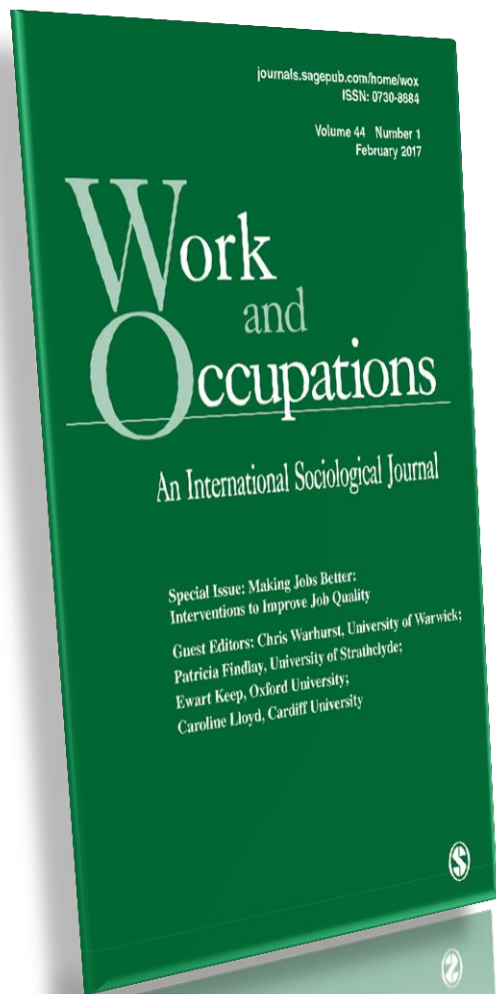


SPECIAL ISSUE



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WORK AND OCCUPATIONS

Volume 44 Number 1

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Opportunity Knocks? The Possibilities and Levers for Improving Job Quality by Patricia Findlay, Chris Warhurst, Ewart Keep, Caroline Lloyd

This article focuses on demands and interventions to improve or maintain job quality. There is a need for better understanding of what can be done, by whom, and with what impacts. The article provides a framework for reflection focused on interventions within and outwith the workplace. Drawing on secondary data, it outlines the renewed policy and academic interest in job quality, examines the multilevel reasons for intervention and the factors that shape this intervention, and evaluates the loci of intervention. On the basis of the evidence to date, it argues that there is scope for intervention and that intervention can be effective.

Multilevel Work–Family Interventions: Creating Good-Quality Employment Over the Life Course by Barbara Pocock, Sara Charlesworth

Poor-quality jobs have significant costs for individual workers, their families, and the wider community. Drawing mainly on the Australian case, the authors' focus is on the structural challenges to work–life reconciliation and the multiple-level interventions necessary to create quality employment that supports workers to reconcile work and family over the life course. The authors argue that interventions are necessary in three domains: at the macrosocial and economic level, in the regulatory domain, and in the workplace domain. The nature and success of these interventions is also critical to gender equality and to responding to the changing gender and care composition of the workforce across OECD countries.

Unions and Job Quality in the UK: Extending Interest Representation Within Regulation Institutions by Melanie Simms

This article presents a counterpoint to a structuralist view of job quality and argues that it can be understood as an outcome of contested power dynamics of interest representation within institutions of labor market regulation. The article presents studies of unions in two sectors in the UK (health care and industrial cleaning) where bad jobs are common. It examines how unions have sought to regulate job quality through representing new interests within existing institutions and by extending institutional regulation to new groups. The evidence highlights the contested nature of these decisions and the importance of collective actors in exercising agency in seeking to improve job quality. The evidence shows how new interests can be promoted within institutions to (seek to) improve job quality, despite internal resistance.

Reducing Wage Inequality: The Role of the State in Improving Job Quality by Gerhard Bosch, Claudia Weinkopf

This article concurs with Weiss's critique of the myth of the powerless state, which underestimates the possibilities that remain open to nation states to take action. Even today in an environment characterized by globalized markets, nation states have at their disposal instruments that can effectively ensure high job quality. The Swedish and French examples show that the state, by means of various combinations of participative and protective labor standards, can ensure that there is a low share of low-wage workers and a high rate of coverage by collective agreements. Given sufficient political pressure, new standards, such as the minimum wage in Germany, can be put in place.

Organizing for Good Jobs: Recent Developments and New Challenges by Annette Bernhardt, Paul Osterman

Over the past several decades, there has been a remarkable surge of economic justice organizing across the country. The goal of this article is to examine these efforts and provide a framework for understanding their potential, their limitations, and their future. In what follows, the authors first describe five distinct organizing movements focused on low-wage work that have flourished in recent years. The authors then develop a framework for thinking about these movements. They distinguish among these efforts along the two dimensions of goals and strategies, assessing relative strengths and weaknesses. With these distinctions in hand, they then take up the question of the scalability of the movements and analyze the challenges they face in terms of growth strategy, sustainability, constituencies, and cohesion. This overall framework yields a picture of significant promise in America's economic justice organizing—but one that will take equally significant resources and political power to realize.

Employer Choice and Job Quality: Workplace Innovation, Work Redesign, and Employee Perceptions of Job Quality in a Complex Health-Care Setting by Patricia Findlay, Colin Lindsay, Jo McQuarrie, Marion Bennie, Emma D. Corcoran, Robert Van Der Meer

This article examines employer choice in relation to job quality (JQ). Acknowledging the important role of market, institutional, and technological constraints, the authors highlight the role of employer agency in shaping JQ by reporting on an employer-led service redesign initiative in hospital pharmacy services in Scotland. This redesign initiative aimed at upskilling employees and redirecting their work effort toward high value-added, patient-facing work using robotics implementation. The article provides a critical assessment of the success of the initiative in enhancing JQ and explores a range of factors constraining and shaping employers' JQ choices.

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