

Chieh Hsu

Max-Weber-Institut für Soziologie

Highly skilled female migrants in Germany – brain waste in a society that values talents?

While literature on skilled migration has gathered momentum, previous studies have predominantly looked at men's experiences, leaving women under-investigated. Female migrants joining their husbands on grounds of family reunification are even less studied, let alone those who are highly educated and skilled. Germany's Residence Act manifestly aims to attract skilled migration and promote integration upon arrival, exemplified by the exemption of language requirements given to skilled migrants' spouses and orientation courses sponsored by the state. This research nevertheless argues that Germany, despite its skilled-friendly immigration policies, is passively leading to the deprofessionalization of skilled female migrants who came for family reunification. The long-standing tradition of family-oriented social welfare policies, based on the men as breadwinner and women as caretaker model, have help mould social values, both discouraging women's participation in the labor market. With the recognition that German women are subject to the similar constraints, this study assumes greater pressure imposed on female migrants and consequently bleaker employment prospects. This research will then examine Germany's social welfare system, its perception on gender roles, and its immigration policies, and how those factors relate to highly skilled female migrants' access to employment in the host country and their corresponding level of integration.

The aim of this research project is to understand if skilled female migrants' employment prospects and level of integration are shaped by social welfare regimes and social perceptions in the host country, and if so, to what degree and how. This research proposes to employ mixed methods of surveys and in-depth interviews. Along with the two data-collection methods, the research is divided into two parts: first, to delineate who the skilled female migrants are in Germany. Secondly, the research will gauge the effects of how social perception on gender roles influence women's participation in the job market, and to evaluate Germany's social welfare policies, specifically those related to childcare and child-rearing, and their implications on female employment.

Either through the Ausländerbehörde, if retrieval of residence permit approval data for research purposes is granted, or local integration courses providers, such as Volkshochschule, highly skilled female migrants who arrived in Germany for family reunification will be identified via survey. Two groupings of women then would have to be made: those who are required to have basic German knowledge and those exempted, whose spouses are highly skilled or EU Blue Card holders. Such groupings could serve as a preliminary indicator of their German language proficiency, depending on how long they have been in the country. Among both groups, educational attainment may be screened through questionnaire distribution. Those who are highly skilled will then be approached for



future interviews.

Semi-constructed interviews will be conducted with both groups of highly skilled female migrants as a means to ascertain the impacts of social norms and welfare policies on skilled female migrants' (or locals) decision-making and participation in the job market. Through discourse analysis, I wish to associate the fixed and traditional gender roles and external pressure from the German society to the deskilling of these women.

Keywords: highly skilled female migrants; immigration policies; social welfare regime; social perception; gender roles; female dependency

HGGS

HEIDELBERGER GRADUIERTENSCHULE
FÜR GEISTES- UND SOZIALWISSENSCHAFTEN



**UNIVERSITÄT
HEIDELBERG**
ZUKUNFT
SEIT 1386