

# Sociology

<http://soc.sagepub.com/>

---

## High-Touch and Here-to-Stay: Future Skills Demands in US Low Wage Service Occupations

Mary Gatta, Heather Boushey and Eileen Appelbaum

*Sociology* 2009 43: 968

DOI: 10.1177/0038038509340735

The online version of this article can be found at:  
<http://soc.sagepub.com/content/43/5/968>

---

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



[British Sociological Association](http://www.britishsociologicalassociation.org)

**Additional services and information for *Sociology* can be found at:**

**Email Alerts:** <http://soc.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

**Subscriptions:** <http://soc.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

**Reprints:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

**Permissions:** <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

**Citations:** <http://soc.sagepub.com/content/43/5/968.refs.html>



## High-Touch and Here-to-Stay: Future Skills Demands in US Low Wage Service Occupations

- **Mary Gatta**  
*Rutgers University*
- **Heather Boushey**  
*Center for American Progress*
- **Eileen Appelbaum**  
*Rutgers University*

### ABSTRACT

Interactive service occupations, requiring face-to-face contact, are rapidly growing in the US as they are typically not susceptible to larger trends of off-shoring and computerization. Yet conventional paradigms of understanding the nature of that work, and in particular the skill demands, are often ill equipped to deal with the 'interactive' aspects of these gendered and racialized occupations. As a result, discussions of lower-end service occupations have typically grouped together a variety of jobs that require little or no higher education, without examining the actual skill content and job requirements of these occupations. In this article we delve more deeply into the rapidly growing non-professional service occupations in the US and the level of skills these jobs require, with the intention of creating a framework that will reorient future sociological research in this area.

### KEY WORDS

future of work / service jobs / skills

**R**ecent social changes challenge scholars to re-examine work worlds with a new lens. Perhaps nowhere is this more significant than in the evolving service sector. Sociologists have made significant contributions to our understanding of low-wage service jobs, introducing concepts such as emotion work,

interactive service jobs, and caring labor into our sociological lexicon and informing theoretical frameworks. While sociologists have been integral in conducting seminal research on service work, significant gaps remain. Most notably, the growth of service jobs is forcing sociologists to focus not only on these jobs, but also on the skills required for them. Typically, current discussions of lower-end service occupations group together a variety of jobs that require little or no higher education without distinguishing the actual skill content and work requirements of various service jobs. More recent papers seek to tease out the kinds of skills that are subject to mechanization or outsourcing in order to better understand the types of jobs that are likely to remain in the US over time. However, this work does not typically connect that discussion to an analysis of skills in low-wage service jobs (Blinder, 2006, 2007; Levy and Murnane, 2005). Instead, a focus on high-wage 'knowledge work' dominates much of the discussion in the sociologies of work and skills demands in the US labor market.

While more recent sociologies of work have shown that conventional skill paradigms fail to provide an accurate understanding of the skills required in service occupations (Bolton and Boyd, 2003; Junor and Hampson, 2008; Korczynski, 2005), sociologists have not identified persuasive alternatives. Central to this challenge is that sociologists of work have for too long treated proxies for skills (in particular, educational requirements and extent of formal training) as skills themselves (Grugulis et al., 2004; Korczynski, 2005), making a comprehensive discussion of skills in service work difficult to accomplish. And then, when skills paradigms are applied to service work, the discussion often over-focuses on emotional labor, ignoring other aspects of the work process (for a full discussion of this see Junor and Hampson, 2008), generates labels of the work (such as emotional work, care work) without creating an integrated analysis of job requirements, or remains stuck at what Peter Sawchuk (2006) has called the 'de-skilling/up-skilling impasse'. This is a problematic place for sociologists to find ourselves. Our changing work worlds necessitate that we reinvigorate our discussions of skills – particularly within the growing service economy.

In this article we delve more deeply into the growing non-professional service occupations in the US and the skills these jobs require, with the intention of creating a framework that will reorient future sociological research. Our focus is on non-professional service occupations that require 'face-to-face' contact. In many ways, these are the jobs of the future. Sociological understanding of the skills required for these jobs is important because:

- They cannot easily be outsourced since they require service work, emotional labor, and/or caring labor that the worker personally performs (Blinder, 2006; Gatta, 2002).
- They cannot easily be replaced by technology because they require human labor, or, as Levy and Murnane (2005) note 'expert thinking' and 'complex communication skills'.

- They are predominately filled by women, minorities, and immigrant workers who are not paid their 'comparable worth' compared to similarly skilled jobs held by male workers (England et al., 2002; Guy and Newman, 2004).
- There is evidence of restructuring some service occupations so that they are more skilled, productive and tied to higher labor market rewards (Appelbaum et al., 2003, 2005).

Given the large growth in non-professional, low-paid service jobs, it is important to ascertain the skills (and changing skills demands) for these jobs, along with work conditions. Adequately understanding skills in work that does not always conform to our accepted conceptions of 'skilled work' will allow sociologists to more comprehensively understand our worlds of work without making a priori judgments. The increased attention to ethnographic analysis in diverse types of service jobs provides sociologists with a strong basis on which to undertake such an investigation. Building on existing quantitative and case study or ethnographic literature on service occupations, we demonstrate the skills required for such work, and suggest ways to orient future sociological analysis. Indeed, sociologists of work will benefit from developing a scholarly agenda to understand these rapidly growing occupations and to reinvigorate our analysis of skills and service work.

### **Service Occupations: Growing rapidly, neither Offshoreable nor Replaceable by Machines**

There is a growing consensus about the importance of delving more deeply into service occupations. Alan Blinder (2006, 2007) developed a typology of potentially 'offshoreable' jobs, and in the process highlighted a long list of jobs that will probably remain in the US for decades. Non-offshoreable jobs require 'personally-delivered' services that cannot 'be delivered electronically over long distances with little or no degradation in quality' (Blinder, 2007: 2). Many non-professional service jobs cannot be offshored because they require contact between the person doing the work and the person getting the service (e.g. barber) or between the person doing the work and a place of work (e.g. janitor).

Perhaps because so many service jobs are not offshoreable, they are projected to grow faster than all other occupations except professional and related occupations. According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, service occupations are projected to grow by 19.0 percent, adding 5,257,000 new jobs by 2014 and to grow much faster than employment overall (13.0%). Of the 10 occupations with the largest growth, five are in services. Notably, only nursing aides require more than short-term, on-the-job training and have more than very low earnings (below \$20,180 annually), and this occupation is itself neither highly skilled nor highly paid. Of the 11 service occupations with the largest projected job growth, eight have very low median annual earnings (below \$20,180 annually), and the remaining three have low median annual earnings – between \$20,190 and \$28,570 (Hecker, 2005).

Table 1 Occupations with the largest job growth, 2004–14

2004 National Employment Matrix code and title	Employment Number		Quartile rank by 2004 median annual earnings <sup>1</sup>	Most significant source of postsecondary education or training <sup>2</sup>
	2004	2014		
41-2031 Retail salespersons	4,256	4,992	VL	Short-term on-the-job training
29-1111 Registered nurses	2,394	3,096	VH	Associate degree
25-1000 Postsecondary teachers	1,628	2,153	VH	Doctoral degree
43-4051 Customer service representatives	2,063	2,534	L	Moderate-term on-the-job training
<b>37-2011 Janitors and cleaners, except maids and housekeeping cleaners</b>	<b>2,374</b>	<b>2,813</b>	<b>VL</b>	<b>Short-term on-the-job training</b>
<b>35-3031 Waiters and waitresses</b>	<b>2,252</b>	<b>2,627</b>	<b>VL</b>	<b>Short-term on-the-job training</b>
<b>35-3021 Combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food</b>	<b>2,150</b>	<b>2,516</b>	<b>VL</b>	<b>Short-term on-the-job training</b>
<b>31-1011 Home health aides</b>	<b>624</b>	<b>974</b>	<b>VL</b>	<b>Short-term on-the-job training</b>
<b>31-1012 Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants</b>	<b>1,455</b>	<b>1,781</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>Postsecondary vocational award</b>
11-1021 General and operations managers	1,807	2,115	VH	Bachelor's or higher degree, plus work experience
<b>39-9021 Personal and home care aides</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>988</b>	<b>VL</b>	<b>Short-term on-the-job training</b>
25-2021 Elementary school teachers, except special education	1,457	1,722	H	Bachelor's degree
13-2011 Accountants and auditors	1,176	1,440	VH	Bachelor's degree
43-9061 Office clerks, general	3,138	3,401	L	Short-term on-the-job training
53-7062 Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers, hand	2,430	2,678	VL	Short-term on-the-job training
43-4171 Receptionists and information clerks	1,133	1,379	L	Short-term on-the-job training
<b>37-3011 Landscaping and groundskeeping workers</b>	<b>1,177</b>	<b>1,407</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>Short-term on-the-job training</b>

Table 1 (Continued)

2004 National Employment Matrix code and title	Employment Number		Quartile rank by 2004 median annual earnings <sup>1</sup>	Most significant source of postsecondary education or training <sup>2</sup>
	2004	2014		
53-3032 Truck drivers, heavy and tractor-trailer	1,738	1,962	H	Moderate-term on-the-job training
15-1031 Computer software engineers, applications	460	682	VH	Bachelor's degree
49-9042 Maintenance and repair workers, general	1,332	1,533	H	Moderate-term on-the-job training
<b>31-9092 Medical assistants</b>	<b>387</b>	<b>589</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>Moderate-term on-the-job training</b>
43-6011 Executive secretaries and administrative assistants	1,547	1,739	H	Moderate-term on-the-job training
41-4012 Sales representatives, wholesale and manufacturing, except technical and scientific products	1,454	1,641	VH	Moderate-term on-the-job training
47-2031 Carpenters	1,349	1,535	H	Long-term on-the-job training
25-9041 Teacher assistants	1,296	1,478	VL	Short-term on-the-job training
<b>39-9011 Child care workers</b>	<b>1,280</b>	<b>1,456</b>	<b>VL</b>	<b>Short-term on-the-job training</b>
<b>35-2021 Food preparation workers</b>	<b>889</b>	<b>1,064</b>	<b>VL</b>	<b>Short-term on-the-job training</b>
<b>37-2012 Maids and housekeeping cleaners</b>	<b>1,422</b>	<b>1,587</b>	<b>VL</b>	<b>Short-term on-the-job training</b>
53-3033 Truck drivers, light or delivery services	1,042	1,206	L	Short-term on-the-job training
15-1051 Computer systems analysts	487	640	VH	Bachelor's degree

<sup>1</sup> The quartile rankings of Occupational Employment Statistics Survey annual earnings data are presented in the following categories: VH=very high (\$43,600 and over), H=high (\$28,580 to \$43,590), L=low (\$20,190 to \$28,570), and VL=very low (up to \$20,180).

<sup>2</sup> An occupation is placed into one of 11 categories that best describes the postsecondary education or training needed by most workers to become fully qualified. For more information about the categories, see Occupational Projections and Training Data, 2

Source: Daniel Hecker, "Occupational employment projections to 2014," *Monthly Labour Review*, November 2005, Table 3.

## Measuring Skill in Service Occupations

While a full review of skill conceptualizations is beyond the scope of this article, focusing on some of the tensions in the debate is important. Attewell (1990), in a landmark article, highlighted conceptual issues confronting the sociological analysis of skill, including the evaluation of skills in quantifiable measures, the impact of supply and demand, and labor power of the worker. He concluded that different paradigms, blind to their own preconceptions, use distinct skill definitions. As a result sociologists have ambiguous conceptions of skills and are stuck at an ‘upskilling/deskilling impasse’ (Sawchuk, 2006). Braverman’s *Labor and Monopoly Capitalism: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (1974) argued that the Tayloristic division of labor broke down the knowledge and power of skilled workers. As Sawchuk (2006) summarized, Braverman’s work led to a 30-year debate over whether work was really being upskilled, deskilled or reskilled.

In response to this ‘impasse’, some (Spenner, 1990; Warhurst et al., 2004) have tried to develop integrated approaches to skills conceptualizations. Yet as Marek Korczynski notes:

[these] debates ...too often leapt from a focus on manufacturing to a focus informed by the all-embracing new paradigm of the knowledge economy. In this breathless journey, there is one notable segment of the workforce that tends to be left by the wayside – service workers, particularly those in direct contact with service recipients or customers. (2005: 3)

Korczynski and others (Bolton, 2004; Brown et al., 2001) suggest that this exclusion is due, in large part, to a rigid skills definition unable to grapple with intangible job demands – the service quality experienced by the customer.

Further, researchers may have glossed over these jobs because most have relatively low wages and low formal education requirements – often only requiring a high-school degree or on-the-job-training – and are not the kinds of jobs we would hope are the jobs of the future. Much of the wage inequality literature a priori defines these as unskilled jobs since ‘skills’ are often measured as the level of formal education required. The most common measures of skills – level of required qualifications and the training time needed to become fully competent – are proxies for the skills they represent. However, conflating skills and proxies of skill measurements masks skill demands in service occupations (Grugulis et al., 2004; Korczynski, 2005).

Many American researchers use the Dictionary of Occupational Titles<sup>1</sup> (DOT) as their main source of information about job skills. The DOT is the only source of fairly consistent, national time series data on skill demands of work in the USA and provides a direct measure of job skills. The measures include various job elements: the level of interaction with data, people, or things; educational requirements; training requirements; aptitudes, including mathematical and verbal; and work conditions (Spenner, 1983).

However, the DOT may not adequately incorporate the specific kinds of skills necessary for service occupations. Table 2 shows that the skills needed for

growing service occupations are similar to service occupations more generally: all five occupations require active listening, instructing others, and speaking effectively. Other common skills are coordinating their job with respect to others, reading comprehension, service orientation, social perceptiveness, and time management. With the exception of reading comprehension, these have typically been labeled ‘soft skills’ or ‘people skills’. This interactive aspect of service jobs further complicates as it is highly subjective and not easily measured by an interviewer. For example, Attewell notes that the DOT variables are susceptible to social judgments ‘leaking into what are ostensibly objective measures of task complexity’ (1990: 427). This can happen either if the DOT field officer holds cultural biases or if the DOT categories themselves reflect a bias. Moreover, because DOT field officers often spend little time evaluating job content, they may miss the interactive skills critical to service occupations.

**Table 2** Skills required in top-five fastest growing service occupations

	<i>Janitors and cleaners, except maids and housekeeping cleaners</i>	<i>Waiters and waitresses</i>	<i>Combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food</i>	<i>Home health aides</i>	<i>Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants</i>
<b>Active Listening</b> — Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Coordination</b> — Adjusting actions in relation to others’ actions.	X	X		X	X
<b>Critical Thinking</b> — Using logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of alternative solutions, conclusions or approaches to problems.		X			X
<b>Equipment Maintenance</b> — Performing routine maintenance on equipment and determining when and what kind of maintenance is needed.	X				
<b>Equipment Selection</b> — Determining the kind of tools and equipment needed to do a job.	X				
<b>Instructing</b> — Teaching others how to do something.	X	X	X	X	X

(Continued)



**Table 2** (Continued)

	<i>Janitors and cleaners, except maids and housekeeping cleaners</i>	<i>Waiters and waitresses</i>	<i>Combined food preparation and serving workers, including fast food</i>	<i>Home health aides</i>	<i>Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants</i>
<b>Judgment and Decision Making</b> — Considering the relative costs and benefits of potential actions to choose the most appropriate one.	X				
<b>Learning Strategies</b> — Selecting and using training/instructional methods and procedures appropriate for the situation when learning or teaching new things.		X			
<b>Mathematics</b> — Using mathematics to solve problems.			X		
<b>Monitoring</b> — Monitoring/Assessing performance of yourself, other individuals, or organizations to make improvements or take corrective action.				X	X
<b>Reading Comprehension</b> — Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work related documents.	X	X		X	X
<b>Service Orientation</b> — Actively looking for ways to help people.		X	X	X	X
<b>Social Perceptiveness</b> — Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.		X	X	X	X
<b>Speaking</b> — Talking to others to convey information effectively.	X	X	X	X	X
<b>Time Management</b> — Managing one's own time and the time of others.	X	X			X
<b>Writing</b> — Communicating effectively in writing as appropriate for the needs of the audience.	X			X	

Source: <http://online.onetcenter.org> O\*NET OnLine was developed for the US Department of Labor by the National Center for O\*NET Development. For more information about the O\*NET project, please visit the O\*NET Resource Center

The original DOT measures were found to have a gender bias and the skills of female-dominated occupations may be deemed less skilled as a result. Since service occupations are disproportionately comprised of women, minorities, and recent immigrants, we must carefully evaluate whether the skills required are clouded by notions of what is 'natural' for these groups. Emotional work,

caring labor, and relationship building are typically associated with women and mothering. The assumption follows that these jobs do not necessitate skill acquisition, complex communication, or expert knowledge, but instead rely on *natural* qualities of women. This then justifies the widely held view that workers should not be paid well for performing this work, as they are not performing skilled work.

Further, Alexandra Spitz-Oener notes that DOT data cannot incorporate an understanding of changes in jobs skills within occupations (2006: 236). Using a West German panel survey that allows an analysis of task changes within occupation, she suggests that occupations have greater complexity, compared to 20 years ago, and that occupations have experienced a shift toward analytical and interactive activities and away from cognitive and manual routine tasks. She argues that her research is more representative of true changes in skills because her panel data do not lead ‘analysts to underestimate the true changes in job content’ (2006: 242) as the DOT does. Her conclusion is that much of what we know about skill demands in service occupations must come from research that looks beyond nationally available surveys that may be able to easily measure educational attainment but not the kinds of skills necessary for service work. In reality, jobs that have traditionally been treated as ‘low skilled’ because of their low technical requirements and/or formal qualifications may indeed represent higher-skilled work that cannot be recognized with conventional measures.

## Interactive Service Work

The investigation of the ‘interactive’ aspects of service work is not new. For several decades, researchers have probed what Arlie Russell Hochschild (2003[1983]) first termed emotion work. Organizations develop rules of behavior and affect to replace elements of the individual’s emotion management and demand this emotional labor of workers. In addition to feeling and displaying certain emotions, service employees may also be asked to provide caring labor. Paula England et al. (2002) define caring work as providing a face-to-face service that develops the recipient’s human capacities. Occupations that England and her colleagues typically reference include nurses, teachers, healthcare assistants, child care workers, and social workers. Rachel Sherman (2007) expands this to include short-term relationships that are service oriented; specifically, in personal care in luxury hotel work, how the employee’s anticipation of customers’ needs overlaps with ‘good care’ in traditional caring occupations.

Sherman’s attention to service work in luxury hotels also highlights the aesthetic labor performed, particularly in the style labor market (such as boutiques, high end hotels, designer retailers, and restaurants) but also increasingly expected of workers in non-style retail and hospitality (Nickson et al., 2004; Witz et al., 2003). These aesthetic skills enable employees to ‘look good’ and ‘sound right’ by presenting themselves appropriately to customers. This presentation involves body language, dress style, personal grooming, and voice or accent, and a working knowledge of culture.

Finally, researchers also focus on articulation work – the linking together of parts of a social action (Strauss, 1985) in interactive service work. This involves the coordination and integration of the service interaction, relating to intersecting social worlds, and the tacit management of the fragile social order that arises during interactive service work (Hampson and Junor, 2005; Korczynski, 2002). For example, the receptionist at a hotel's front desk may have to access information from the computer system, process information from hotel guests, answer phones, and maintain a conversation flow, all simultaneously. Gittell (2000; Gittell et al., 2008) further notes that since service work is interdependent, workers also engage in relational labor that 'requires reciprocal, iterative interactions among workers rather than the sequential hand-offs performed by workers on a production line' (2000: 517). This work blends emotional, cognitive, technical, and time management skills, often performed at high speed, with varying levels of complexity and autonomy, and coordinated with other workers within and across work settings.

This framework raises significant challenges to traditional definitions of skills. Many scholars stress the need to move away from rigid and conventional skill notions that focus on technical content, job complexity, and task discretion to include social and soft skills such as communication, flexibility, attitudes, and teamwork. Workers must develop skills that can discern a customer's needs, and then select and adapt social scripts to meet those needs. Even in the most stringent attempts to routinize the service interaction (Leidner, 1993) degrees of unpredictability are inevitable. The success of the interaction lies with the worker.

## How Are Skills Conceptualized in Service Work?

What, then, does the literature tell us about these skills? The 'deskilling' or 'McDonaldization' (Ritzer, 1996) of service jobs suggests that the future of service work is characterized by continued integration of technology and streamlined services, thus relegating workers to low-skill, routinized work. However, more recent qualitative work has questioned this by demonstrating that not all service occupations are subject to this fate. Face-to-face interactive service work presents challenges to the routinization of work – it has to be performed in the moment in plain sight of the customer. Indeed, as Robin Leidner (1993) argues, while McDonald's tries to routinize the customers and servers (e.g. by having them line up at counters, by displaying a fixed menu of items), they do not always succeed. Since customer reactions are neither predictable nor routine, the ambiguity requires workers to do more than just use a predetermined script. They must possess the skills to respond quickly or creatively to customers.

In restaurant work, although there are fairly precise scripts to guide the service interaction, waiters and waitresses need additional skills to be successful. Mary Gatta's (2002) analysis of restaurant servers demonstrated that while each server knew the prescriptions for emotional balance at work, they did not always follow them. For example, restaurant management attempted to direct servers

to a company-produced emotive state. However, in restaurant interactions the emotional state was often not achieved. Instead, individuals engaged in numerous practices to deal with the emotions that they were experiencing in interactions. Servers chose, disregarded, altered, and created different scripts based on the unique characteristics of the micro-social context. Flexibility, creativity, and adaptability become important skills.

Hampson and Junor (2005) note that the skills required of interactive service work go beyond simply enacting routines and scripts, but instead are a subset of articulation work skills. For example, restaurant servers must greet customers, take orders, get drinks, process orders in computers, bring food, balance as many plates as possible to avoid unnecessary trips to the kitchen, make change for customers, and be friendly. This articulation of skill work, while less visible, is critical to completing one's job. Indeed servers, among other things, must manage multiple tables at once, engage in creative rapport with customers, use technical skills to manage customer food orders, and steer customers to higher priced foods and drinks without appearing manipulative. Servers also deal with many emotional hazards from customers – those who were not happy with their meals, those who may have a particularly long time waiting for a table, or are simply having a bad day (Gatta, 2002).

Katherine Newman's (1999) study of fast-food workers finds that they must listen to orders, communicate with customers, send out a stream of instructions to co-workers who prepare food, pick up the food, check orders, and process customers' payments. So while the multiple stations behind the counter of a fast-food restaurant have been broken down and routinized, the ability to make them work together under time pressures require higher-order skills in which workers track information, coordinate with others, and track inventory. Newman further notes these tasks are all completed while using emotional labor to manage customers.

Articulation work then goes beyond just coordinating the tasks of one's own job, but also coordinating other workers' tasks, or what Gittell and Weiss (2004) refer to as 'relational coordination'. As the modern healthcare delivery system becomes complex, patients are more likely to receive follow-up care in other settings, such as rehabilitation hospitals, nursing homes, or even at home. This requires front-line healthcare workers to not only provide care to patients, but to coordinate with workers within and across work organizations. Indeed, these workers need to effectively communicate information about patients' medical care, ensure there are available 'slots' in follow-up care institutions, and build and/or maintain relationships across the healthcare system (Gittell and Weiss, 2004).

Such changes in the demands of front-line service jobs also point to the importance of job crafting. Wrzesniewski and Dutton (2001) note that workers engage in activities beyond the boundaries of their work to better match their own needs, aspirations, and circumstances to the job. Leana et al. have expanded this concept and noted that in service work job crafting can be collaborative: 'individuals do not take self-directed action to meet their singular

goals and preferences regarding the job, but instead work jointly with other employees to customize the work' (2009: 10). They find that childcare workers build on the interconnections of their work, and go beyond their job descriptions to respond collaboratively to unscriptable situations. They find collaborative job crafting is positively associated with care quality and is most important for less experienced workers who can learn from each other.

In addition to these skills, the growth of the style labor market demonstrates the increased demand for aesthetic skills (Nickson et al., 2004). Nickson et al. found that the skills that employers demand are social and aesthetic. Compiling survey data from retail, hotels, bars, restaurants, and cafes in Glasgow, they found overwhelmingly that both interpersonal communication and self-presentation were central to service work. Specifically, 99 percent of employers felt that social and interpersonal skills were of significant importance and 98 percent of employers felt the same of self-presentation skills. Conversely, only 48 percent of employers reported that technical skills were important (2004: 22). Indeed the right appearance and personality took precedence over technical qualifications. Lynne Pettinger (2004) found that sales assistants are a critical part of the 'branding' of retail stores, and that their social and aesthetic skills are central to their work. One of her interesting conclusions is that 'fashion-orientation is one facet of brand-strategy [used by the stores] and the ability to present a fashionable appearance is one of the skills needed by sales assistants in many stores' (2004: 468).

Rachel Sherman's (2007) account of luxury hotels found that workers expanded on the skills associated with caring labor. Workers are expected to personalize and customize the experiences of guests by discerning nuances of guests' interactions, gathering and acting on information about guest preferences, and creating authentic experiences for guests. This requires both observational and active listening skills. During the employee training session, managers encouraged workers to use visual cues to service guests. Examples include when a guest comes to the hotel and appears tired, hotel staff should offer him/her a place to sit down; or if a guest arrives with a crying baby, the staff should find a private space for the mother even if her room is not ready (2007: 33).

Front-line hotel workers also must discern the needs of the customer, based on subtle cues. In concierge work:

When a guest asks the concierge to recommend a restaurant, the concierge must ... take into account factors such as where he is from, how old he is, and how sophisticated he appears. If the guest is older and appears unschooled in upscale dining, he may receive a reservation at a chain steakhouse; if a visitor from New York requests information on local entertainment, the concierge will not recommend the traveling version of the latest Broadway hit. (2007: 33)

This requires skills to understand the nuances of cultural capital, including a good working knowledge of culture centers and how they manifest across socio-economic class, along with creativity to personalize the experience for each customer.

Of course, these skills are important across many service jobs. Hampson and Junor (2005), drawing on the experiences of bank tellers, suggest that they must be able to develop abstract understanding of organizational networks and information flows, piece together rapidly assimilated information, ensure follow-through and follow-up, accept responsibility for coordinating and maintaining information flows, and, in some cases, tacitly help to develop systems and procedures (2005: 178). Counter staff at banks must track customer information from their point in the data flow, maintain a flow of conversation with a customer (especially if screens are slow to navigate), and integrate data.

David Autor et al. (2003) demonstrate how information technologies have penetrated deeply into banking. Check imaging, ATMs, and optical character recognition have effectively automated several key tasks in check processing departments. They found that the introduction of computer-based technological change in two bank departments had differential impacts. The reorganization of work processes in one part of this bank *in advance* of the introduction of check imaging and recognition technology resulted in major improvements in productivity. This case study demonstrated that managers have important discretion in how they organize the tasks that remain after technology has automated rule-based tasks. In one department the remaining tasks were fragmented and workers had narrow, repetitive jobs. In the other, the tasks were integrated into more complex jobs that were more interesting, demanding, and required greater skills.

The case studies in *Low-Wage America: How Employers Are Reshaping Opportunity in the Workplace* (Appelbaum et al., 2003) demonstrate that computer skills per se have not created a bottleneck. Frontline workers in a wide array of jobs *do* require computer skills. However, modest amounts of training have generally been sufficient. In some of the case studies, however, managers found that it has proven more difficult to teach abstract problem-solving skills to incumbent workers. Some employers have turned to hiring workers with at least a few years of college education for jobs that, in principle, can be performed by a high school graduate to ensure that workers have the appropriate level of abstract reasoning and problem solving skills.

## Gender and Race

For decades researchers have demonstrated that the skills associated with service work – the emphasis on sociability, caring, communicating and making customers feel good – are frequently deemed as natural feminine qualities and the skill content of these jobs is typically unnoticed and poorly rewarded in the labor market. Not surprisingly, data bear out that the jobs that emphasize these skills are also characterized by a large composition of female workers, low wages, and limited opportunities for advancement.

Mary Ellen Guy and Meredith Newman (2004) use state level data to quantify the impact of the ‘conflation of gender and emotional labor’ on occupational wages. Specifically, jobs in the career services class for the State of Florida present

interesting comparisons between fruit and vegetable terminal market inspectors (100% male), driver's license examiners (65% female), and family services counselors (80% female). Of these jobs the two that require high levels of emotional labor – driver's license examiners and family services counselors – are also predominantly female. Driver's license examiners earn the least money, while fruit and vegetable terminal market inspectors and family services counselors are compensated at the same financial level. This equal compensation exists despite the fact that family services counselors require a bachelor's degree and passing a written assessment, and fruit and vegetable terminal market inspectors require completion of inspection school and six months' experience. Guy and Newman's analysis of state level data indicates that 'the conflation of gender with the requirements of emotional labor, predominately emotional labor that involved *caritas*, results in work skills and abilities that are taken for granted, not listed as bona fide requirements for the job, and not compensated' (2004: 296).

Yet, while service work skills are gendered female, they are highly sought after in our growing service economy. Vicki Belt et al. (2002: 20–1) note that 'female labor power is increasing in demand at least in part because women are believed to naturally possess in abundance many of the social skills required by employers in the service-based economy'. Moreover, some researchers have suggested that femininity has become a market requirement (Woodfield, 1998), as employers are actively marketing a version of femininity that emphasizes passivity, servicing, and attention to customers' needs.

Belt et al. (2002) use focus group and interview data from managers in call centers in Ireland, the Netherlands, and the UK to explore whether women are recruited to interactive service work because they possess the right kinds of skills. They note that, overall, women are recruited by employers in part because they 'naturally' possess the kinds of communication skills required, as employers expect women to perform emotional labor over the phone. Specifically, women were perceived to be more comfortable with the ethos of customer service and particularly skilled at listening and empathizing with customers. They were also assumed to be more tolerant with more difficult customers, and less likely to react aggressively.

Technical support jobs in computer services call centers were an exception to this pattern in hiring. Here technical knowledge, qualifications, experience, and interest in computers were considered more important than communication skills. Moreover, when communication skills were specified in these jobs, the term was used to refer to problem-solving abilities, and not a 'bubbly personality'. Perhaps even more telling is that some managers believed that the workers in technical support jobs were actually less likely to possess those types of social skills. Not surprising, men held a larger portion of these jobs.

This 'market for femininity' has important implications for the recognition of the skills and the organization, training, and labor market rewards of service work. The impact of gender on skills is more complicated than simply a social constructionist analysis of skills and gender. Instead, a more useful paradigm incorporates an intersectional approach, which emphasizes the effects of

historical patterns of inequality on overrepresentation of people of color and women, especially women of color, among the poor (Dill et al., 2004). What this suggests is that simply because there may be a market for what are deemed 'feminine qualities', not all women are recruited equally. Instead, gender intersects with race, ethnicity, and class to marginalize groups of women within service work and to challenge assumptions associated with skills. Focusing just on a gender division of labor in service work can mask differences among women, particularly around race and ethnicity. Nakano Glenn (1992) has demonstrated that white women tend to be in service jobs that are in the 'public's eye' and require the most interactions and emotional labor, while women of color are overrepresented in 'dirty back room' jobs, such as maids and kitchen workers.

Rachel Sherman (2007) found similar patterns. She notes that hotel work is divided into two main categories: interactive and non-interactive positions. Interactive or 'front of the house' work consists mainly of intangible emotional labor, while 'back of the house' or non-interactive work mainly involves physical labor. Sherman goes on to note that interactive workers are usually white women and 'back of the house' workers are typically women of color and immigrants. In addition, not only were back of the house workers paid less, they also did not typically receive the tips that front of the house workers received from hotel guests.

Mignon Duffy sums up this demographic pattern by noting:

... it is where reproductive work is seen to lack the need for emotional skills and relational interaction that women of color are concentrated. Furthermore, these back-room jobs are even lower paying than those more public reproductive labor occupations in which white women are more concentrated. (2005: 72)

Duffy then, using 2000 US Census data, found that white women were represented at a much higher rate in jobs that required emotional labor and care work, while Hispanic women had the exact opposite pattern. These women were more likely to be concentrated in jobs that were 'back of the room' and did not require high levels of emotion work and interactions. In regard to Black women, the pattern is a bit more complicated, with Black women highly represented in both 'front of the house' and 'back of the house' jobs. Duffy also found that the wages associated with work characterized by interaction and emotion skills were higher than jobs that did not require those skills. Duffy warns that:

One of the strategies suggested by a care movement is to revalue nurturance by making it more visible, emphasizing the skills required by the work, and aiming for ongoing professionalization of these occupations. In the context of a racial hierarchy in which women of color bear much more of the burden of those reproductive labor jobs that do not have the characteristics of nurturant care, a movement to revalue nurturance could have the unintended effect of making their jobs even more invisible and devalued. Framing the value of certain occupations in terms of the emotional and relational skills required – and even professionalizing those skills – may risk further devaluing those 'menial' jobs that are not perceived to require those skills. (2005: 86)



## A New Agenda for Sociological Inquiry and Service Jobs

While sociologists can remain mired in the debates over skill conceptualizations, we suggest that the growth of low-wage service jobs presents both opportunities and challenges to reinvigorate this discussion. Research is indicating that ‘it is not only in the most highly skilled, professional jobs that image and social competencies are important. Even in the most routine, low-paid areas of interactive service work, employees are increasingly being seen as “marketable assets”’ (Belt and Richardson, 2005: 258). Individual workers matter, as the quality of the service delivered is dependent upon workers’ performance. Yet these jobs remain low wage and the skills are often undervalued and unnoticed. It is incumbent upon sociologists to conduct ethnographic accounts of service occupations, highlighting the diverse skill sets of this work. Sociologists must develop connections between various occupational studies, working toward empirically based typologies of service skills. While research is moving in this direction, a significant challenge over the next decade will be evidence-based analyses of service occupations that provide clear *recognition* of skills, using both qualitative and quantitative research methods.

Yet recognizing skills in service occupations is only part of the challenge; sociologists must also contribute to the dialogue on *rewarding* these skills. The under-recognition, along with the gendered and racialized nature of the skills in service occupations, contributes to low labor market rewards. To improve the quality of service jobs and the quality of services provided, sociologists can highlight high-road management practices – practices that engage front-line workers in problem-solving and decision-making and provide them with the training and skills to do this well. For instance, not all service jobs are the same, even within the same broad occupational category. Annette Berhardt noted in retail work:

... markets for high income customers or products requiring expert advice, multi-skilled and better trained workers are required – they need to have the technical background to give advice, the soft skills to build relationships with customers, and the ability and knowledge to make decisions on their own. (1999: 29)

For example, Home Depot<sup>2</sup> workers earn significantly more than other retail workers, are typically employed full time with benefits, and have significantly less job turnover. Moreover, since Home Depot employs a decentralized management, departments within the store are run autonomously and hourly sales associates have considerable power to solve customers’ problems and resolve customer complaints. In contrast, service jobs at mass discounters or fast-food restaurants are characterized by part-time work at low wages, along with increased levels of routinization and management control.

While higher quality service jobs are not the norm, the lessons from studies of management practices and work organization can be integral to the restructuring of service jobs in the future. Additionally, it is necessary to unpack not only the nature of work organization, but also the characteristics of workers. Even within the same occupations, lower status service jobs are predominately

filled by lower educated, minority, immigrant, and female workers. As the service economy grows it can continue to bifurcate, with better jobs going to higher status workers. Sociologists can be pivotal in highlighting this inequality and addressing it. Tied to this is the need to direct firms from to move from low-cost, low-skills strategies to higher value product markets where higher skills are needed (Korczynski, 2005).

Comparative analysis can prove to be very important not only in identifying high-road management practices, but also in understanding the role of national labor-market institutions in improving service jobs. Eileen Appelbaum and John Schmitt (2009, forthcoming) found significant differences in low-wage work in high-income countries. Specifically, when 'unions retain much of their traditional strength and influence, where employment regulations provide workers with protections against layoffs, or where a national minimum wage provides an effective floor that enables most workers to rise above the low-wage threshold' employers are less able to evade institutional constraints on their ability to pay lower wages and to reduce employment security.

Finally, *training and education* are critical for individuals' ability to compete in service occupations; yet discussions of training and education for workers in these jobs is often ignored or framed within the context of attaining skills so that workers can exit these jobs. Tom Baum (2002) observes that skill shortages in service occupations are increasingly seen in terms of generic rather than specific technical competencies. He notes that employers want workers trained in communications, people management, and problem solving. Pre-employment training initiatives can successfully deliver these skills. Employers demand workers who possess the necessary social competencies and generic skills, and then train new hires in the technical skills and knowledge they need in the jobs.

Yet the lack of attention to training of service workers in the sociological literature and subsequent delay in training initiatives may reflect the larger debate surrounding the skills of service work (Lindsay, 2005). We must develop research protocols identifying training initiatives in service work to provide empirical data to help governments reconceptualize skills and systems of skill certification. Korczynski (2005), in discussing the skills certification system in the UK, notes that policymakers privilege definitions of skills that can be easily measured via numerical outcome and represented in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system. The same is true of skills certification systems in many other high-income countries. To move beyond such conceptualizations will require sociologists to develop sound measures and typologies that include the service skills discussed in this article. Very recent work by Junor and Hampson (2008) for the New Zealand Department of Labor provides some models. Indeed, this area is ripe for sociological investigation.

In addition to pre-employment training and reconceptualization of skills certification systems, it will be necessary to transition *existing* workers from other industries into growing service jobs. Skills demanded by service employers – social skills, emotional labor, aesthetic labor, information technology skills – are

unfamiliar to many workers in the manufacturing jobs that are declining (Lindsay, 2005). Alan Blinder (2006) warns that:

... the United States and other rich nations will have to transform their educational systems so as to prepare workers for the jobs that will actually exist in their societies. Basically, that requires training more workers for personal services and fewer for many impersonal services and manufacturing.

As the service economy continues to grow it will be up to sociologists to reorient their analyses to fully understand the complex skills and work involved in service jobs. Sociologists, with a focus on both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, can offer a great deal to this inquiry. In that we echo, but also extend, the calls from other social scientists (Junor and Hampson, 2008; Korczynski, 2005), who argue for a framework that is holistically informed. Sociologists need to develop a research agenda that *recognizes* skills in service work, both at the level of the worksites and within national skill certification systems; that understands how service work can be organized so skills are *rewarded* and the *quality* of jobs is improved; and that develops *training and education protocols* to ensure that current and future workforces possess the necessary skills. Indeed, without a full understanding of the complex skills and work involved in service jobs, it is difficult to justify directing training funds and the attention of training providers to service work. We believe that it is incumbent upon researchers to examine service occupations holistically – using multiple approaches – to fully depict the work and workers.

## Acknowledgements

An earlier version of this article was commissioned and presented at the National Academies, Research on Future Skills Demands, and at the American Sociology Associations annual meetings in 2008. This article benefitted from the comments and suggestions from participants in these workshops; along with the suggestions from anonymous reviewers of this journal.

## Notes

- 1 While our focus here is on the categorization of jobs via the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, we are aware that the concerns with the Dictionary of Occupation Titles (DOT) are also shared by researchers in other countries. For instance, Nickson et al. (2004) challenge the UK's Vocational Education and Training (VET) to include skills in service jobs, and Junor and Hampson (2008) have made a strong case for developing new service skills taxonomy for Aotearoa/ New Zealand's Department of Labor.
- 2 Home Depot is a US-based home improvement specialty retailer, with stores throughout North America and China. The store bills itself as 'one-stop shopping for the home do-it-yourselfer'; see <http://www.homedepot.com>

## References

- Appelbaum, E. and J. Schmitt (2009 forthcoming) 'Low-wage Work in High-income Countries: Labor-market Institutions and Business Strategy in the U.S. and Europe', *Human Relations*.
- Appelbaum, E., A. Bernhardt and R. Murnane (2003) *Low-Wage America: How Employers are Reshaping Opportunity in the Workplace*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Appelbaum, E., A. Bernhardt, R. Murnane and J. Weinberg (2005) 'Low-wage Employment in America: Results from a Set of Recent Industry Case Studies', *Socio-Economic Review* 3: 293–310.
- Attewell, P. (1990) 'What Is Skill?', *Work and Occupations* 17(4): 422–48.
- Autor, D., F. Levy and R. Murnane (2003) 'Computer-based Technological Change and Skill Demands: Reconciling the Perspectives of Economists and Sociologists', in E. Appelbaum, A. Bernhardt and R. Murnane *Low-Wage America: How Employers are Reshaping Opportunity in the Workplace*, pp. 121–54. New York: Russell Sage Foundation
- Baum, T. (2002) 'Skills and Training for the Hospitality Sector: A Review of Issues', *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 54(3): 343–64.
- Belt, V. and R. Richardson (2005) 'Social Labour, Employability and Social Exclusion: Pre-employment Training for Call Centre Work', *Urban Studies* 42: 257–70.
- Belt, V., R. Richardson and J. Webster (2002) 'Women, Social Skill and Interactive Service Work in Telephone Call Centres', *New Technology, Work, and Employment* 17(1): 20–34.
- Berhardt, A. (1999) 'The Future of Low-wage Jobs: Case Studies in the Retail Industry', *IEE Working Paper* 10.
- Blinder, A. (2006) 'Offshoring: The Next Industrial Revolution', *Foreign Affairs* 85(2): 113–28.
- Blinder, A. (2007) 'How Many U.S. Jobs Might Be Offshorable?', CEPS Working Paper No. 142, URL (consulted June 2009): <http://www.princeton.edu/~blinder/papers/07ceps142.pdf>
- Bolton, S. (2004) 'Conceptual Confusions: Emotion Work as Skilled Work', in C. Warhurst, I. Grugulis and E. Keep *The Skills that Matter*, pp. 19–37. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bolton, S. and C. Boyd (2003) 'Trolley Dolly or Skilled Emotion Manager? Moving on from Hochschild's Managed Heart', *Work, Employment and Society* 17(2): 289–308.
- Braverman, H. (1974) *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Brown, P., A. Green and H. Lauder (2001) *High Skills: Globalisation, Competitiveness, and Skill Formation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dill, B.T. et al. (2004) *Racial, Ethnic and Gender Disparities in Access to Jobs, Education and Training under Welfare Reform*. College Park, MD: Consortium on Race, Gender and Ethnicity.
- Duffy, M. (2005) 'Reproducing Labor Inequalities: Challenges for Feminists Conceptualizing Care at the Intersections of Gender, Race, and Class', *Gender and Society* 19(1): 66–82.
- England, P., M. Budig and N. Folbre (2002) 'Wages of Virtue: The Relative Pay of Care Work', *Social Problems* 49(4): 455–73.

- Gatta, M. (2002) *Juggling Food and Feelings: Emotional Balance in the Workplace*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Gittell, J. (2000) 'Organizing Work to Support Relational Coordination', *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 11(3): 517–39.
- Gittell, J. and L. Weiss (2004) 'Coordination Networks Within and Across Organizations: A Multi-level Framework', *Journal of Management Studies* 41(1): 127–53.
- Gittell, J., D. Weinberg, S. Pfefferle and C. Bishop (2008) 'Impact of Relational Coordination on Job Satisfaction and Quality Outcomes: A Study of Nursing Homes', *Human Resource Management Journal* 18(2): 154–70.
- Glenn, E.N. (1992) 'From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproduction Labor', *Signs* 18: 1–43.
- Grugulis, I., C. Warhurst and E. Keep (2004) 'What's Happening to Skill?', in C. Warhurst, I. Grugulis and E. Keep *The Skills that Matter*, pp. 1–19. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Guy, M. and M. Newman (2004) 'Women's Jobs, Men's Jobs: Sex Segregation and Emotional Labor', *Public Administration Review* 64: 289–98.
- Hampson, I. and A. Junor (2005) 'Invisible Work, Invisible Skills: Interactive Customer Service as Articulation Work', *New Technology, Work and Employment* 20: 166–81.
- Hecker, D. (2005) 'Occupational Employment Projections to 2014', *Monthly Labor Review* November: 70–101.
- Hochschild, A. (2003[1983]) *The Second Shift*. New York: Penguin.
- Junor, A. and I. Hampson (2008) 'How Skilled Are Service Jobs? Developing a New Service Skills Taxonomy in Aotearoa/New Zealand', Paper presented at the International Labour Process Conference, Dublin, Ireland.
- Korczyński, M. (2002) *Human Resource Management in Service Work*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Korczyński, M. (2005) 'Service Work and Skills: An Overview', *Human Resource Management Journal* 15(2): 1–12.
- Leana, C., E. Appelbaum and I. Shevchuk (2009) 'Work Process and Quality of Care in Early Childhood Education: The Role of Job Crafting', Unpublished manuscript.
- Leidner, R. (1993) *Fast Food, Fast Talk: Service Work and the Routinization of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Levy, F. and R. Murnane (2005) 'How Computer Work and Globalization Shape Human Skill Demands', Paper prepared for Planning Meeting for 21st Century Skills, National Academy of the Sciences.
- Lindsay, C. (2005) 'McJobs, Good Jobs and Skills: Job-seekers' Attitudes to Low-skilled Service Work', *Human Resource Management Journal* 15(2): 50–65.
- Newman, K. (1999) *No Shame in My Game: The Working Poor in the Inner City*. New York City: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Nickson, D., C. Warhurst and E. Dutton (2004) *Aesthetic Labour and the Policy-making Agenda: Time for a Reappraisal of Skills?* Research Paper 48. Coventry: SKOPE Publications, Warwick Business School.
- Pettinger, L. (2004) 'Brand Culture and Branded Workers: Service Work and Aesthetic Labour in Fashion Retail', *Consumption, Markets and Culture* 7(2): 165–84.
- Ritzer, G. (1996) *The McDonaldization of Society*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

- Sawchuk, P. (2006) 'Use-value and the Re-thinking of Skills, Learning and the Labour Process', *Journal of Industrial Relations* 48(5): 593–617.
- Sherman, R. (2007) *Class Acts: Service and Inequality in Luxury Hotels*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Spenner, K. (1983) 'Deciphering Prometheus: Temporal Change in the Skill Level of Work', *American Sociological Review* 48(6): 824–37.
- Spenner, K. (1990) 'Skills: Meanings, Methods, and Measures', *Work and Occupations* 17(4): 399–421.
- Spitz-Oener, A. (2006) 'Technical Change, Job Tasks, and Rising Educational Demands: Looking Outside the Wage Structure', *Journal of Labor Economics* 24(2): 235–70.
- Strauss, A. (1985) 'Work and the Division of Labour', *The Sociological Quarterly* 26(1): 1–19.
- Warhurst, C., I. Grugulis and E. Keep (2004) *The Skills that Matter*. London: Palgrave.
- Witz, A., C. Warhurst and D. Nickson (2003) 'The Labour of Aesthetics and the Aesthetics of Organisation', *Organization* 10(1): 33–54.
- Woodfield, R. (1998) 'Working Women and Social Labour', Working Paper in Rusel Forum for Comparative Political Economy, University of Exeter.
- Wrzesniewski, A. and J. Dutton (2001) 'Crafting a Job: Revisioning Employees as Active Crafters of their Work', *Academy of Management Review* 26(2): 179–201.

## Mary Gatta

Is a Director in Gender and Workforce Policy at the Center for Women and Work, and on the faculty in the Department of Labor Studies and Employment Relations at Rutgers University. She holds a PhD and MA in Sociology from Rutgers University and a BA in Social Science from Providence College. Dr Gatta has published several books, articles, and policy papers. Her latest book, *Not Just Getting By: The New Era of Flexible Workforce Development* (Lexington Press's imprint Press for Change), chronicles workforce development initiatives that deliver skills training to single working poor mothers via the internet. In addition to books, Dr Gatta has published numerous scholarly articles and public policy papers on topics including gender equity in academia, the gender-based pay gap, and welfare policy.

Address: 50 Labor Center Way, Rutgers University, New Brunswick NJ 08901, USA.

E-mail: [gatta@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:gatta@rci.rutgers.edu)

## Heather Boushey

Is Senior Economist at the Center for American Progress. Previously she was a senior economist with the Joint Economic Committee of the US Congress, and with the Center for Economic and Policy Research. Dr Boushey studies working families and trends in the US labor market. She has written extensively on labor issues, including tracking the recession and its impact on workers and their families, women's labor force participation, trends in income inequality, and work/life policy issues. She has testified before Congress and given lectures nationwide. Dr Boushey's research has been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Time* and *Newsweek*, as well as in many regional papers, television and radio. Dr Boushey co-authored *The State of Working America 2002–3* and *Hardships in America: The Real Story of Working Families*. Boushey received her PhD in economics from the New School for Social Research and her BA from Hampshire College.

Address: Center for American Progress, 1333 H Street NW 10th Floor, Washington DC 20005, USA.

E-mail: [hboushey@americanprogress.org](mailto:hboushey@americanprogress.org)

## Eileen Appelbaum

Is a Professor and Director of the Center for Women and Work. She holds a concurrent position as Professor in the People, Management and Organisations Department of the University of Manchester Business School (MBS) in the UK. She has published widely on workforce, employment, and labor market issues and on the labor market experiences of women. Her current research focuses on low-wage work in the US and Europe; on work processes and quality of care in child care, elder care and health care; and on policies and practices that facilitate the work and family lives of workers. Publications include the co-edited volume, *Low Wage America: How Employers Are Reshaping Opportunity in the Workplace* (2003), and the co-authored books, *Manufacturing Advantage: Why Higher Performance Work Systems Pay Off* (2000) and *The New American Workplace: Transforming Work Systems in the US* (1994), all three of which were selected by Princeton University as Noteworthy Books in Industrial Relations and Labor Economics. She has published widely in books and journals on wage and employment trends in industrialized countries and on the workplace and work-life practices of firms, including in *Industrial Relations*, *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, and *International Labour Review*.

Address: Rutgers University, 50 Labor Center Way, New Brunswick NJ 08901, USA.

E-mail: [ba@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:ba@rci.rutgers.edu)