Skilled Migrants Access to the Australian Labour Market: An Intersectional Analysis

While there has been substantial work undertaken in relation to skilled migrants and access to employment, the adoption of intersectionality approaches in analysing migration studies has only recently been undertaken (Bürkner 2011). Historically, the representation of gender in migration studies has been weak, with a 'women only' focus appearing more recently during the 1980s (Bürkner 2011). Often, the migration process had been passed off as 'genderless' (Boucher 2006, p. 383), attributed to the historical treatment of the primary migrant being male, with women viewed as either secondary or tied migrants (Boucher 2006). The migrant literature has been important in bringing issues experienced by migrant women to prominence. However, the utilisation of intersectionality theory can contribute further by considering how identity constructs of migrants are intermeshed with the constructs and influences of broader society. Such an approach can help identify difficulties of access to employment, attributed not only to gender but also to additional identity differences. The lack of insight into what occurs at the family level for this group and how this shapes inequality can also be contemplated (Baca Zinn 2012).

The presentation will consider issues drawn from a recent qualitative PhD research project focused on the job search experiences of skilled migrants from non-English Speaking backgrounds (NESBs), conducted in Australia. Twenty-two migrants were interviewed twice over a twelve-month period, and their narratives were analysed utilising intersectionality theory. The research provides a foundation for the further development of work in this field, and future research directions are also considered.