CHINESE IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN CANADA: FROM PROFESSIONAL TO FAMILY CAREERS

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ABSTRACT

We investigate labour market outcomes of Chinese immigrants in Canada focusing on the impact of career change on women as they enter the Canadian labour market. The sample includes men and women with higher education, from the People’s Republic of China. Applying an institutional approach, we discuss how professions are institutionalised into segmented labour markets with specific expectations of education and career paths. We analyse how skills, careers and gendered occupational roles are institutionalised differently in the two countries and how skills and gender roles mismatch is particularly disadvantageous towards women. Although men are slightly better educated than women, there were considerable equality in their career outcomes in China. Entering Canada, many face problems in the labour market. Employers do not accept their credentials and most land low-level jobs. Women have the worst outcomes; not only do required credentials work against them, but so do gender-specific work roles. Many women turn their energies to their families and have a second child. The institutional approach explains how professions constitute rules of the labour market and how social systems create gender roles for work and family life. Moving from one institutional setting to another breaks careers because the two systems are not integrated and are incompatible with regard to credentials and gender work roles.

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