



# Irreconcilable Differences? Job satisfaction versus Quality of Work

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‘You could be in the most high flying business in the world, earning millions an hour, but if you don’t like what you’re doing then it’s not quality to you’

## The tension between job satisfaction and job quality - conflicting literatures?

Economic - discretionary effort, productivity;

Psychological - decision latitudes (social interaction);

Labour process - work as social relation .

## The tension between job satisfaction and job quality - conflicting methodologies?

Qualitative v Quantitative;

Subjective v objective?

Gender and class - expectations;

Change (Green)?

## Research Methods

TUC sponsored research;

40 in-depth interviews;

Mass-retail and telecommunications;

‘low’ and ‘high’ skilled.

## Job quality - skill and job design

‘Capacity management is about ensuring the current architecture can actually handle changes in demand and the way you do that is by analytical modelling, which is a beautiful mathematical method of actually creating machine models...it requires a deal of analysis and it’s lovely seeing the team learn ... its just lovely’.

## Job Quality -Job Design

Work organisation;

Multi-skilling;

Autonomy and task discretion.

## Job Quality - Pay

Local labour market;

Non-wage benefits - profit sharing;

Pensions.



## Job satisfaction - Experience and Expectations

Aspirations of work - education;

Work-life balance - part-time working v flexible working time;

‘It’s just shopwork really’;

‘It’s solving problems, that’s what a techy loves’.

## **Job satisfaction - social relations at work**

Importance of relations with co-workers;

Relations with customers;

Relations with management.

## **Supermarket**

‘I quite like it, I don’t mind coming here, it’s a job. At the end of the day it’s a job isn’t it, you just come and do it. It’s like you say, you have better days than others, some days are like crap and other days are really good and you have a laugh with people... it’s the people that I work with, yeah, it’s good’.

## **Job satisfaction - intensification**

Impact of work intensification;

Job security - 'reorgs';

Flexible working and discretion?

Stress.

## **Work intensification**

‘The way we work even within Telcom now is not the same feel as it was nine years ago. And even though potentially it was a more staid environment nine years ago, it felt different. I worked in a team of Business Advisors, we all went to lunch every day, as a matter of course...we’d all come together as a group, we would walk over [to the canteen] and we would have some lunch. Today lunch breaks are non-existent, so now you grab a sandwich and sit at your desk. So some kind of comradeship, the kind of “it’s a fun place to work” has kind of gone. Telecom is still a great place to work, but there is more pressure. It’s a very exciting environment to work in, but its pressure, pressure, pressure, pressure, because we have to do, do, do, do, do, do. Nine years ago you still had to do, do, do, but there seemed to be sort of time for less pressure...It just seemed to be easier to find the time to do that kind of social interaction’.

## **Telecom**

‘I mean the tension’s between your home life and work life, I have more of a sense that I’m sort of selling out my family to keep going in this job’.

## Organisational commitment?

‘My husband is really jealous of me, he absolutely hates his job, and he’s not jealous of the fact that I work for Supermarket, he’s jealous of the fact that I enjoy my job and I like going to work’

‘I’m a great evangelist for Telecom...I think Telecom is winning in the stakes, it’s got a really great brand, it’s got a really great culture and it’s winning and it’s winning because of the culture its got and the people here and I’m not sure why I’d want to move’.



## Organisational commitment

‘When I first joined, it was a case of “oh, I feel really well treated here, and we make money” [but] the bigger its got the hungrier its got....I think the first thing staff will say now is that its all now about making money’.

‘It’s all driven to squeezing the last bit of value out of everybody. So this course is to encourage me to get the most out of my team and for me to give more...to increase productivity is the way to increase our profitability’.

## Conclusions

Making the most of a disadvantaged socio-economic position (Brown et al, 2007)?

Training and progression;

Job design and work organisation.

Labour process - possibility of resistance (Newsome et al, 2009);

Challenging intensification - restoring the social and democratic to work?