clients 'work ready'. These individuals highlighted that they had chosen this training as they aimed to pursue employment within the field of administration. The majority also felt that the training they were experiencing at the Wise Group was very effective, equipping them with up to date skills and qualification that would allow them to access employment in the future. For example one participant pointed out that her training is 'giving me the skills I'm going to need, the skills employers are looking for in this work' (ILM4), while another highlighted the importance of gaining both skills and work experience in a training organisation by suggesting that:

> 'Being out of the job market for a long time means things have moved on and being here and doing the work we do here brings me back up to date [with regard the skills required for administration work]. Then overall that makes it easier to get a job: having work experience and qualifications. (ILM12)

Although both the New Deal clients and ILM clients agreed that the aim of their pre-employment training was to equip them with skills, qualifications and work experience that would enable them to gain employment it is important to note that accessing employment in the first instance does not necessarily mean that an individual's employability has been fully enhanced. As stated previously employability concerns not only gaining employment but also sustaining employment. These clients did not mention that their training would impact upon their employment sustainability or their ability to progress within a work

environment. This is unsurprising as Belt and Richardson indicate, with regard pre-employment training for call centre work, training initiatives are 'geared towards getting people into jobs and neglect(ed) the question of the *sustainability* of these jobs.' (2005: 268) There are clearly two issues here, the employment sustainability of the clients and the sustainability of the job itself. Clearly training for the unemployed cannot influence the latter. However, with regard the former Belt and Richardson make the cogent point that there should be some concern regarding how prepared clients of pre-employment training courses are for the world of work. Clearly pre-employment training should address skill acquisition, gaining qualifications and work experience, but also a thorough understanding of the world of work or a degree of work readiness. Clearly the ILM training at the Wise group does include work readiness as part of the training, however it is not clear to what extent the New Deal training focuses on this issue in order to enhance the sustainability of clients employment. And importantly none of the clients involved in this research suggested that participating in the training would enhance their employment sustainability.

Despite the limited amount of data gathered regarding clients perceptions of the training they were currently undertaking there is evidence to suggest that clients are in general happy with their training and expect to achieve employment by gaining qualifications, work skills and work experience through the duration of their course. Clients were undergoing training that they had selected or been referred for according to the area of employment they hoped to access in the near future. Therefore there was a close link between training and anticipated future employment. However, in a few instances clients had been referred for training according to their past work experience which did not match their future employment goal. This was obviously problematic for these individuals.

Having examined the client's perceptions of their training it is important to now turn attention to clients' ambitions and perceptions regarding future employment.

9.4.3 Future employment

Although, as stated above, in a few instances clients had been referred for training that did not match their anticipated future employment, this situation was quite rare. Generally there was a close link between training and future employment. Moreover, with regard to client's future employment, there are three pertinent issues that emerged from the data. Firstly clients were very clear about the area of employment they hoped to access post training. Secondly clients had similar views regarding what was important in determining their preferred areas of work. And thirdly clients expressed that they experience a variety of difficulties that inhibit their access to work.

As discussed above the mostly female ILM participants hoped to gain employment in the field of administration work. This work appealed to them because it was social but did not solely involve dealing with customers, was perceived to be well paid and was an area where there are many jobs available. The majority of these clients had previous work experience in administration work and remained very positive about this employment.

When asked if the status or value others attached to their chosen area of future work was important to them or had impacted upon their decision to pursue it the participants had mixed feelings. Approximately half reported that the status afforded their work was not important, and half considered that it was important what others thought about their work. However, overall they argued that they were choosing an area of work that they perceived to be valuable and worthwhile, as one client stated:

> I think we are all here because this is the work we want to do. We have thought about it and have been here long enough to know that it's the right course for us. And you get plenty of practice while you're here so you'd soon know if you weren't cut out for the work ...and it's good to know that you're doing a good job here. (ILM3)

The New Deal clients gave a far more mixed response than the ILM group regarding preferred areas of future employment. The most popular choice of future employment was construction work followed by warehousing work and landscaping work. It is unsurprising that these mostly male clients were seeking stereotypical 'male' areas of employment. A few of these clients also highlighted that their 'ideal' job would be positions such as fireman, policeman or mechanic, again very traditional roles. These individuals were also quite explicit in identifying the jobs they would not consider, unanimously rejecting cleaning jobs or work with the cleansing dept of the council, while expressing a dislike for janitorial work, work in a bank or work in an office. Helms and Cumbers (2004) similarly found that young men often cited construction work as their preferred area of work, despite the lack of opportunities in this area for young unskilled males in Glasgow. Moreover, Nixon (2005) also found that unemployed males aged between 18-25 suggest similar work preferences rating areas such as warehousing and gardening work as their best jobs. Nixon also suggests that these men showed a definite preference for work they had previous experience of, involving manual skills and competencies, while rejecting work that involved customer interaction. This dislike of interaction with customers reflects the strong opinions of the New Deal clients involved in this study. With regard interactive service work it was discovered that the individuals from the New Deal groups who had past work experience of interactive service work had a slightly more positive view of this work and would be willing to seek employment this area, although it was not their 'first choice' as they were keen to try different areas of employment.

Unlike the ILM clients, who had mixed feeling regarding the importance of the status afforded their future preferred area of work, the New Deal clients agreed in the focus group discussion that what others thought of their work or the status of work was not important to them and did not affect their choices regarding future areas of work. As one client pointed out: 'What other people think about what I work as doesn't bother me. You've got to do what you want' (ND2). While another client suggested:

If you're always gonny worry about what everybody thinks then you'd never get a job. I mean some people think working for the clenny [council service of waste collection] is a crap job but they get paid loads and they don't work loads of hours. I mean I'd do it if I could get into it. (ND8)

However, in the survey around one third of respondents stated that the status of their work was important to them. The usefulness of the survey in capturing differences in opinion between the group members regarding this question is apparent. With regard the issues that they consider important in determining the area of work they hope to gain access to in the future the New Deal clients argued that shift work, weekend working, and working long hours were not aspects of work that they looked favourably upon. Moreover, they underlined their dislike of dealing with the public at work. They associated these qualities with service work and reiterated their rejection of working in the interactive service sector. Furthermore, discussion in these groups turned towards the rewards of work, with some participants suggesting that they wanted to be employed in an area where they had an interest, for example, working outdoors in landscaping. Some clients also suggested that they perceived the long-term prospects of a job to be important and not the immediate job outcome.

There was very little data gathered from the Employment Zone clients regarding future work. However, from the brief discussion it was clear that the majority of these men would ideally like to be employed in areas such as portering or be involved in a trade or work outdoors. As stated above they rejected interactive service work, yet accepted that there were many job opportunities in this area and very few in the areas they expressed preferences for. Again these findings reflect Nixon's (2005) discovery that older unemployed males (aged over 26) identified hospital porter, driving, gardening work and warehouse work as their most preferred jobs and interactive service jobs and office work as their least preferred jobs.

Moreover, the data from the Wise Group clients underlines Nixon's (2005) finding that for unemployed males, regardless of age, preferred employment is typically manual in nature and takes place in a male dominated environment, while the least

liked employment involves interaction with customers where employees behaviour is subject to close scrutiny and management of emotions is required. Apart from the New Deal clients whose past experience in the interactive service sector may have influenced their less negative perceptions and attitudes towards interactive service work, the majority of the males involved in this study rejected interactive service work. Reflecting the findings from the New Deal and Employment Zone groups Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) also found in their study that the majority of job seekers seek jobs that are outside the service sector, despite the reality of these sectors expansion and growth. Moreover, as Lindsay (2005) and McQuaid and Lindsay (2004) underline, unemployed males job seekers often express preferences for work they have previous experience of, most usually work involving manual and technical skills. Furthermore, Nixon (2005: 17) suggests that the males in his study did not possess and indeed were 'not being taught the skills increasingly important for employment in the service economy.' Therefore, it is unsurprising that males tended to select future employment that reflects past work experiences and skills. Yet if this pattern continues then the mismatch of skills required in growth areas of employment and the skills possessed by those seeking employment will remain and the employability of individuals will not be addressed. Moreover, the findings from this data reflect Nixon's (ibid: 13) assertion that in his study of low skilled unemployed males there was a rejection of 'female' work, such as office work, and a distinct preference for 'masculine' work such as construction work. These traditional preferences for future employment are apparent in this study, with the female ILM client's intentions to pursue administration work very apparent, and both the Employment Zone and New Deal clients expressing mostly typical preferences for construction and manual work. It must be noted here that the females taking part in this study were undergoing training for administration work and therefore their views are unlikely to be typical of all female clients of the Wise group. However, the strength of feeling among these females indicates that interactive service work is not an area of work they would consider even if they were not committed to seeking employment in the field of administration.

In this section of the chapter it was important to set previous findings, regarding participants' perceptions regarding interactive service work and understandings of employers' skills demands and the skills they possess, in context. This was done by examining participant's experiences of work in the past, their current training and their aims for future employment.

9.5 <u>Unemployed job seekers' perceived barriers to employment</u>

McQuaid and Lindsay (2002) point out that unemployed job seekers report barriers to employment that include both external factors which they have no control over, and personal or circumstantial factors which they may have more impact upon. It is important to note that it is a combination of both these factors that act as barriers to work for the unemployed.

With regard the unemployed job seekers in this study the ILM group suggested that there are several barriers to work that make it difficult for them to enter employment. The two most common reasons cited by this group that make it difficult to become employed are insufficient information regarding job opportunities and a lack of own transport for work. The lack of well-paid jobs and a lack of good quality jobs were also cited by many as obstacles to employment. Very few of these participants suggested that employer discrimination was a factor that affected their employment prospects and no one reported that a loss of state benefits once in employment or the poor quality of public transport affected their ability to gain employment. Overall however this group identified both external factors, such as insufficient information regarding job opportunities and a lack of well paid and good quality jobs, and personal or circumstantial barriers, such as a lack of private transport, as impacting upon their ability to gain employment.

The New Deal clients suggested that they faced many barriers to work, again stressing both external and personal or circumstantial barriers. Two thirds of the group suggested that the lack of well-paid jobs impacted upon their ability to gain

employment. Around half suggested that not possessing their own transport for work also affected their ability to become employed. Moreover, just less than half suggested that discrimination by employers towards the unemployed generally or towards how the individual looks or sounds adds to the difficulty of gaining employment. The focus group discussion also revealed that these clients feel that they may sometimes suffer from postcode discrimination, with employers reluctant to employ individuals from certain areas in Glasgow, and age discrimination, with employers favouring younger employees, because, the participants suggest, they can pay them less money. As one client pointed out with regard postcode discrimination: 'Where you live can matter. You know the area you come from. But then sometimes it might not matter it just depends how badly they [employers] need people.' (ND12)

Reflecting the findings of McQuaid and Lindsay (2002) the unemployed job seekers involved in this research reported that several external barriers to work impacted upon their ability to gain employment. Overall the biggest barriers they reported include: a lack of well paid employment; a lack of good quality jobs; a lack of information regarding job opportunities and discrimination by employers. Importantly these are all external factors that the unemployed have no control over. The major personal or circumstantial barrier to work appears to be a lack of access to private transport for work. However, McQuaid and Lindsay (ibid) identified 'problems associated with losing benefits' and 'costs related to starting work' as major barriers to work for the unemployed, yet the ILM and New Deal clients did not report that either of these issues acted as a barrier to work. Indeed, overall the unemployed job seekers from the ILM and New Deal groups identified more external barriers to employment than internal ones.

9.6 Conclusions

This chapter sought to provide evidence concerning the views and experiences of unemployed job seekers regarding perceptions of interactive service work, skills and employment and training. The data presented here goes some way to addressing the

lack of knowledge concerning the perceptions of the unemployed regarding the growth area of interactive service work, and offers some insight into their perceptions of skills, employment and training.

Analysis of the data gathered from the three different groups of unemployed job seekers offers some illuminating findings. Firstly, with regard their perceptions of interactive service work the focus group and survey data highlights that there is an overwhelming rejection of this work by these individuals, regardless of age, gender or length of time unemployed. However, younger, male jobseekers expressed slightly more positive perceptions of some interactive service work, namely that in the style labour market. Moreover, one factor that seems to positively impact upon perceptions of interactive service work, and thus make individuals more likely to be willing to undertake such work, is previous experience in this work. Indeed, several of the young, male New Deal clients, who had past work experience of interactive service work, were more likely to express positive attitudes towards employment in this area. Yet, despite these findings, overall the individuals involved in this study articulated a rejection of interactive service work as their preferred area of employment. The reasons for the dislike of this work included the quality of this work, remuneration and the lack of opportunities for career progression, yet the main factor that influenced their negative opinion of this work was the requirement to interact with customers on a day-to-day basis.

Secondly, the data also indicated that these unemployed job seekers understand, to a certain extent, the skills demands of employers in the interactive service sector. That is, there is awareness that employers are seeking a combination of both hard and soft skills in employees. However, an understanding of the particular soft skills demanded by employers was less clear. The mostly female ILM clients did not suggest that aesthetic skills, such as personal presentation or voice and accent, were important to employers, yet the mostly male New Deal clients did. The older male Employment Zone clients merely suggested that the quality these employers demanded was a 'young' employee, without actually articulating what it was about young employees that made them particularly suitable employees for this work.

Therefore only a small proportion of the participants, and from the New Deal group, articulated an understanding of the demand of aesthetic skills in interactive service work. Therefore it is perhaps surprising that this group were not particularly clear in communicating the non-technical or soft skills that they possess, including aesthetic skills. It appears therefore that they do not believe that they possess such skills. Equally the Employment Zone clients also did not report that they possessed soft skills, perhaps reflecting their definition of skill to be hard skills or technical ability. On the other hand the female ILM clients clearly expressed their possession of many soft skills, such as communication skills, yet like the other two groups did not state that they possessed aesthetic skills, quite possibly again because they do not consider aesthetic skills to be skills. Therefore there is clearly a lack of understanding regarding the skills that are valuable in the workplace today, particularly the demand for aesthetic skills in the interactive service sector.

The third finding from the data concerns participant's employment and training. It is clear that there are some differences between the groups regarding the links between previous work, training and future employment aims. For the ILM clients there is great consistency, with administration work being the focus of many clients past work, their current training and their future employment goal. However, for the New Deal clients there was less consistency, and indeed in many cases clients hoped to access employment in quite different areas to their past experience via their training. Yet, for the Employment Zone clients, who were not at that time actually taking part in pre-employment training, there was recognition of a lack of opportunities for employment in the areas of which they had previous experience. Also while these individuals showed awareness of the growth of employment opportunities linked to services, they did not favour this employment and their future work goals remained fairly traditional in nature. Overall clients had fairly positive perceptions of the pre-employment training they had experienced, suggesting that training would equip them with the skills, qualifications and work experience necessary to gain employment. However, there was no demand that training should enhance their overall employment sustainability. Moreover, clients expressed a slight concern of inflexibility when attempts were made to change training courses, along with a view

that their past work experience influenced their current training rather than their preferred option of future employment. Yet, with regard their ability to access work in the future clients appeared to be relatively positive, while displaying gender typical preferences for employment. It is important to note also that the unemployed job seekers involved in this study identified more external barriers to employment than internal ones. Interestingly around half of the New Deal clients suggested that employer discrimination affected their ability to gain employment, yet very few of the ILM clients thought that employer discrimination affected their chance of becoming employed.

It is clear from the findings of this chapter that there are very many issues regarding perceptions of work, skills, training and employment that impact upon the decisions and perceptions of unemployed job seekers. These issues are very rarely taken into consideration when studies of pre-employment training, increasing employability and discussions of skills are carried out. Yet clearly, the unemployed job seekers and their views are important in the equation of skills, training and increasing employability to overcome unemployment. It is hoped, therefore, that the evidence presented here can be utilised to address the issue of skills, training and employability incorporating issues of significance to unemployed job seekers. Therefore the next chapter attempts to integrate the findings of this chapter, concerning the unemployed, with the findings of the other two empirical chapters and the literature reviewed at the start of this thesis. The aim is to offer a fuller understanding of the issues that are pertinent regarding the growth of employment opportunities in interactive service sector work and the demand for aesthetic skills, including a focus, not only on employers and training, but also on the unemployed.

Chapter 10

Discussion and Evaluation

10.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and evaluates the main findings of the study, from the three strands of empirical research. Firstly, the chapter begins by evaluating the evidence concerning the demand for aesthetic skills and the importance of aesthetic skills in interactive service work with regards employability. Secondly, it then discusses the issues surrounding the supply of aesthetic skills, including the extent and effectiveness of training provision for the unemployed regarding these skills. Thirdly, attention is then given to unemployed job seekers' attitudes towards work involving aesthetic skills, that is, their perceptions of interactive service work.

There then follows an evaluation of these findings within the context of the key literature sources, identified in Chapters 2 – 5, highlighting the contribution this research makes to the literature surrounding skills in interactive service work and unemployed job seekers' access to this work. In reviewing the findings from the three empirical chapters it is clear that at points the results reflect the work of others in this area. However, it is also clear that this research has addressed gaps in the literature, and these contributions in particular are highlighted. It is argued that the demand for aesthetic skills has not been conceptualised adequately in relation to access to this work and this thesis fills this gap. Finally the main implications of the demand and supply of aesthetic skills upon unemployed job seekers' access to interactive service work are highlighted.

10.2 The demand for aesthetic skills: aesthetic skills and employability

One of the objectives of the research is to examine employers' skills demands in the interactive service sector and the implications of this demand for the unemployed. The key research question regarding this objective is: What skills are important at the point of recruitment and selection for interactive service work? The findings of the research underlines that there is an ongoing demand for and utilisation of aesthetic skills by employers in the interactive service sector. Specifically, potential employees should display these aesthetic skills at the point of entry to employment. The data highlights that employers have an 'ideal' employee in mind for interactive service work, with that employee possessing, confidence, commitment to customer service and an overall look and sound that reflects and underlines the organisations overall style. As one hotel manager suggested an ideal employee has: 'a confident personality and confident to be in the culture of the organisation...someone who takes pride in their own style...confidence and a bit of drive and enthusiasm for the product.' (HM4) The look and sound of employees, or more simply, the possession of aesthetic skills, is deemed integral to the 'ideal' employee due to the perceived positive contribution employees' aesthetic skills have on the service experienced by customers.

More specifically however, the research underlines that aesthetic skills comprise a variety of both aural and visual elements, with as Warhurst and Nickson (2001) suggest, employers looking for employees who both 'look good' and 'sound right'. The data reveals that for employers the important factors for interactive service employees at the point of recruitment and selection include being well groomed, having a pleasant accent, being attractive and displaying a pleasant personality. Diagram 5 below illustrates the demands made by employers regarding potential and existing employees for interactive service work, underlining that employees involved in interactive service work are required to use elements of their personality, their emotions and their body to offer good service.

Diagram 5: Interactive service sector employers' demands regarding employees
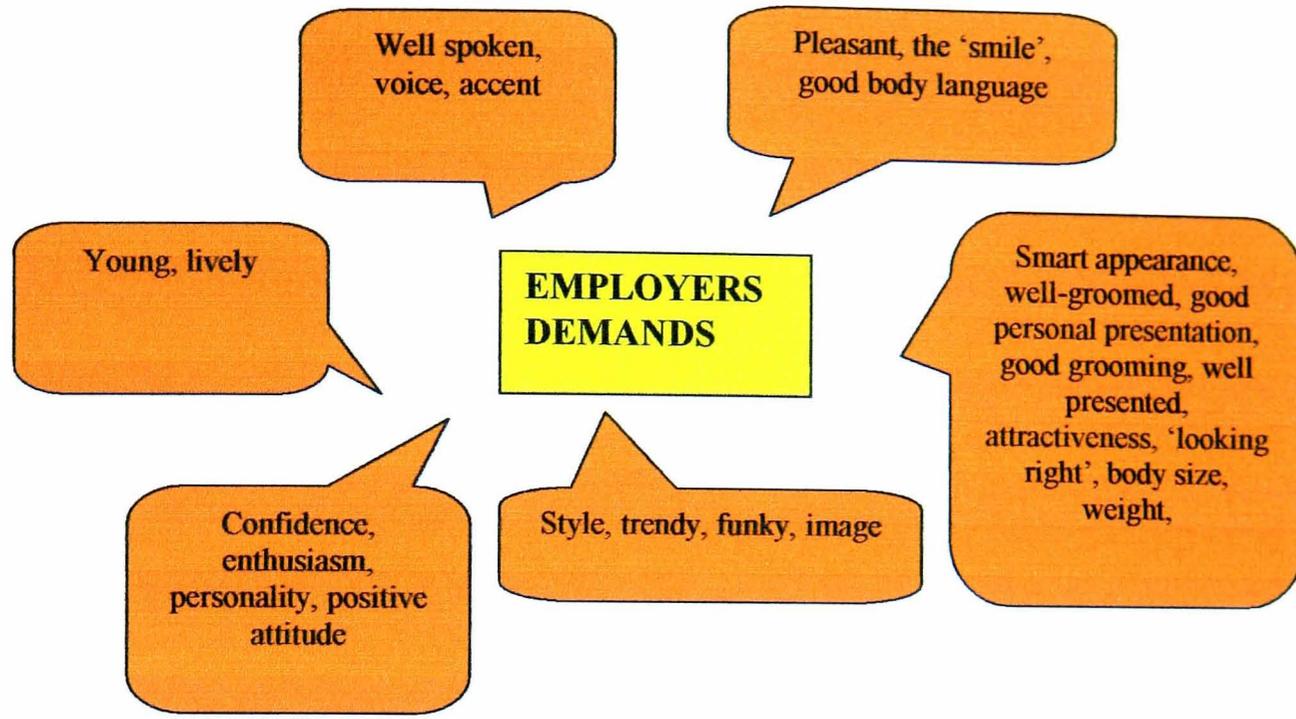
Well spoken, voice, accent

Pleasant, the 'smile', good body language

Young, lively

EMPLOYERS DEMANDS

Smart appearance, well-groomed, good personal presentation, good grooming, well presented, attractiveness, 'looking right', body size, weight,

Confidence, enthusiasm, personality, positive attitude

Style, trendy, funky, image

As emphasised in the research findings employers from both style and non-style organisations seek employees with aesthetic skills. Yet the data does reveal that the demand for employees who present a particular aesthetic is more explicit, rigorous and specific in style organisations. For example, while many of the employers from style organisations specifically requested employees who were stylish, trendy or funky, the employers from the non-style organisations made more general demands for 'well presented' or 'presentable' employees. The difference in demand between style and non-style organisations is apparent from the research findings. Although employers in the non-style organisations requested 'well presented' employees the hotel manager of a stylish boutique hotel suggested that potential employees: 'have to look good, be presentable, clean and tidy, a contemporary look. Not too traditional… we are trying to do something different from the chain hotels with this hotel so the staff reflects this image.' (HM4) Moreover, the difference in demands regarding styles of appearance and presentation between different organisations appears to be a result of the link between the organisational aesthetic of the company and the appearance of employees.

This research revealed that employers place emphasis on the possession and display of aesthetic skills in interactive service work because they perceive that employees are representatives of the organisation, who should reflect the image of the organisation and appeal to customers. Therefore the link between service quality, which includes the performance of employees, and commercial success appears to be driving the demand for aesthetic skills by employers in the interactive service sector.

A subsidiary research question concerning this objective, regarding employers' skills demands, queries whether aesthetic skills contribute to employability. Although the debate regarding what comprises skill seems set to continue this research emphasises that whether aesthetic skills, as conceptualised in this work, are skills or not does not affect the reality that these are the qualities that employers are demanding potential employees should possess and display at the point of recruitment and selection. As such the possession of aesthetic skills clearly contributes to employability. Therefore those individuals who lack aesthetic skills, or do not display them at the point of entry to employment, will be disadvantaged regarding access to employment in the interactive service sector. This is clearly problematic, not least because of the number of job opportunities in the growth areas of retail and hospitality work that will be inaccessible to those who do not possess aesthetic skills.

Furthermore, with regard the final research question regarding this objective, it is clear that the demand for aesthetic skills has further implications for the unemployed. A notable finding from the research regards who possesses aesthetic skills according to employers. As one employer from the style labour market pointed out regarding his preference for employees: 'Because we are putting them in front of customers...they've got to be very smart, very polite, very well mannered...confident, young, almost middle class people here who give the right image of [the organisation].'(HM3) Although this was the only employer who mentioned a link between being middle class and being suitable for front line interactive service work in his organisation, it is important to note that the majority of employers stressed that they employed students for this work. The employers reported that they employ students in interactive service positions because they are

well suited for this work. Therefore the research reveals that some sections of the population, those from a middle class background including students, are particularly suited to this employment, according to employers, and as such are able to access these positions while others, such as unemployed job seekers, may not.

A further key finding from the research is that employers reported that while they are confident in their ability to provide training for employees regarding the technical skills required for work, they are less confident in their ability to develop the aesthetic skills they demand. As the personnel manager from a large retail chain store argued:

> We can train and develop them [with regard technical skills associated with the job], but if they can't speak properly or they're not that bothered about their appearance no matter how much effort you spend [regarding training or development] they won't be able to do it [the job]. (RM2)

Therefore it is unsurprising that employers demand that aesthetics skills should be in place when potential employees present themselves for employment. Although they are reluctant to address aesthetic skills training the majority of employers suggest that training for aesthetic skills is both desirable and possible. Indeed, several employers pointed out that pre-employment training for aesthetic skills would benefit their organisation and the sector more generally, providing more suitable employees at a time when they report difficulties recruiting appropriately skilled individuals. Indeed employers report that they have difficulties recruiting suitable staff due to the prevalence of negative perceptions of service work as 'serving' work among much of the population. Interestingly, none of the employers suggested that the quality of service work, including remuneration, work hours and conditions, impacts upon negative perceptions of this work. This finding suggests that the employers involved in this study may not fully appreciate the importance of the quality of work to employees.

Consideration of the many findings regarding employer's demands for aesthetic skills underlines that the possession and display of aesthetic skills clearly contributes to employability in the interactive service sector. It also emphasises that there are negative implications for those who do not possess these skills, resulting in exclusion from work in growth areas where there are many job opportunities.

10.3 The supply of aesthetic skills: training provision for the unemployed

As discussed above there is clearly an ongoing demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work, however, despite the link between aesthetic skills and employability it is evident that not all sections of the population possess these skills. Therefore the demand for aesthetic skills has implications in terms of skill formation and the supply of skills. Regarding the supply of aesthetic skills the research held two objectives. Firstly, to examine training provision for interactive service sector work for the unemployed, and secondly, to assess the efficacy of aesthetic skills training for the unemployed. Regarding the former objective the key research question asks: How extensive is training provision for retail and hospitality work for the unemployed? Following this key question the research also considered whether this training is geared towards employers' skills demands and finally considers why there is a lack of training for retail and hospitality work for the unemployed.

Addressing the key research question concerning the extent of training for interactive service work for the unemployed it was noted in Chapter 8 that despite the growth of the retail and hospitality industries in Glasgow and a plethora of training organisations offering training for the unemployed, the research revealed that there is very little training for interactive service work available to the unemployed. However, there is evidence of widespread training for call centre and care work, which the training providers suggest is due to the demand for employees from employers and the reciprocal demand for training for this work from the unemployed. Yet there is little evidence of specific training for retail or hospitality work, and in particular the interactive roles involved in this work. A few

organisations do offer hospitality training but point out that demand from the unemployed for this training is low while the demand from employers for potential employees recruited from the training organisation is equally low. There is even less evidence of training for retail employment despite the reputation of Glasgow as a highly rated retail centre. Moreover, evidence suggests that the retail and hospitality industries in Glasgow provide approximately 20 percent of all jobs and are significant in current employment trends (Glasgow Economic Monitor, 2005). Therefore it is problematic that there is very little evidence of training for the unemployed for this work.

Addressing the subsidiary question regarding the appropriateness of existing research in meeting employers' skills demands the research reveals that alongside the dearth of training provision for the interactive service sector training for this work suffers as existing training courses are not geared towards the skill demands of employers. Existing training for hospitality and retail work tends to focus on the practical elements of this work, involving training for hard or technical skills. Yet, as previously discussed, employers demand that potential employees have soft skills, including aesthetic skills, in place at the point of recruitment and selection, rather than the technical skills required to carry out the work. Clearly the focus on skills that are more easily measured and accredited, that is technical skills, impacts upon the content of training courses. Moreover, training providers focus on hard skills is clearly problematic as it results in a mismatch in terms of employers in the interactive service sector skill demands and existing training for the unemployed.

The data from the training providers reported in this thesis addresses the second subsidiary research question regarding the extent of training for interactive service work for the unemployed and reveals that there are several reasons why little apposite training exists for interactive service work in the retail and hospitality sectors. Firstly training providers report that training for this work suffers from very poor success rates, measured by the proportion of trainees who successfully complete the course and gain employment. It is important to note that the continuation of

training programmes is very dependant upon the job outcome rate achieved. Therefore, as the training providers stated, the job outcome rate of retail and hospitality training tends to be poor and this has impacted upon the provision of retail and hospitality training, resulting in a diminishing level of this training. Moreover, the training providers point to two factors that influence the success of training courses, namely input into the training by employers and the quality of employment on offer upon completion of training. Regarding the former point, training providers were united in their opinion that the greater involvement employers have in pre-employment training, in developing the training course and providing work placements for example, the more successful the course will be in terms of job outcomes for clients. However, training providers also pointed out that the quality of employment offered upon completion of training impacts upon job outcome levels, suggesting that the quality of the job offered to the job seeker upon completion of training determines whether employment is achieved.

The second reason for the lack of training provision for retail and hospitality work is a lack of demand from the unemployed for this training. Training providers from several organisations pointed out that they experienced a real lack of demand for training for retail and hospitality work. They suggest that the reasons for this lack of demand from clients is due to: the perception of this work as being poor quality; a dislike of dealing with customers on a daily basis; a perceived lack of the required skills for this work; the perception of service work as being low status work; a filtering of unsuitable clients prior to training allocation; and a lack of awareness among clients regarding the growth of service work and associated job opportunities. It is important to note that these are the training providers' opinions of unemployed clients' views. The perceptions of several groups of job seekers are examined more fully in the following section of the chapter. Clearly though, according to the training providers, there appear to be a number of issues that negatively impact upon unemployed job seekers' view of interactive service work in retail and hospitality.

Thirdly, the research reveals that many of the training providers do not fully understand the extent of growth in the retail and hospitality sectors and that they also

have little understanding of the skills demands of employers in these industries. As the training providers state the success of much training depends upon involvement of employers, and there appears to be little involvement of employers in retail and hospitality training. This discovery reflects Belt and Richardson's (2005) finding regarding call centre training for the unemployed, where training providers did not fully understand employers demand for soft skills, including aesthetic skills, at the point of recruitment and selection.

As highlighted above the possession and display of aesthetic skills clearly contributes to employability and as such it is important that training for the unemployed recognises the demand for these skills and incorporates training for these skills into retail and hospitality training programmes. Therefore the second objective of this strand of research, to assess the efficacy of aesthetic skills training for the unemployed, is important. As reported in Chapter 8 there is evidence that training to develop an understanding of aesthetic skills and their use in the workplace, and thus enhance employability, can be effective. The examination of the efficacy of the aesthetic skills training course revealed that upon completion of the training clients had developed a greater awareness of aesthetic skills and an ability to utilise them in work. It was concluded, therefore, that this training may positively impact upon individuals who have ruled out employment in the interactive service sector as they believe they do not possess the appropriate skills, or who have previously been excluded from this employment due to a lack of these skills. The results of the Wise Group training indicates that a change from traditional vocational outcomes towards the development of soft skills, including aesthetic skills, can better prepare job seekers for the skills demands of employers in the interactive service sector.

Overall the findings from the training providers suggests that not only is current training not geared towards the skills demands of employers in the interactive service sector, but also that this training is not popular with the unemployed clients. Therefore it appears that it is not only the effectiveness of pre-employment training for interactive service work that will impact upon the movement of unemployed job

seekers into this work, but also an extremely important factor is their perceptions of this work.

10.4 Attitudes towards work involving aesthetic skills: unemployed job seekers' perceptions of interactive service work

As discussed above training providers suggest that training for interactive service work in the retail and hospitality sectors is unpopular with unemployed job seekers due to a variety of reasons, not least a dislike of dealing with customers and the poor quality of employment offered in these industries. The objective of the third strand of research was to examine the views of unemployed job seekers regarding interactive service work, skills, future work preferences and perceived barriers to work. This objective involved the key research question: How do the unemployed perceive work in the interactive service sector generally? The various findings from this strand of research answer the key research question and subsidiary research questions developed from the original key research question.

The data gathered from the unemployed clients backs up many of the reasons proffered by the training providers regarding unemployed clients' attitude towards interactive service work. Moreover, as highlighted in Chapter 9, the three different groups of unemployed job seekers included in this research hold quite similar views regarding employment in the interactive service sector. With regard to the unemployed job seekers' perceptions of interactive service work generally the data revealed that the majority had very poor perceptions of this work. The perceived quality of employment in the interactive service sector was clearly problematic for these individuals. Factors such as poor pay, job insecurity. shift work, long hours and few opportunities for career progression were associated with this work and contributed to the negative view the individuals hold of this work. Moreover, it was a common perception that this work requires young employees, and this factor along with the lack of job satisfaction associated with the work also contributed to negative perceptions.

However, the research also revealed that a major factor that contributed to the unemployed job seekers' dislike of interactive service work is the required interaction with customers on a day-to-day basis. Individuals, regardless of age or gender, expressed a dislike of dealing with customers. Therefore it appears that it is not only issues such as the quality of work that influence individuals perceptions of interactive service work, but also, the required interaction with customers involved in this work.

With regard to unemployed job seekers' perceptions of the specific sectors of interactive service work included in this study, namely retail, hospitality and call centre work, the data revealed differences between the groups. While the older individuals, both male and female, suggested that call centre work would be their preferred option the younger males rejected call centre work and expressed a preference for retail work. This preference can be explained by their expressed inclination for back-of-house work in the retail sector, such as storeroom work, where no customer interaction is required. However, when asked specifically about perceptions of employment in the style labour market, despite an overall negative perception towards this work expressed by the majority of individuals, several of the younger male job seekers expressed interest in employment in the hospitality sector of the style labour market. These individuals tended to have past experience in hospitality work and, interestingly, did not report an inability to carry out the work due to a lack of appropriate skills. An interesting aspect of this finding is that past work experience in the interactive service sector seems to impact upon individual's attitudes towards work in this area, making them more positive about this work and less likely to completely disregard this work from their jobs search strategy.

This finding of a link between past work experiences and attitudes towards interactive service work also suggests that there may be a link between understanding employers skills demands and perceived possession of skills and work preferences. Those employed in interactive service work in the past may have a better understanding of the skills required for this work and be less likely to rule out

this employment due to a perceived lack of suitable skills. Yet there remains a problem with many unemployed job seekers, particularly those without past experience in the sector, perceiving that they lack apposite skills. Data from the training providers suggests that many unemployed individuals perceive that they lack the required skills for interactive service work. However, the older males and females involved in this research expressed that they were unsuited to this work due to their age and not a lack of skills.

However, as discussed in Chapter 9, the younger male clients expressed an awareness of the skills required for interactive service work, including aesthetic skills such as personal presentation skills, appearance and appropriate voice and accent. This understanding of employer's skills demands did not deter all of these individuals from this work as around half of this group suggested that they would consider work in hospitality in the style labour market. Therefore, it seems that many of the younger males involved in this study do not perceive that they lack the required skills for this work. However, the other half of this group did reject employment in the style labour market and employment in the interactive service sector generally. For these individuals a dislike of dealing with customers and a perceived inability to 'cope' with customers and their demands, possibly because they perceive they lack the skills to perform this work, rules out this employment for them.

There were several interesting finding regarding the client's understandings of employer's skills demands and their own skills. The ILM clients suggested both soft and hard skills are important in interactive service work, and also reported that they possess both hard and soft skills. The Employment Zone clients, however, understood that employers in the interactive service sector require both hard and soft skills, yet reported that they possess hard skills and did not mention soft skills. The New Deal group, however, were the only group to indicate an awareness of employers in the interactive service sector demand for aesthetic skills. They suggested that these employers require both hard and soft skills, including aesthetic skills. However, when asked to report the skills they possess the majority of this

group reported possessing only hard skills, and not soft skills. This group understood the skills requirements of employers in the interactive service sector, they did not report that they possess these skills, yet they also did not report that it is a lack of these skills that influences their negative perceptions of this work. Therefore, the research findings regarding skills perceptions and undertakings of employer's skills demands are not clear.

It was interesting to note that none of the clients involved in this study were undergoing training for interactive service work, perhaps unsurprisingly considering the perceptions clients expressed regarding this work. However, both the training providers and the unemployed job seekers suggested that a filtering of individuals is carried out prior to allocation on training programmes. This filtering effect may lead to the exclusion of individuals from training due to being considered unsuitable for service sector work. Yet this decision regarding suitability is being made prior to training and thus is problematic and may add to the self-exclusion of individuals.

Another notable finding from the evidence is a link between previous work, training and future employment aims for the older female clients, with the majority of these clients either possessing past experience or currently undergoing training for their preferred area of work, namely administration work. However, the older males, who had past work experience in traditional trades, labouring and security work recognised that there were few opportunities for employment in such trades. Yet, their future work preferences remained fairly traditional as they expressed preference for work they had experience of, involving manual and technical skills, and rejected work involving customer interaction. Both of these groups of job seekers therefore seemed reluctant to consider employment or training for employment in areas outwith their direct work experience.

Many of the younger males however, expressed a desire to gain employment in areas that differed from their past work experience. These individuals expressed the greatest range of preferred employment, suggesting aims to access work in areas such as construction, warehousing and landscaping. Moreover, it is important to

point out that although some individuals from this group expressed more favourable perceptions of interactive service work and would be willing to gain employment in this area interactive service work was not the 'first choice' of anyone in this group.

A final pertinent finding regarding the research involving the unemployed job seekers concerns their perceived barriers to work. In general they suggested that the barriers to work that they experienced were external barriers, such as a lack of information regarding job opportunities, a lack of well-paid and quality jobs and employer discrimination. Importantly, these barriers are outwith the control of the individual, yet, they suggest, impact upon their ability to gain employment.

This section of the chapter has evaluated the original empirical research evidence concerning the demand for aesthetic skills, the contribution of aesthetic skills to employability, issues surrounding the supply of aesthetic skills and training provision for these skills and unemployed job seekers' attitudes towards work involving aesthetic skills. However, it is now pertinent to interpret these findings within the context of the three key literature sources. This interpretation highlights the contribution this research has made to existing literature regarding skills in interactive service work and unemployed job seekers' access to this work.

10.5 The research findings contribution to the labour market literature

As discussed in Chapter 2 there have been several key developments in the UK labour market over the last few decades. In particular the literature points to the decline of manufacturing work and the shift to a service economy that has occurred in this time. Alongside, and related to this shift to a service economy, Nolan and Slater (2003) identify the development of an hourglass economy, with growth at the top end of the labour market and growth at the bottom end, where low paid, low skill, low value added work is characteristic. The reality is that the majority of new jobs are occurring in mundane service sector employment. Moreover, despite economic growth in the UK male unemployment and economic inactivity, are causes for

concern. As Nolan and Slater (2003: 71) suggest, the erosion of industry since the 1980s, and the 'failure of the service sector to provide alternative employment in the areas most in need' has led to high male inactivity rates in previously industrial regions. Moreover, as Danson and Mooney (1998) argue, the increase in service jobs in Glasgow has not benefited the population equally. Yet Shuttleworth and McKinstry (2001) note that in many urban areas high unemployment is occurring alongside recruitment and retention problems in the service sector.

The empirical research for this thesis focuses on Glasgow, a city that is exemplar of a previously industrial city aiming to transform into a 'post-industrial' service centre (Warhurst and Nickson, 2001). Indeed the service industries are very apparent in Glasgow, with TERU (1999) suggesting that the growth sectors of call centre, retail and hospitality work will provide many opportunities for employment, and the retail and hospitality industries providing 20 per cent of jobs in Glasgow (Glasgow Economic Monitor, 2005). Lindsay and McQuaid (2004: 302) suggest that the growth of service work is perceived by policy makers as providing 'an important opportunity for large scale employment creation' that can positively impact upon the population. However, it is important to note that the literature underlines that despite the availability of jobs in service work in Glasgow there also exists high unemployment levels alongside recruitment and retention problems in this work.

It is suggested in the literature that perceptions of service work may contribute to the above problems. McQuaid and Lindsay (2002) suggest that unemployed job seekers, particularly those with experience in traditional industries, hold negative perceptions of service work, viewing it as insecure and low paid. Therefore they are unlikely to pursue employment in the growth areas. Yet, Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) suggest, there is little research concerning how negative views of service work may impact upon the job search strategies of the unemployed and also a paucity of evidence concerning unemployed job seekers' perceptions of specific areas of employment within the service sector. They attempt to address this gap by examining unemployed job seekers' attitudes towards three areas of service work, namely, retail, hospitality and call centre work and a few recent studies also examine some of these issues.

McQuaid and Lindsay (2004) suggest that female job seekers are more likely to consider entry-level employment in the service sector than males, and that younger males are more likely to consider this employment than older males. However, overall, the unemployed job seekers involved in their research expressed very negative perceptions of interactive service work. The evidence presented in Chapter 9 highlights a similar pattern with regard younger and older males, with the younger males expressing slightly more positive attitudes towards interactive service work than older males. However, the females involved in this research expressed equally negative views towards this work as the males. Yet, as pointed out in Chapter 9, it is important to note that the female sample may not be representative of all female unemployed job seekers, as they were undertaking training for a specific area of work and their choice of training reflected their work preferences.

The literature reveals that unemployed job seekers perceive that work in the interactive service sector is poor quality and that this impacts upon their negative perceptions of this work (Lindsay, 2005; TERU, 1999). Similarly the evidence presented in Chapter 9 highlights that the majority of the unemployed job seekers regarded this work to be poor quality, suffering from poor pay, job insecurity, long hours and few opportunities for career progression. On a more positive note, Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) and Lindsay (2005) point out that individuals with past experience of interactive service work are more likely to consider this work than those without this experience. As discussed in Chapter 9 there was a link between past employment in service work and a more positive attitude towards this work.

The literature also suggests that unemployed job seekers express preferences for manual work or work they have experience of and this contributes to the absence of this work from their job search areas (Helms and Cumbers, 2004; Lindsay, 2005; McQuaid and Lindsay, 2004; Nixon, 2005). Similarly evidence presented in Chapter 9 underlines that the male unemployed job seekers expressed preferences for manual work and work they had experience of, despite a lack of opportunities in these areas. While the females also expressed a preference for work they had past experience of,

The research reported in Chapter 9 therefore confirms existing research regarding many of the reasons for unemployed job seekers' negative perceptions of interactive service work. However, while there is also evidence that unemployed job seekers hold negative perceptions of this work due to a perceived lack of skills required for this work (Lindsay, 2005; Nixon, 2005; TERU, 1999) the individuals involved in this research did not report that a lack of skills impacted upon their views of this work. Moreover, while McDowell (2004) and Nixon (2005) argue that the male view of interactive service work as requiring female skills contributes to their negative perceptions this work, evidence of this view of interactive service work as female work was not apparent in the research conducted for this thesis.

Alongside confirming existing research, as noted above, the research conducted for this thesis involving unemployed job seekers extends understandings of their views of interactive service work. Firstly, as highlighted in Chapter 9, the unemployed job seekers were unanimous in their opinion that their negative perceptions of this work were a result of both the quality of the employment and the required interaction with customers. The dislike of dealing with customer was very apparent across all three groups of unemployed job seekers. Further research concerning this finding would shed more light on unemployed job seekers noticeable aversion to dealing with customers. Moreover, the research reported in Chapter 9 also includes an examination of unemployed job seekers' views of work in the style labour market. The findings reported extends existing knowledge, as to date there has been no specific examination of this topic. The research reveals that although overall the unemployed job seekers held negative views of work in this area around half of the younger males involved in the research suggested they would consider employment in the hospitality sector of the style labour market, suggesting that past work experiences influenced their more positive views of this work. Again, however, further research examining unemployed job seekers' views of this particular work would be beneficial.

10. 6 The research findings contribution to the skills literature

As discussed above there have been significant changes in the labour market in the UK over the last few decades, in particular the impact of the growth of services has been underlined in this thesis. Indeed it is clear that there has been a shift to a service economy, with much employment in the UK now based around services, with a particular growth in low skill, low wage, routinised service work at the bottom end of the range of service work. A result of the growth of such work is the current debate regarding the changing meaning of skill. Of particular relevance in this thesis is what comprises skill in interactive service work, work where service employees are required to be involved in either face-to-face or voice-to-voice interaction with customers (Leidner, 1991, 1993). There is much evidence of the demand for soft skills or person-to-person skills (Thomson, et al. 2000) in much interactive service work, however, often analyses of soft skills overlook the demands on employees corporeality made by employers. However, the work of Warhurst et al. (2000), Nickson et al. (2001) and Witz et al. (2003) has underlined the utilisation and demand for aesthetic labour, where employers require employees to possess aesthetic capacities and attributes at the point of recruitment and selection.

There is debate regarding the extent to which this demand for and utilisation of aesthetic labour and other 'soft' skills marks a shift in the meaning of 'skill'. It is apparent in the literature, however, that the meaning of skill is broadening. For example, Ashton et al. (1999) conceive skills to be ability, attitude, knowledge motivation or competency and NSTF (2000b) refer to a type of skill, distinct from generic and vocational skills, as the personal attributes which employers most frequently demand at the point of recruitment. In these attempts to define skill, as is relevant to the contemporary labour market and workplace, it is clear that there is more to skill than mere technical competence, know-how or ability. Thus it is not a huge leap to suggest that the demand for aesthetic capacities and attributes by employers, that Nickson et al. (2001) identify, can be referred to as a demand for 'aesthetic skills'. Indeed this broadening of the definition of skill merely reflects the impact of the growth of service work and the changing nature of much work.

The demand for soft skills in interactive service work has resulted in calls for improved understandings of employers' skills demands (Keep and Mayhew. 1999) and the skills important in work today (Ashton et al. 1999). Furthermore, Nickson et al. (2004) argue it is important to determine the extent of demand for and utilisation of employees' aesthetic skills, as this has been overlooked in much literature to date.

One of the main objectives of this thesis is to examine employers' skills demands in the interactive service sector and the implications for the unemployed. Existing literature suggests that employers in the interactive service sector are demanding that employees display aesthetic skills at the point of recruitment and selection, with potential employees screened for possession of these skills at this point (Nickson et al. 2001). Although the demand for aesthetic skills is most apparent in the 'stylish' organisations comprising the style labour market, Warhurst and Nickson (2007) highlight that a demonstration effect is apparent with the demand for these skills apparent in organisation outwith the style labour market. The findings reported in Chapter 7 underline these findings, highlighting the ongoing demand for and utilisation of aesthetic skills by employers in the interactive service sector in Glasgow. There is also evidence that potential employees are expected to display these aesthetic skills at the point of recruitment and selection. Moreover, the demand for aesthetic skills is evident in both the style and non-style organisations included in this research, although demands are more explicit, rigorous and specific in style organisations.

As Nickson et al. (2001: 179) suggest physical appearance is the most apparent manifestation of aesthetic labour, yet employers report requirements concerning employees 'dress codes; manner; style; shape and size of the body... the "right" sort of appearance and "dispositions"'. And moreover, employers make demands regarding both the visual and aural aesthetics of employees (Nickson et al. ibid). The research reported in Chapter 7 underlines Nickson et al's findings. suggesting that aesthetic skills comprise a variety of both aural and visual elements. The data reveals that for employers the important factors for interactive service employees at the point

of recruitment and selection include being well groomed, having a pleasant accent, being attractive and displaying a pleasant personality. These findings also reflect Nickson et al's (2004) assertion that both the attitude and appearance of employees are important to employers in the interactive service sector.

Moreover, as emphasised in the research findings, employers from both style and non-style organisations seek employees with aesthetic skills. However there is a difference in demand between style and non-style organisations that is apparent in the research findings. Although employers in the non-style organisations requested 'well presented' employees, employers from the more style led organisations expressed more specific demands for 'contemporary looking' 'stylish' or 'trendy' staff, with the difference in demands regarding styles of appearance and presentation between different organisations appearing to be a result of the link between the organisational aesthetic of the company and the appearance of employees. This finding again underlines and confirms Nickson et al's (2003) assertion that different organisations have different aesthetic appeals, with employees expected to reflect the overall aesthetic of the organisation, and therefore due to different organisational aesthetics there will be a demand for quite different personal aesthetics in employees.

As Warhurst and Nickson (2007) note, employers recruit employees with the required skills, including aesthetic skills, rather than train employees regarding these skills. The research conducted for this thesis underlines this employer preference to recruit for skills rather than train them. The employers in this study highlighted that while they are confident they can provide training for the technical skills required for work, they express less confidence in their ability to develop the aesthetic skills they demand. Therefore employers demand that aesthetics skills should be in place when potential employees present themselves for employment. However, a notable finding from the evidence obtained from employers highlights that despite their reluctance to address aesthetic skills training the majority of employers propose that training for aesthetic skills is both desirable and possible, with several employers expressing that pre-employment training for aesthetic skills would benefit their organisation and the sector more generally, providing more suitable employees.

Overall the findings of the research concerning employers' skills demands confirms and underlines the existing research in the field. Specifically, however, the findings confirm Nickson et al's (2004) survey research examining employers' skills demand in interactive service work. However, the qualitative examination of employers' skills demands conducted for this thesis provides data rich in detail that is not obtained by the survey method, and therefore this evidence is a useful addition to the survey evidence presented by Nickson et al. (ibid).

It is argued that the research evidence presented in Chapter 9 regarding unemployed job seekers' understandings of the skills they possess and employers' skills demands also contributes to the skills literature. The research presented in Chapter 9 includes an examination of understandings of aesthetic skills. Examination of the research data highlights that several of the unemployed job seekers, those from the New Deal group, indicated an awareness of employers in the interactive service sectors demand for aesthetic skills, yet did not report that they possessed these skills or that the demand for these skills impacted upon their negative perceptions of interactive service work. This finding indicates that further work examining unemployed job seekers' understandings of employers' skills demands in interactive service work would greatly contribute to the skills literature.

10.7 The research findings contribution to the social exclusion and employability literature

The third area of literature that informs this research concerns social exclusion and employability. This literature suggests that attention to and investment in skills is a continuing focus of UK government policy as they attempt to overcome unemployment and high levels of economic inactivity. The UK government believes that unemployment is equated with social exclusion, while employment equals inclusion and therefore makes employment the focus of their attempts to move towards a more inclusive society. Moreover they have moved from a 'passive' benefit system to an 'active' welfare system where the onus is often on individuals to

include themselves in society, most particularly through gaining employment. McQuaid and Lindsay (2005) point out that current labour market policy, with the emphasis on employability, is based on the belief that up-skilling and increasing employability has benefits for the economy, society and the individual. In particular, in terms of enhancing the employability of the unemployed, the government focuses on increasing skills and addressing skills mismatches through training schemes such as the New Deal initiative.

The social exclusion and employability literature was used to inform much of the research used to inform this thesis. Specifically it informed the research objectives concerning assessing the efficacy of aesthetic skills training for the unemployed and the examination of training provision for the unemployed for interactive service work. Moreover, as stated above, one of the main objectives of this thesis is to examine employers' skills demands in the interactive service sector and the implications for the unemployed. Overall the research conducted concerning employers' skills demand underlines the existing literature, highlighting the ongoing demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work. However, the ongoing demand for aesthetic skills has implications for the unemployed, not least the contribution possessing these skills has upon an individual's employability. As Warhurst and Nickson (2007: 107) argue employers regard the right attitude and appearance to be crucial in potential employees, and indeed they suggest 'they are being configured as the skills that matter to these employers.' Moreover, as Nickson et al. (2004) argue individuals who do not possess the right soft skills, including social, interpersonal and self-presentation skills, at the point of recruitment and selection, will be excluded from this employment. The evidence gathered from the employers involved in the research underlines that regardless of whether aesthetic skills can be conceived as skills in the traditional sense it is clear that these are the qualities that employers deem important in potential employees. Moreover, potential employees must possess and display these qualities at the point of recruitment and selection and as such, it is argued, the possession of aesthetic skills clearly contributes to employability. Individuals who lack aesthetic skills, or do not display

them at the point of entry to employment, will be disadvantaged regarding access to employment in the interactive service sector.

Moreover, a notable finding from the research concerns employers' perceptions regarding who suitable employees are and who possesses the required aesthetic skills. One manager, from an overtly stylish organisation, expressed a preference for 'young, almost middle class people...who give the right image of [the organisation]'. Yet although only this one employer explicitly mentioned social class in reference to employees the majority of employers reported that they employ students in interactive service positions because they are well suited for this work. These findings reflect evidence that the skills employers require in interactive service employees, particularly aesthetic skills, may be related to class background, with those from the middle classes and students in particular possessing the required skills (Nickson, et al., 2003: Warhurst and Nickson, 2005; Warhurst and Nickson, 2007). The findings from the research conducted for this thesis suggests that further research is required concerning employers' views of the unemployed as potential employees, while also investigating links between social class and possession of aesthetic skills.

As discussed above the government focuses on overcoming exclusion from employment by providing skills training for the unemployed. As Silver and Wilkinson suggest (1995) training policies adjusted to labour demand can increase the hiring of disadvantaged groups. It is important therefore to examine the extent and efficacy of training for the unemployed for growth areas of employment where there are currently many job opportunities. However, there is some doubt regarding the suitability of training for the unemployed. For example TERU (1999) conclude that training providers for the unemployed in Glasgow may not be addressing the lack of appropriate skills for employment in retail and hospitality work. Moreover, Nixon (2005) suggest that the male unemployed job seekers involved in his study were not offered training in the skills important in interactive service work, that is, training for soft skills. And furthermore, Belt and Richardson (2005) suggest that in a pre-employment training course for the unemployed for call centre work the training

providers did not fully understand the demand for soft skills at the point of recruitment and selection in this work. As Crouch (2004) cogently argues, skill formation systems may not operate well at times of change in the labour market where there is a resultant shift in demand for skills.

The research presented in Chapter 8 revealed that there is very little training for interactive service work for the unemployed in Glasgow, with the exception of training for call centre and care work. More specifically there was little evidence of training for retail and hospitality work. Moreover, the few existing training programmes for the unemployed for retail and hospitality work were not geared towards employer's skills demand. This training often focused on developing the technical skills and practical components of this work, rather than on developing the soft skills, including aesthetic skills, that employers demand. These findings highlight that there is very little training provision for the growth sectors of retail and hospitality work for the unemployed in Glasgow and that where it is in place it is not geared towards the skills demands of employers. The training providers signalled three reasons for the lack of retail and hospitality training for the unemployed: the poor success rates of this training; a lack of demand from the unemployed for this training; and a lack of understanding within the training organisations regarding the growth of opportunities in these sectors and employers' skills demands. The examination of the extent and appropriateness of pre-employment training for interactive service work, particularly in the retail and hospitality industries in Glasgow, extends existing knowledge regarding the quality of training provision offered for service work. Importantly, this research also identifies the reasons for the dearth of apposite training for the growth sectors of retail and hospitality, and therefore contributes to the literature regarding training for the unemployed. However, it is clear that further research in this area would be beneficial

With regard training for the unemployed, Belt and Richardson (2005) point out that although many training providers in the UK now offer training for service work, involving soft skills, there is very little academic research examining the effectiveness of such initiatives. Therefore they address this gap by examining pre-

employment training for call centre work. In the same vein this doctoral thesis attempts to further address this gap in knowledge by examining the effectiveness of a training course aimed at developing aesthetic skills in unemployed job seekers.

As reported in Chapter 8 the review of the efficacy of the aesthetic skills training programme highlights that upon completion of the course participants had developed a greater awareness of employers' demands for aesthetic skills thus enhancing their understanding of work in the interactive service sector. The participants also developed confidence and a greater awareness of aesthetic skills and the ability to utilise them in work. Overall, upon completion of the training, participants suggested they had developed a better understanding of the need to focus on their appearance and voice in order to access retail or hospitality work, and as such the training was effective in preparing those lacking the skills and knowledge to access this work. Therefore, it is argued, the original research reported in Chapter 8 concerning the efficacy of the aesthetic skills training programme adds to understandings regarding the development of aesthetic skills in the unemployed.

10.8 The implications of the demand for aesthetic skills upon unemployed job seekers' access to this work

The review of the findings from the three empirical chapters and the assessment of the contribution to literature this research provides indicates that some of the findings reflect the work of others in this area. Yet, it is also clear that this research has addressed a few gaps in the literature, as identified above. However, the overall aim of the thesis is to examine the impact of the demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work upon unemployed job seekers access to this work. While the specific contributions of the research are discussed and evaluated above it is also pertinent in this chapter to draw attention to the main implications of the demand for aesthetic skills upon job seeker access to work. Indeed, the demand for aesthetic skills has implications for not only job seekers but also employers and the various

governmental bodies whose remit includes increasing employability and enhancing access to work.

Firstly, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests that there is a demand for aesthetic skills made by employers in the interactive service sector. and as such the definition of skill needs to include elements relating to aesthetic skills. Current definitions of soft skills overlook the corporeal dimension of skill that employers demand, yet evidence suggests that possessing and displaying aesthetic skills contributes to employability, and some evidence highlights that it may be possible to develop an appreciation of and awareness of aesthetic skills in individuals. As Keep and Mayhew (1999) argue as definitions of skill move away from more traditional notions of practical skill and qualifications 'physical attributes' may now be regarded as skills. Therefore, despite the difficulties noted with measuring or assessing soft skills such as aesthetic skills, through traditional methods such as VET, the demand for aesthetic skills requires that these skills be recognised as skills, which as Witz et al. (2003) suggest are 'open to transformation'. As Crouch (2004) underlines the efficacy of skill formation systems are impacted upon by change such as the shift to a service economy and therefore it may take some time to develop appropriate tools and methods to develop skills such as aesthetic skills and also to accredit such skills. Nonetheless regardless of whether aesthetic skills are viewed as skills or not the demand for these 'skills' by employers is evident and as such employability is determined, in part, upon possession of these skills. Therefore training for the unemployed needs to address the lack of such skills in individuals in order to increase their employability and enhance their access to much employment in the interactive service sector. To sum up, the demand for aesthetic skills and their impact upon employability needs to be recognised, not least by those responsible for providing training for the unemployed, in order to allow training provision to accurately meet the needs of employers and the nature of work while enhancing individuals access to work.

Secondly, another result of the demand for aesthetic skills is the ensuing problem of exclusion from work that requires utilising aesthetic skills. This exclusion can occur

for several reasons: due to employer discrimination; due to a lack of appropriate skills; or due to self-exclusion from this work. Exclusion from this work is problematic as the jobs demanding aesthetic skills are in growth areas, such as the retail and hospitality sectors, where there are employment opportunities for those who are unemployed and are seeking to gain employment. Yet the demand for skills related to appearance, presentation and demeanour may further disadvantage those already experiencing disadvantage in accessing employment, that is the long term unemployed and the unemployed from working class backgrounds. Nickson and Warhurst (2005) make the cogent point that skills relating to attitude and appearance, the skills demanded by employers in the interactive service sector, are linked to class, while Keep and Mayhew (1999) also relate class background to the possession of skills and personal attributes required for work in much of the service economy. Therefore if the demand for skills related to corporeal capital continues then class divides may be reinforced (Warhurst et al., 2004). Indeed as Warhurst and Nickson (2007: 116) argue the demand for aesthetic skills brings with it a 'new exclusionary potential' where discrimination based on appearance is apparent. Undoubtedly then it is important that the ongoing demand for aesthetic skills does not result in future exclusion from this work by large sections of the population. Moreover, situations such as the displacement effect, of high numbers of students found working in the interactive service sector further compound the issue of access to this employment for the unemployed. It is important to note that while employer discrimination was not a focus of this study the younger males involved in this study expressed that employer discrimination, generally towards the unemployed as a whole, and regarding the appearance or sound of individuals, contributes to the difficulties they face in accessing work. While a further factor that contributes to access to work in the interactive service sector is self-exclusion by the unemployed. As the TERU (1999) study highlighted many unemployed individuals self exclude away from employment in the interactive service sector, as they do not perceive that they possess the required skills and characteristics for this work. Appropriate skills training, aimed at developing the aesthetic skills demanded by employers at the point of entry to employment would be a first step in better preparing individuals for work in the interactive service sector and thus enhance their employability with regard this

work. Importantly many of the employers involved in this study expressed very positive views regarding pre-employment training that would address the lack of aesthetic skills in many potential employees, and indeed welcomed such training.

Thirdly, it is clear that there are important demand side issues specifically regarding the quality of much employment in the retail and hospitality sectors which impact upon how this work is perceived by unemployed job seekers. The research highlights that to address the lack of appropriately skilled employees presenting themselves for employment in the retail and hospitality industries employers need to make changes that will benefit their organisation and the service industry generally. The employers involved in this study pointed out that they are unhappy with the current situation in the retail and hospitality industries where they report difficulties in recruiting suitable employees, particularly for full time and permanent positions, which has resulted in the increasing incidence of part time work being carried out by students, who generally do not remain with the organisation beyond the duration of their studies. This evidence reflects the findings of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) who highlight that there are skill shortages in the consumer services in the UK, with employers having difficulty recruiting 'competent staff' in the hospitality and tourism and retail sectors, despite much of the work being regarded as low skill work (Turner, 2005). Moreover, the reality is that much service work is poorly perceived by unemployed clients of training organisations due to the poor wages and conditions and job insecurity that they associate with this work. For example, it is clear that like social skills, aesthetic skills may be increasingly recognised as core skills required in interactive service work yet they do not attract a wage premium, despite employers demand for them. Therefore employers, alongside trade unions and the government, need to improve these conditions of employment in order to make these jobs more desirable to the unemployed. Employers seem to understand, in part, the negative perceptions associated with work in the interactive service sector, and in hospitality and retail specifically. Evidence from the employers involved in this study suggests that they associate recruitment difficulties with a negative attitude towards serving work in the population. However, although it is important to recognise the importance of perceptions of skill and the nature of work and how this negatively

impacts upon perceptions of interactive service work it is important that we do not overlook the reported issues regarding the quality of much work in the interactive service sector, such as pay, hours and lack of opportunity for career progression. Employers did suggest that a perceived lack of opportunity for career progression impacted upon negative perceptions of the work, yet importantly, they did not report that issues such as pay, job insecurity and working hours impacted upon negative perception of this work. Clearly then employers would benefit from a better understanding of job seekers' perceptions of interactive service work and could encourage participation in this work by taking steps to overcome the identified negative aspects of this work.

Finally, measures such as providing appropriate training, overcoming barriers to employment and improving the quality of interactive service sector employment needs to be accompanied by a change in perceptions towards this work if access to such work is to be increased. The majority of unemployed job seekers involved in this study underlined the poor perceptions of serving work possessed by a large percentage of the population, particularly males. The perception of interactive service work, or serving work, as female work is obviously problematic and the rejection of interactive service work by males are well documented and reported in this thesis (c.f. Helms and Cumbers, 2004; Lindsay and McQuaid, 2004; McDowell, 2004; Nixon, 2005). However, male notions of what is 'good' or 'appropriate' work may need to be reconfigured just as the economy is reconfiguring around services. Many of the traditional past work experiences of males no longer exist, yet for older males work preferences revolve around these past experiences. Moreover, as Nixon (2005) and Helms and Cumbers (2004) suggest, males express preferences for manual blue-collar work. Thus, as Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) recognise, despite the growth of opportunities for employment in the service sector a large number of unemployed job seekers are seeking jobs outwith the sector. A change in attitude towards interactive service work would possibly encourage more unemployed job seekers to consider such work. As highlighted by the unemployed job seekers in this study and in Lindsay and McQuaid's study those with past experience of such work are more likely to posses less negative attitudes towards this work, therefore it is

possible that work placements in this industry, as part of skills training, would enhance individuals' perceptions of this work.

10.9 <u>Conclusions</u>

This chapter presented a discussion and evaluation of the main findings of the study, integrating the three strands of empirical research and the literature used to inform the study. It is clear that the research presented in this thesis both confirms existing research and contributes to knowledge regarding skills in interactive service work and unemployed job seekers' access to this work by addressing gaps in knowledge. Indeed, it is argued that it is important to do both in a new area of research. In particular, the thesis addresses the gap in the literature concerning the demand for aesthetic skills and the impact this has on access to work in the interactive service sector. Furthermore, the main implications of the demand and supply of aesthetic skills are highlighted, including the link between possessing aesthetic skills and employability, exclusion from work that requires aesthetic skills, the quality of work in the interactive service sector and the extent and appropriateness of training for the unemployed for interactive service work. Following this discussion the final chapter then presents the conclusions of the thesis.

Chapter 11

Conclusions

11.1 Introduction

As discussed in the introduction to this thesis the impetus for this research stems from both an academic and personal interest. Through working and studying in Glasgow the huge changes that have occurred in the city over the last ten to twenty years have not gone unnoticed. More pertinently the experience of working as a research assistant on a project examining the nature and significance of aesthetic labour in Glasgow raised many questions outwith the remit of that research project that demanded attention. Therefore the focus for this thesis, examining the impact of changes in the nature of work on unemployed job seekers' access to work, became clear and that focus has been maintained throughout the doctoral research process. This final chapter summarises the thesis, affirms it contribution, signals implications in terms of future research and policy and also highlights the strengths and limitations of the thesis.

11.2 Summary of thesis

11.2.1 Background to the empirical research

From the literature it is clear that, using the 1950s 'reference point' of male, full time, permanent and usually manual employment, employment in the labour market in the UK has altered considerably, most particularly over the last three decades. Although there are various changes in the labour market (discussed in detail in Chapter 2) the issue concerning this thesis is the growth of service work, and in particular interactive service work in the retail and hospitality sectors. Alongside economic growth in the service sector the UK has experienced a simultaneous

increase in part-time employment (most usually conducted by females), increased female participation in the labour market, reduced unemployment levels and an increase in economic inactivity levels. Yet, worryingly, Nolan and Slater (2003) argue that these changes are a result of the decline of manual and heavy industries in the 1980s and highlight the failure of the service sector in offering alternative employment opportunities in certain regions of the UK.

One such region is Glasgow, the geographic focus of this thesis, a city that reflects the changes occurring more generally across the UK with the shift to a service based economy. Glasgow Economic Forum (2003) highlight that the shift to a service economy has created new job opportunities in Glasgow. Yet problematically, despite a buoyant labour market, Glasgow suffers from high unemployment levels and increasing levels of economic inactivity, particularly among males. It is argued in Chapter 2 that the regeneration of Glasgow has not benefited the population of Glasgow equally; with in particular, older males being disadvantaged by the growth in service work. As TERU (1999) suggest, with the shift to a service economy in Glasgow, the call centre, retail and hospitality sectors are growth industries that create job opportunities for the population. Although there has been research regarding the growth of call centre work and its impact on employees there has been less research concerned with examining the growth of opportunities in retail and hospitality work and implications of this growth. Moreover, retail and hospitality work is particularly apparent in Glasgow with the retail and hospitality industries providing 20 per cent of all jobs in Glasgow (Glasgow Economic Monitor, 2005). Therefore this research focuses on retail and hospitality work.

The second strand of literature utilised to inform this research concerns skills and the changing definition of skill, in part resulting from the increase in service work. The literature highlights that the issue of skills generally has become increasingly important for the government and for the individual and this importance is reflected in the level of academic attention focusing on skill. Although the definition of skill is much debated (as discussed in Chapter 3) it is clear that work in the service sector, particularly work involving regular and repeated interaction with customers, that is

interactive service work, requires 'soft' skills alongside the technical skills required to carry out the work. Furthermore, the demand for and utilisation of aesthetic skills in much interactive service work is apparent. However, although the government is concerned with increasing skills levels and overcoming unemployment through skills training to increase employability, it is important to note Crouch's (2004) point that skill formation systems may not operate effectively during periods of change such as that being experienced in the UK with the growth of the service economy. Thus existing methods of equipping individuals with skills may not be effective when there is little understanding regarding skills demands. Moreover, as Witz et al. (2003: 41) note the 'embodied dispositions', or what can be perceived as aesthetic skills, that are required in much interactive service work 'are not equally distributed socially' and as such many individuals may lack the required aesthetic skills to access employment in the interactive service sector.

Reflecting upon the literature concerning the growth of service work and debates around skills it is then imperative to examine the literature surrounding social exclusion and in particular the issues of exclusion from employment and employability. Clearly the issue of social exclusion is a priority for government in the UK, with a focus on overcoming social exclusion through increasing access to work by enhancing individual's employability. It is argued that the government, and therefore initiatives aimed at overcoming social exclusion, focus on the individual's role in their social exclusion, overlooking the structural forces or external factors that contribute to social exclusion, and in particular exclusion from employment. This thesis therefore adopts a broad definition of employability, taking into account factors such as employers skills demands, the efficacy of existing training for the unemployed and the perceptions of the unemployed towards interactive service work, in order to examine the impact of the growth of service work upon unemployed job seekers, specifically the demand for aesthetic skills and the resultant implications in terms of access to work and training for the unemployed.

Examination of these three strands of literature makes it very clear that the growth of service work has implications for the government, employers and for those seeking

employment. From this literature emerged a number of important issues that have hitherto been under researched and therefore required empirical investigation in order to develop a fuller understanding of the implications arising from the demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work. Thus this doctoral research examined employers skills demands in the interactive service sector in detail, assessed the efficacy of existing training for the unemployed regarding skills training for retail and hospitality employment specifically and importantly investigated unemployed job seekers' perceptions of interactive service work.

11.2.2 The empirical research – key points

It is important at this point to emphasise the key points from the empirical research. While the review of the literature informing the research underpins the thesis, offering context and background information, reviewing the empirical findings highlights what was actually discovered by carrying out this research and thus makes the thesis's contribution to knowledge clear.

In Chapter 4 it is argued that although there is a general acceptance of the importance of some soft skills in service work often analyses of soft skills overlook the demands employers make regarding employees' corporeality. It then highlights the importance of the work of Warhurst et el. (2000), Nickson et al. (2001) and Witz et al. (2003) whose research into 'aesthetic labour' draws attention to employers demand for and utilisation of employees aesthetic capacities and attributes, or what is conceived here as aesthetic skills. As the NSTF point out what employers demand or look for in potential employees when recruiting clearly determine access to employment and as such the personal attributes and characteristics of individuals appear to be conceived as skills by employers. Moreover, Warhurst and Nickson (2007: 107) argue that although debate regarding what comprises skills will continue it is important to note that appearance and attitude are 'being configured as the skills that matter' to employers in the interactive service sector. Chapter 7 then reports on the demand for aesthetic skills by employers in the interactive service sector in Glasgow. The findings of this strand of research are related to the key research question and

subsidiary research questions outlined in the introduction to the thesis. The main findings of this research related to employers' skill demands are highlighted below:

Table 14: Main research findings regarding employers' skill demands

Objective: Examine employers' skills demands in the interactive service sector and the implications for the unemployed.
• Ongoing demand for and utilisation of aesthetic skills by employers.
• Demand evident in both style and non-style organisations, although demands more explicit, rigorous and specific in style organisations.
• Potential employees expected to display aesthetic skills at point of entry to employment.
• Employers 'ideal' employee possesses confidence, commitment to customer service and an overall look and sound that reflects and underlines the style of the organisation.
• Aesthetic skills important due to perceived positive contribution to the service experienced by customers.
• Possession and display of aesthetic skills contributes to employability.
• Disadvantage regarding access to employment for those who lack aesthetic skills or do not display them at the point of entry to employment.
• Employers willing to address training for technical skills but reluctance to address training for aesthetic skills.
• Employers suggest training for aesthetic skills is both desirable and possible and advise pre-employment training for aesthetic skills would benefit the industry.

Consequently, reflecting upon these findings it is argued that the possession of aesthetic skills contributes to employability. Yet despite the ongoing demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work and the link between employability and possession of these skills it is evident that not all sections of the population possess these skills. It is important therefore to examine training for interactive service work and in particular for aesthetic skills. The aim of the second strand of research, reported in Chapter 8, is to inform the gap in academic knowledge relating to examining the extent and appropriateness of pre-employment training for interactive service work, particularly in the retail and hospitality industries. The findings of this strand of research are again related to the key research question and subsidiary

questions. The main findings of this research concerning training provision are highlighted below:

Table 15: Main research findings regarding training provision for interactive service work for the unemployed

Objective: Examine training provision for interactive service work for the unemployed.
• Lack of training for interactive service work, apart from call centre work or care work, available to the unemployed.
• Lack of training for retail and hospitality work.
• Existing training for retail and hospitality work not geared towards the skill demands of employers, focusing on technical skills, and overlooking soft skills.
• Training providers suggest that there are several reasons why little apposite training exists for interactive service work in the retail and hospitality sectors.   1. This training suffers from poor success rates   2. Lack of demand from unemployed clients   3. Lack of understanding among training providers regarding job opportunities in growth areas and employers skills demands.

Assessing the extent of training provision for interactive service work available to unemployed job seekers highlights two important findings. Firstly, current training provision is not geared towards the skills demands of employers in the interactive service sector, and secondly where training for interactive service work has been in place it is clear that this training is unpopular with the unemployed clients. These findings suggest that while the lack of appropriate pre-employment training for interactive service work impacts upon unemployed job seekers' access to this work unemployed job seekers do not express demand for this training, possibly reflecting negative perceptions of this work. It is important therefore to discover why training for interactive service work is unpopular with unemployed jobs seekers, and the aim of the third strand of empirical research is to draw attention to unemployed job seekers' perceptions of interactive service work. Importantly, and reflecting the information offered by training providers, none of the clients involved in this study were undergoing training for interactive service work. The findings of this strand of research are linked to the key research question and the subsidiary research questions. The main findings are highlighted below:

Table 16: Main research findings regarding unemployed job seekers views of interactive service work, skills, future work and barriers to work

Objective: Examine views of unemployed job seekers regarding interactive service work, skills, future work and barriers to work.
• Unemployed job seekers held poor perceptions of interactive service work due to the quality of employment and the required interactions with customers.
• Perception of this work as involving poor pay, job insecurity. shift work. long hours and few opportunities for career progression contribute to the aversion to interactive service work.
• The required interaction with customers on a day-to-day basis contributes greatly to the negative perceptions of this work.
• Common perception among unemployed job seekers that employers in the interactive service work require young employees.
• Older individuals, both male and female, expressed preference for call centre work, involving voice-to-voice interaction with customers, while the younger males expressed preference for back-of-house retail work where no customer interaction is required.
• An overall rejection of work in the style labour market by unemployed job seekers with the exception of several young males with past experience in hospitality work. reflecting a link between past employment in service work and a more positive attitude towards this work.
• Understandings of skills they possess include soft skills, but not aesthetic skills.
• Awareness of employers demands for aesthetic skills noted by young male unemployed job seekers.
• Future work preferences for work outwith the interactive service sector, preferences usually reflecting past work experiences.
• Reported more external barriers than personal or circumstantial barriers to employment, including: a lack of well paid employment opportunities; a lack of good quality jobs; a lack of information regarding job opportunities; and employer discrimination.

Assessing the views of unemployed job seekers regarding interactive service work reveals that overall, regardless of age or gender, the majority of these individuals hold very negative views of this work, due to the quality of the work and the required interaction with customers. However, a proportion of the young male individuals involved in the research expressed that they would consider employment in the hospitality sector of the style labour market. Importantly these individuals have experience of work in the hospitality sector and this experience may have influenced their slightly more positive view of this work. Secondly. regarding skills. the

unemployed job seekers all noted the demand for both hard and soft skills by employers in interactive service work, however, only the young males noted the demand for aesthetic skills in this work. Moreover, the majority of individuals expressed a preference to gain employment outwith the service sector, with preferred work often reflecting their past work experiences. Overall, the males involved in this study expressed preferences for manual work despite the lack of opportunities in this work. Finally, these individuals highlighted that they experienced a range of barriers to work, however importantly; most of these barriers are external barriers that they have no control over, such as discrimination by employers and a lack of quality employment.

The fourth strand of research involved examining the efficacy of an aesthetic skills training programme for the unemployed offered by the Wise Group. The findings of this research answered the key research question. The main findings from this research are highlighted below:

Table 17: Main research findings regarding the efficacy of one aesthetic skills training programme for the unemployed

Objective: Assess the efficacy of aesthetic skill training for the unemployed
• Aim of course to develop an appreciation for and understanding of the skills employers in the interactive service sector require in order to enhance employability.
• Evidence of improved understanding of the importance of personal appearance at work.
• Evidence of improved confidence in participants.
• Evidence of understanding of the performative nature of much work in the interactive service sector.
• Evidence of an improved understanding of employers' skills demand in interactive service work.

Overall the evidence concerning the effectiveness of the aesthetic skills training highlights that this training course was effective, providing many positive outcomes for participants. The evidence suggests that upon completion of the training participants had developed an appreciation for and understanding of the skills

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demands of employers in the interactive service sector. They had also increased in confidence, understood the performativity of interactive service work and understood the importance of both looking good and sounding right in this work.

11.3 <u>Relevance and usefulness of research findings</u>

Having reiterated the key findings of the empirical research it is important to state the relevance and usefulness of the research. The growth of opportunities for employment in the expanding service sector should provide employment opportunities for all of the population. However, it is clear that the growth of employment opportunities in the service sector, in particular the interactive service sector, has not offset the results of the decline of manual and heavy industries in the 1980s, with high unemployment and economic inactivity levels apparent in cities such as Glasgow. It is important to understand why there has not been a replacement effect with the growth of the service industry and the thesis has explored some possible reasons for the situation. Therefore this research has academic relevance and usefulness as it contributes to debates about skill, employability and the nature of work in the interactive service sector.

Firstly this research offers a better understanding of the nature of work and employment and the utilisation of skills in the interactive service sector. As Crouch (2004) has argued in periods of labour market change, such as the relatively recent shift to a service economy in the UK, there is less certainty regarding the skills required to carry out work. Also there have been calls for improved understandings of employers' skills demands (Ashton et al. 1999; Keep and Mayhew. 1999) and specific concern that employers demand for aesthetic skills has been overlooked in research to date (Nickson et al. 2004). Therefore this research contributes to debates regarding the nature of interactive service work and to debates regarding the changing meaning of skill, highlighting in particular the ongoing demand for aesthetic skills and indicating that possession of aesthetic skills enhances employability for work in the interactive service sector. Specifically, the research

concerning employers' skills demands extends Nickson et al's (2004) examination of survey data regarding employers' skills demand, providing qualitative data that is rich in detail.

Secondly, it is clear that the government is committed to tackling unemployment levels by increasing employability via skills training. Therefore it is vital that skills training is apposite, meeting the supply and demands of the labour market and employers. Yet existing methods of skill formation, including training for the unemployed, may be less effective when there are rapid changes in the labour market and the economy (Crouch, 2004). Moreover, as Belt and Richardson (2005) point out, there is little academic research assessing the effectiveness of service work pre-employment training initiatives for the unemployed. Therefore the research of this thesis addresses this gap in knowledge by examining specifically the extent and effectiveness of training for the unemployed for interactive service work in the retail and hospitality sectors, usefully highlighting that there is very little training for this work and where it is in place it is not geared towards employer's demands. Moreover, this research contributes to debates concerning the usefulness of training for interactive service work. The examination of the efficacy of the aesthetic skills training course addressing a gap in knowledge concerning the effectiveness of training for the unemployed in developing an appreciation for and understanding of the skills demands of employers in the interactive service sector.

Thirdly, this research contributes to the debates surrounding issues arising from the change in the nature of work and the utilisation of soft skills, in particular issues arising from the demand for and utilisation of aesthetic skills. This research underlines Warhurst and Nickson's (2007) argument that the demand for aesthetic skills may benefit the middle classes, including students, while disadvantaging others, such as unemployed job seekers. Moreover, the link between the possession and display of soft skills, such as aesthetic skills, and gender is underlined in this research. This research emphasises that the demand for aesthetic skills may disadvantage males, in particular older males, in terms of access to work in the interactive service sector.

Finally, Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) suggest that further research into the practical and attitudinal barriers that prevent many unemployed job seekers from including service sector employment in their job search strategy is required. While Helms and Cumbers (2004: 15) also suggest the need for further research into how changes in the labour market are 'interpreted' by individuals such as unemployed job seekers and how these changes impact upon their 'values, perceptions and attitudes' towards work. Thus by incorporating research into the perceptions and attitudes of unemployed job seekers towards interactive service work this research makes important contributions to knowledge concerning the barriers faced by these individuals with regard access to this employment and a specific examination of perceptions of work in the style labour market. This examination of perceptions of work in the style labour market, and unemployed job seekers' understanding of employers demand for aesthetic skills, contributes to debates surrounding attitudes to service work and understanding of skills demands.

Overall, as pointed out above, and in detail in Chapter 10, it is argued that the main conceptual contributions of this doctoral research include contributions to the literature surrounding skills in interactive service work and unemployed job seekers' access to this work. Although analysis of interactive service work has benefited from the examination of the corporeal aspects of this work, most specifically the research surrounding the demand for aesthetic skills, this demand has not been conceptualised adequately in relation to exclusion or access to this work. This gap in understanding has informed the key concern of this thesis and it is argued, the aim of this thesis, to examine the impact of the demand for aesthetic skills in interactive service work upon unemployed job seekers' access to this work, fills this gap in understanding. It is argued that the research reported in this thesis both confirms and extends existing knowledge, which is important in new areas of research.

Moreover, this doctoral research has practical utility. It examines the extent and effectiveness of training for the unemployed for interactive service work in the retail and hospitality sectors, and underlines the positive outcomes of training geared towards developing an appreciation for and understanding of the utility of aesthetic

skills in interactive service work in unemployed job seekers. In addition it examines the perceptions and attitudes of unemployed job seekers towards interactive service work highlighting the practical and attitudinal barriers faced by these individuals with regard access to this employment.

11.4 Policy implications – a combination of measures

Not surprisingly, given that this doctoral research was part of an ESRC CASE studentship with a partner organisation whose objective is to help the unemployed find employment this research has policy implications. As Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) rightly point out policy makers have viewed the growth of employment opportunities in the service sector as valuable employment creation that could lower unemployment levels. Yet as Shuttleworth and McKinstry (2001) indicate despite the expanding service sector and a buoyant labour market many urban areas in Glasgow experience high levels of unemployment alongside difficulties of recruitment and job retention in the service sector. Many of the difficulties with work in the interactive service sector are identified in this chapter; not least the lack of appropriate training for required skills, negative perceptions of interactive service work, issues surrounding the nature of such work and the poor quality of much of this work. It is clear therefore that a combination of measures, as set out in Table 18 below, is required in order that the employment opportunities available in the growth sectors of interactive service work in the retail and hospitality industries can be accessed by unemployed job seekers.

Table 18: Combination of measures required

Measures by Employers:	Measures by Unemployed Job Seekers:	Measures by Government Bodies/ Training Providers/ Trade Union:
Premium paid for soft skills, including aesthetic skills	Undergo education regarding realities of labour market and job opportunities	Training providers to develop and offer suitable skills training, including aesthetic skills training, for unemployed – joint working with employers in order that employers inform content of training
Improve quality of work – remuneration, conditions, job security etc	Undergo skills training for skills utilised by employers in interactive service sector, including aesthetic skills training	Formalise skill accreditation for 'soft' skills including aesthetic skills
Offer clear routes for career progression and provide opportunities for ongoing skills development		Government body to monitor trends in occupational and industrial change, then provide appropriate and timely training provision
Offer education regarding careers in the industry during secondary education – providing accurate view of work in order to encourage ISW as a potential career		Education for unemployed job seekers regarding the realities of the labour market – where job opportunities are, range of jobs and possibility of career paths to follow
Work with training organisations in developing skills training courses, specifically aesthetic skills training, for the unemployed		Government and trade unions – work with employers on quality of employment (wages, conditions etc)

This combination of measures involves action on the part of employers, unemployed job seekers and the various bodies involved in enhancing employability. This approach obviously involves taking a broader approach to employability, as suggested by McQuaid and Lindsay (2005), where both supply and demand side factors are considered important in determining employability. As McQuaid and Lindsay argue it is important that employability is tackled not only via 'individual factors', such as skills and attributes, but also that external factors that greatly impact upon employability, such as labour market factors, the effectiveness of training provision and employer related aspects such as remuneration, job conditions, recruitment methods and discrimination, are also included. Currently government policy aims to overcome unemployment by focusing on aspects of the individual

without looking at the broader factors that also impact upon employability. However, it is argued here that the inclusion all three actors in the employability equation and the combination of measures suggested would positively impact upon the employability of unemployed job seekers with regard access to work in the interactive service sector.

As outlined in Table 18 employers need to consider several issues in order to improve access to interactive service work for unemployed job seekers. Firstly as these employers demand soft skills, including aesthetic skills, at the point of entry to employment they must consider attaching a wage premium to such skills. As Felstead et al. (2007) note, although aesthetic skills are widely used in service work, there is no wage premium associated with these skills. Related to this point employers also need to improve the quality of work in the interactive service sector, improving work conditions, increasing wages and providing job security, as unemployed job seekers view the quality of work in the interactive service sector to be poor. Moreover, employers also need to offer clear routes for career progression and continuing skills development in order to enhance job retention rates. Another useful intervention would be greater coordination between the retail and hospitality sectors and education providers such that useful information and a realistic vision of work in these industries are made available to individuals. Finally there is evidence presented in this thesis and discussed by Lindsay and Sturgeon (2003) regarding the positive outcomes achieved by training that is enhanced by the involvement of employers. Lindsay and Sturgeon's findings highlight the importance of local employer involvement in local employment initiatives, while the training providers involved in this study also noted the positive outcomes for training for the unemployed that has a level of employer involvement. This findings resonates with Crouch's (1997) assertion that employers are able to respond more quickly to changes in skills demands than other skill formation systems and as such the usefulness of employers in impacting upon skills training should be understood.

There are also measures that need to be undertaken by unemployed job seekers in order to enhance their employability in a labour market increasingly geared towards

services. Firstly it is important that these job seekers receive training and education regarding the realties of work in the interactive service sector. As pointed out in this thesis and discussed by Lindsay and McQuaid (2004) those with previous experience in any kind of service work had more positive attitudes towards this work than those without experience. Therefore those without past work experience in interactive service work would benefit from some insight into the industries involved. This is an important point because as forms of work alter individuals may need to consider areas of employment they would previously have overlooked. As argued in the final report of the NSTF (2000a: 41): 'The nature of occupational change is such that many individuals will need directing into substantially new career paths if they are to maintain their continuing employability.' Secondly, unemployed job seekers could enhance their employability for work in the interactive service sector by undergoing training to develop the skills demanded by employers, including aesthetic skills.

Finally, it is clear that the government, via the various bodies and organisations associated with developing employability and increasing access to employment for the unemployed, along with pressure from trade unions, have a role to play in enhancing the employability of unemployed job seekers with regard to access to work in the interactive service sector. Firstly it needs to be recognised that there is a demand for soft skills, and particularly aesthetic skills, in the interactive service sector and therefore it is important that appropriate training provision for such skills is provided for the unemployed. As pointed out above, training that is informed by employers tends to be more in tune with employers skills demands, and has better job outcome levels than training with no employer involvement, and as such training organisations should encourage the input of employers at the stage of course development, and use links with employers to provide work experience and possibly offer job interviews upon completion of training. As Keep and Mayhew (1999: 10) rightly point out with the demand for aesthetic skills VET providers may need to address 'speech training, deportment, and personal grooming classes rather than degrees, GCSEs, or NVQs.' Yet it is also important that the appropriate body formalises skill accreditation for soft skills, including aesthetic skills, such that training results in positive, verifiable outcomes that enhance individuals

employability. Moreover, as changes in the economy and employment continue there is a need to accurately monitor trends in occupational and industrial change, examining associated changes in skills requirements and subsequently providing appropriate and timely training provision for such skills in order to minimise skills shortages and gaps. Once a clear picture of evolving labour markets is developed the government needs to provide education for unemployed job seekers regarding the realities of the labour market, providing information on job opportunities, ranges of jobs and availability of careers. As the NSTF (2000a) highlights, younger individuals and adults would benefit greatly from careers advice, education and guidance regarding the realities of the local and wider labour markets. Finally, government policy needs to go further than the existing incentives provided to encourage job seekers to enter employment. Although the strategies of offering tax credits and the introduction of the minimum wage seek to provide real incentives to move from unemployment into employment the system needs to be one that prioritises the very real needs of the unemployed, such as providing well informed and appropriate training and encouraging employers to provide decent quality of employment. As Smith (2000) has concluded the success of welfare to work programmes is dependant upon not only economic incentives but also the quality of jobs that unemployed job seekers have access to. As with the US, government policy in the UK has sought to utilise training for the unemployed to overcome difficulties with accessing employment. However, Lafer (2004) highlights that there is no evidence that skills training initiatives in the US has resulted in a move out of poverty for those participating in such programmes. The issue here is the quality of the employment offered upon completion of skills training and both the government and trade unions need to demand that employers offer good quality work with adequate wage levels. As argued in Chapter 5, for employment to overcome social exclusion is it vital that the quality of employment is adequate, offering satisfactory remuneration and offering 'meaningful' employment (Byrne, 1999; Smith, 2000; Toynbee, 2003).

It is clear that the efforts and measures that require to be put in place will involve a number of actors, because, as McQuaid et al. (2006) have highlighted, the

employability of individuals can be greatly increased when there is interagency collaboration and joint working. Moreover, as Crouch (1997) argues skill formation can suffer because those involved in skill formation have differing interests or lack appropriate information, and it is clear that the agencies usually responsible for skill formation suffer in times of uncertainty regarding skills, which in turn will negatively impact upon individuals seeking skills provision and training. Therefore communication, joint working and combined efforts between, trade union and policy makers may enhance the quality of skill formation. However, as discussed, employers and the unemployed themselves also have a role to play in enhancing employability and the combined effect of the various measures outlined above may go some way to tackling exclusion from employment in the interactive service sector for many unemployed job seekers.

11.5 <u>Strengths and limitations of the research</u>

Like any piece of research this work has both strengths and limitations. With regard to the qualitative methodology adopted for the majority of the empirical research conducted it is considered that valuable information was gathered using qualitative tools and it is considered that quantitative methods would not have been as useful in gathering this data and would not allow the depth of examination gained or a clear view of the multiple perspectives gained for analysis. Moreover, the focus group method adopted in the research with the unemployed job seekers allowed stimulation of discussion in a way not possible in individual interviews.

Furthermore, adopting a critical realist stance towards this research ensures that the focus of the work is not limited to behaviour, experiences and perceptions, but also stresses the impact of structures in society, both political and ideological, that may disadvantage the less powerful. Moreover the inclusion of the 'voice' of unemployed job seekers balances the research, allowing an examination of both supply and demand factors regarding skills, while the utilisation of a broad definition of

employability allows the inclusion in analysis of factors other than those related to the individual, including factors external to the individual and outwith their control.

These strengths however are also accompanied by several limitations regarding the research. Firstly, the sample of unemployed job seekers involved in this study may not be representative of the unemployed population. Although the study included both males and females with a wide age range the females involved used in the research were all undergoing training for administrative work, and therefore their perceptions of other work may not be generalisable to the wider female unemployed job seeker population. However, employees of the Wise Group facilitated gaining access to these clients, and although gaining access was relatively straightforward the researcher did not select the groups or individual who took part. Rather the groups were in place, prior to the research, according to their training programme and work option, in the case of the females involved in this study, ILM training for administrative work. Additionally, although the joint working with the Wise Group facilitated access to the unemployed job seekers it is important to note that the findings represent the views of unemployed job seekers who are clients of this one organisation. It is important to note however, that gaining access to unemployed job seekers would be difficult without the facilitation of, for example, the Wise Group employees. Moreover, the research location is limited to one city, namely Glasgow. Conducting similar research in other UK cities would enhance the findings of the research and reveal similarities and differences across cities. Finally, in relation to the primary data collection it is clear that the sample of employers interviewed are not representative of all interactive service sector employers and the number involved in the research is not large. However, the unfortunate timing, during the busy Christmas season, of this wave of research resulted in fewer participants than anticipated. Nonetheless, it was important that this piece of research was conducted at this time due to the impending maternity leave and required submission of a report, concerning the findings of this strand of research, to the Wise Group.

11.6 <u>Issues for future research</u>

Several issues emerge from an overview of the research and associated limitations. It is clear that research into the growth of service work, and the related demand for aesthetic skills, and the resulting impact upon unemployed job seekers' access to this employment would benefit from future research involving a larger sample of male and female job seekers in order that comparisons could be made between females and males perceptions of interactive service work, and specifically work involving aesthetic skills. Similarly research involving both different employers and unemployed job seekers outwith the Wise Group would also provide valuable comparative data. Furthermore, it would be valuable to conduct similar research with employers, training providers and unemployed job seekers in other cities across the UK, which have also undergone a shift away from manufacturing and heavy industries towards a service based economy. In summary, and based on the limitations of this research, data triangulation using analysis of data from a multi-site survey, involving other cities who have also experienced the shift to a service economy alongside the decline of heavier industries, yet who also suffer from high unemployment and high inactivity levels, might further affirm the findings of this research.

Moreover, although not the focus of this doctoral research the research highlighted a key issue that requires further examination. The importance of class regarding the changing nature of work and skills demands emerged as a factor that influences access to interactive service work. As Keep and Mayhew (1999), Nickson et al. (2003, 2005) and Warhurst et al. (2004) argue the skills required of interactive service workers, including aesthetic skills, may be related to social class. Indeed, Warhurst and Nickson (2007) suggest that there is a displacement effect in much service work, with students, who in the UK generally have middle class backgrounds, filling positions in the service sector that other types of workers, those from working class backgrounds, may have been expected to fill. Further, as highlighted in Chapter 7, while only one employer reported a link between 'middle-classness' and the ideal front line service employee, the majority of the employers

noted that they employed student in these positions, as they are perceived to possess the right skills for the job. Therefore, further examination of the link between possession of aesthetic skills, the skills required in interactive service work, and social class would greatly enhance knowledge concerning the important factors involved in access to interactive service work.

More specifically, as the evaluation of the findings in Chapter 10 highlights there are several issues that require further exploration in order to enhance understandings regarding unemployed job seekers' access to work in the interactive service sector. Firstly, it is argued that there is a need for further research examining unemployed job seekers' views of work in the style labour market. Secondly, the research highlights that the unemployed job seekers involved in this study reported that a dislike of the required interactions with customer in interactive service work contributes greatly to their negative perceptions of this work. Further research concerning this finding would be useful to determine if this finding has relevance for other unemployed job seekers. Thirdly, the skills literature would benefit from further research concerning unemployed jobs seekers' understandings of employers' skills demands for interactive service employees. Moreover, the research findings highlight that further research is required concerning employers views of the unemployed as potential employees, including an examination of the link between social class and possession of aesthetic skills. Finally, as the growth of interactive service work continues and employers seek other forms of competitive advantage, other than the utilisation of aesthetic labour, it is important to inform those seeking employment, and those whose objective it is to help the unemployed gain employment, of the strategies adopted by employers.

11.7 Concluding remarks

This doctoral research highlights the ongoing demand for aesthetic skills by employers in the interactive service sector, and emphasises that despite the link between possessing and displaying aesthetic skills and employability there is very

little training for these skills for unemployed job seekers. The research also draws attention to the successful outcomes associated with a pilot training course aimed at developing aesthetic skills in unemployed job seekers, suggesting that there is scope for the development of aesthetic skills in those currently lacking them. However, importantly, the research reveals that interactive service work is extremely unpopular with the unemployed job seekers involved in this research, due to issues of the quality of this work and a dislike of the required interaction with customers, and therefore skills training alone may not be the solution to overcome their lack of access to work in the interactive service sector. Moreover, the empirical research reveals the demand for aesthetic skills has implications for not only job seekers but also employers and the various governmental bodies whose remit is to increase employability and enhance access to work. Yet it is important that the quality of work unemployed job seekers gain is adequate, such that the work offers satisfactory remuneration and career progression. As Smith (2000) cogently argues employment is only a positive outcome for those previously unemployed if the quality of the jobs is good and the wages sufficient to encourage a shift away from unemployment or economic inactivity and reliance on welfare benefits. Yet, as highlighted in this thesis, it is not only the quality of employment that is important to job seekers, the negative perceptions of unemployed job seekers is greatly influenced by a dislike of dealing with customers. As one unemployed job seeker suggests, summing up attitudes towards work requiring aesthetic skills: 'It's dealing with customer's innit. It doesn't matter how much money you get it's not gonna stop you losing your temper.' The aversion to interactive service work so apparent in this research is a combination of objective factors, such as the quality of the job, and the subjective conditions of this work, that is dealing with customers. Therefore, even if the quality of employment in the interactive service sector was to change for the better the underlying issue of negative perceptions of work requiring interaction with customers may remain.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Interview schedule (semi-structured) for clients:
Review of pilot aesthetic labour training programme run by Wise Group April/May 2000

Introduce myself, explain I am a student and what I am doing working with the Wise Group. To those who do not know me I will inform them I took part in the training programme. Explain this feedback will be helpful and ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

TOPICS TO COVER INCLUDE:

Q1. What kind of jobs had you been employed in prior to joining the Wise Group?

Q2. What kind of work interested you before you joined the Wise Group?

Q3. Did this change due to your experiences at the Wise Group?

Q4. In terms of the aesthetic labour training course, could you tell me what you thought was good about the course?

Q5. What about any bad points regarding the course?

Q6. Do you think you learned anything in terms of developing aesthetic skills by taking part in the aesthetics course? (Prompt: Did you learn anything about how to look good or speak in a certain way?

Q7. Do you think you can learn these skills? (Prompt: Do you think it is possible to learn how to look good or sound right?)

Q8. Do you think that aesthetic skills are important in all jobs or only in some jobs?

Q9. Would you put yourself forward for jobs that asked for 'stylish', 'friendly', 'outgoing', 'lively' or 'trendy' people? Would you before the course and would you be more likely to after the course?

Q10. In terms of group gelling, working together as a group, were there any exercises in particular that you covered in the aesthetics course that helped the participants gel as a group?

Q11. What was your favourite part of the course? (Can prompt: Art Galleries, Song recording, Acting, Be someone else for a day, Pub lunch etc)

Q12. What could be added to the course to make it better?

Q13. Do you think the aims of the aesthetics course were clear? Did you know what you were supposed to learn by taking part? What you were supposed to be getting out of it? Does the course need a better introduction?

Q14. Did you like the name of the course, or do you think that should change?

Q15. The course you underwent lasted two weeks; do you think that was a good length for the course?

Q16. Would you have liked to have more opportunity for one to one time with the trainer?

Q17. Do you think that in general you understand what employers are looking for from employees with regard aesthetic skills? How you look and how you sound, that kind of thing?

Q18. How was the experience of getting the job here? A good or a bad one? (If they are currently employed)

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART

APPENDIX 2

Interview schedule (semi-structured) for trainer of aesthetic labour training course:
Review of pilot aesthetic labour training programme run by Wise Group April/May 2000

Explain what I am now doing with the Wise Group and explain this feedback will be helpful. I am examining the clients' experience of the aesthetic labour pilot programme and assessing the outcomes of the course in terms of the learning and transfer of aesthetic skills to the clients.

TOPICS TO COVER INCLUDE:

Q1. Good points about the course?

Q2. Any bad points?

Q3. What skills were you trying to transfer to the clients?

Q4. Do you think you can learn aesthetic skills?

Q5. Do you think the clients learned anything in terms of developing aesthetic skills by taking part in the aesthetics course?

Q7. Do you think that aesthetic skills are important in all jobs or only in some jobs?

Q8. How would you measure the outcomes of the course in terms of what the clients have learned?

Q9. What could be added to the course to make it better? Was it missing anything?

Q10. Do you think the aims of the aesthetics course were clear? That is did the clients understand what they should be getting out of the course?

Q11. Did you like the name of the course, or do you think that should change? Any feedback on this from the clients?

Q12. The initial course lasted two weeks; do you think that was a good length? Any feedback from clients on this?

Q13. As a trainer do you feel the clients should have more opportunity for one to one time with the trainer?

Q14. Do you think that in general the clients of the Wise Group understand what employers are looking for from employees with regard aesthetic skills? How you look and how you sound, that kind of thing?

Q15.What would be the best way to proceed with the process of recruiting individuals for the aesthetics course?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

APPENDIX 3

Interview schedule (semi-structured) for employers:
Skills demanded by employers in the interactive service sector in Glasgow

Introduce myself and explain research – mostly interested in information on front of house staff. Inform that their insight will be useful and ensure anonymity.

TOPICS TO COVER INCLUDE:

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION
- Methods used: - who aimed at?
                            - who hoping will apply?
                            - 'ideal' worker in mind?
- Who selects employees?
- Is previous experience in the industry important?
- Technical skills or social/interpersonal skills – what is more important at this stage?
- Is appearance/image/voice important at this stage?
- Do you use application forms – what are they like?
- Do you ask for photographs?
- Do you receive photographs along with applications?
- What 'aesthetic' skills are important at the point of entry to employment?
- What is the most important skill employees should display at this point?

TRAINING
- Does it cover grooming/presentation?
- Do you have a staff handbook/guidelines manual?
- Length of training?
- Any formal rules re appearance?
- Do you think training in terms of aesthetics is important and possible?
- Do employees get feedback on their appearance/voice at work?

GENERAL
- Labour turnover level?
- What type/style of service is offered here?
- Why do people want to work here?
- Why is it important for employees to look good and sound right?
- Is there a shortage of suitable employees?
- Any rewards above salary?
- Is organisation independent/chain?
- Do you have a person specification?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING PART

APPENDIX 4

Focus group schedule for unemployed job seekers (Wise Group clients):
Perceptions of work and employment in Glasgow, in particular work in the interactive service sector

Introduce myself, explain I am a student and what I am doing working with the Wise Group. Explain topic/area. Point out that this feedback will be helpful and ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

TOPICS TO COVER INCLUDE:

What are your attitudes towards specific occupations and areas of employment in the service sector?
Prompts:
The service sector in general first and then mention retail; call centre, hospitality in hotels and restaurants for example
Would you look for work in the service sector and is this a good job

Specifically your attitudes towards entry level jobs in retail, hospitality, and call centre work

What do you think about the quality of service work
Prompts:
Pay
Career advancement
Insecure or secure /a job for life

What do you think about work in the style labour market – trendy hotels and bars, designer shops, cafes?
Prompts:
Would you like to work there, would you consider it, would working in these places be different from working in regular shops like Woollies or traditional pubs and hotels or restaurants.

What do you think about job opportunities in areas more traditional forms of work like ship building or construction – is it possible to get a job here and area they 'good' jobs?

How important is the status of the job you do – how other people view your work?

What is important about work for you?
Prompts:
What are your expectations
Attitudes
Norms and values about work?

What do you think the focus of this training at the wise group is?
Prompt:
To give you skills, to get you into work, both or something else?

Have you ever experienced discrimination when trying to access work or at work?
Prompts:
Due to age
Due to how you look or are presented
Due to how you speak?

Where are the current opportunities in the labour market – where are the jobs, what areas of work

Do you think there are many vacancies in interactive service work? tourism, hotels, leisure and retail?

What work skills do you have?
Prompt:
Qualifications/soft skills/technical competency

What skills do you think are important for work in the service sector?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

A survey of work and employment experiences and perceptions of interactive service work

As I have outlined to you please complete this survey in full and do not hesitate to ask if you have any questions. Thank you.

1. ARE YOU MALE OR FEMALE? ....

2. WHAT IS YOUR AGE? ....

3. HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN UNEMPLOYED? ....

....

4. WHAT TYPE OF JOB ARE YOU LOOKING FOR? e.g. work in construction industry, or in retail, or administration work etc

....

5. WHAT IS THE MAIN TYPE OF WORK YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY BEEN INVOLVED IN?

....

....

6. WOULD YOU CONSIDER TAKING ON EMPLOYMENT IN:
(please circle your answers)

RETAIL WORK:	yes	no	maybe	don't know
CALL CENTRE WORK:	yes	no	maybe	don't know
HOSPITALITY WORK:	yes	no	maybe	don't know

7. WOULD YOU CONSIDER AN ENTRY LEVEL JOB (that is. a job such as kitchen porter, chamber maid, shelving assistant) IN:

RETAIL WORK:	yes	no	maybe	don't know
CALL CENTRE WORK:	yes	no	maybe	don't know
HOSPITALITY WORK:	yes	no	maybe	don't know

8. DO YOU HAVE ANY QUALIFICATIONS? IF SO PLEASE WRITE THEM DOWN.

....

....

....

9. PLEASE WRITE DOWN THE WORK RELATED SKILLS YOU HAVE?

....

....

....

10. PLEASE WRITE DOWN THE SKILLS YOU THINK WOULD BE IMPORTANT FOR WORK IN SERVICE SECTOR WORK IN AREAS SUCH AS RETAIL, HOSPITALITY OR CALL CENTRE JOBS.

....

....

....

11. WHAT IS THE LONGEST PERIOD OF TIME YOU HAVE SPENT UNEMPLOYED AND WHAT AGE WERE YOU AT THE TIME?

....

12. IN THE PAST WOULD YOU SAY THAT YOU HAVE BEEN REGULARLY IN WORK, REGULARLY UNEMPLOYED OR SOMETHING ELSE?

....

13. HOW FAR WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO TRAVEL TO WORK EVERY DAY? (Please tick or circle which statement you agree with)

Less than 15 mins to get to work
Between 15 mins and 30 mins to get to work
Between 30 mins and 1 hour to get to work
Over one hour to get to work

14. IN WHAT TYPES OF WORK DO YOU THINK THERE ARE CURRENTLY JOB VACANCIES IN GLASGOW?

....

15. DO YOU THINK EMPLOYERS IN THE SERVICE SECTOR IN GLASGOW ARE CURRENTLY LOOKING FOR EMPLOYEES?

....

16. PLEASE STATE WHETHER YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT SERVICE SECTOR WORK:
(write agree or write disagree beside each statement)

It is poorly paid
It is well paid
These are poor quality jobs
These are high quality jobs
There is a chance to make a career out of this type of work
There is no possibility of following a career in this type of work
You are closely supervised day to day in your work in this type of work
You are not closely supervised day to day in your work in this type of work
Jobs in the service sector are insecure and there is a chance you will be made unemployed quite quickly
Jobs in the service sector are secure there is little chance of being made unemployed very quickly
You do not need qualifications to get a job in the service sector
You need qualifications to get a job in the service sector

17. WOULD YOU CONSIDER TAKING A JOB IN SERVICE SECTOR WORK IN AREAS SUCH AS VERY STYLISH HOTELS, DESIGNER SHOPS AND TRENDY CAFES, BARS AND RESTAURANTS? (If not please say why not)

....

....

18. IS THE STATUS OF YOUR JOB/ WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK ABOUT YOUR JOB, IMPORTANT TO YOU?

....

19. DO YOU THINK YOU HAVE GOOD INTERPERSONAL SKILLS?
(Interpersonal skills include skills such as communication skills, people to people skills and social skills)

....

20. HAVE YOU EVER WORKED IN THE SERVICE SECTOR BEFORE? IF SO IN WHAT JOB?

....

21. DO YOU THINK IT IS RELATIVELY EASY TO GET A JOB IN THE SERVICE SECTOR IN GLASGOW (IF YOU WANTED ONE)?

....

22. DO YOU HAVE DEPENDANT CHILDREN?

....

23. WHAT LEVEL OF WAGE WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO ACCEPT FOR FULL TIME EMPLOYMENT? (tick or circle what applies to you)

Less than £100 per week
£100 - £149 per week
£150 - £199 per week
£200 and over per week

24. IN YOUR OPINION WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO BECOME EMPLOYED?
(Please tick any of the statements you think make it difficult to become employed)

There are not enough well enough paid jobs out there.
I will lose state benefits if I get a job.
There are not enough good quality jobs out there.
The costs involved in starting a job, like clothing, childcare costs and travel expenses, makes it difficult for me to start work.
I do not have my own transport for work.
Public transport is not very good or is too expensive.
I do not get good enough information regarding the job opportunities out there for me.
Poor health.
I do not get good enough support from support agencies such as Jobcentre Plus
Employers discriminate against the unemployed
There are not enough suitable childcare facilities.
Employers discriminate against older workers.
Employers discriminate against how I look or sound.

PLEASE ADD ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU HAVE ON ANY OF THE
TOPICS WE HAVE TALKED ABOUT TODAY

....

....

....

....

**THANK YOU FOR ALL OF YOUR HELP TODAY – ALL OF YOUR
ANSWERS WILL BE TREATED IN CONFIDENCE AND USED FOR MY
RESEARCH ONLY.**