The Complexity of the Job Search Experiences of NESB Skilled Migrants: Looking through an Intersectional Lens

Susan Ressia, Griffith University, s.ressia@griffith.edu.au
Glenda Strachan, Griffith University, g.strachan@griffith.edu.au
Janis Bailey, Griffith University, j.bailey@griffith.edu.au

Abstract

This paper explores the job search experiences of skilled migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds who arrived in Australia between 2004 and 2008. Semi-structured interviews collected the stories of 22 migrants after their arrival, and 12 months later. The research utilises intersectionality theory which acknowledges the need to tease out the intersecting factors of power that create disadvantage within the intertwining complexity of social categories and divisions that creates them (Anthias 2012). The research is underpinned by Anthias’s (2012) levels of analysis to examine how social divisions and their associated identity categories (e.g. gender and ethnicity) intersect with broader social systems, such as the labour market, to understand how these shape outcomes and socially locate migrants within lower level occupations. The research identifies that a participant’s ethnic background and ‘new migrant’ status initially complicates employment seeking. However, additional complexities associated with gender roles intersect and force migrating families to prioritise the job search for one spouse, especially where young families are involved. Men were most likely to seek employment ahead of women as a way of handling competing financial and childcare constraints. This reveals that job seeking becomes a gendered process as responsibilities become divided around work and care roles. While it is clear that both genders suffer downward occupational mobility (Ho 2006; Ho & Alcorso 2004) men initially find any type of job to get by and continue to seek professional work. Women, however, tend to gravitate towards insecure forms of work, and are more likely to permanently change occupations.

Reference List


Contact Details

Ms Susan Ressia, PhD Candidate
Department of Employment Relations and Human Resources &
    Centre for Work, Organisation and Wellbeing
Griffith Business School, Griffith University
Nathan Campus
Brisbane Qld 4111

Mob: 04399 51097
Fax: 07 3735 7177