Integration into the Australian Labour Market: The Experience of Three “Visibly Different” Groups of Recently Arrived Refugees

Val Colic-Peisker* and Farida Tilbury**

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the effects of “visible difference” on employment outcomes of three recently arrived refugee groups: ex-Yugoslavs, black Africans, and people from the Middle East. The paper draws on data collected through a survey (150 questionnaire-based face-to-face interviews conducted by bilingual interviewers) of refugees who settled in Western Australia over the past decade. Results indicate different outcomes for respondents from the three backgrounds despite similar levels of human capital and similar length of residence. Our evidence supports a “political economy of labour migration” interpretation for the differential outcomes, based on both structural and interpersonal racism, rather than a neo-classical explanation which holds that the job market is “blind to ethnicity”. Despite high unemployment and loss of occupational status, predominantly highly educated refugees were relatively satisfied with their lives in Australia.
I can’t escape the view that my relatively easy ride is not the result of the dream-England’s famous sense of tolerance and fair play, but of my social class, my freak fair skin and my “English” English accent. Take away any of these, and the story would have been very different (Salman Rushdie, 1991, *Imaginary Homelands, Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, Granta Books and Viking, London).

INTRODUCTION

The Australian population is increasingly ethnically diverse, as is the case with other Western countries, and the trend is likely to continue in the future. The “White Australia Policy”, which virtually banned non-white immigrants for three-quarters of the twentieth century, was finally abandoned in the early 1970s (Jayasuriya et al., 2003). Consequently, from the mid-1970s onwards, non-European immigration grew considerably (Markus, 2001). In the 1990s new immigrant groups arrived from Africa and the Middle East, mostly within Australia’s humanitarian intake. These immigrants, “visibly different” from the white-Anglo majority of Australians, seem to suffer from a degree of disadvantage related to the extent and type of their “visibility”. Although most people, including social scientists, believe such disadvantage exists, its degree is difficult to establish and interpretations vary widely. The debate about the levels of racism that affect the immigrant “Other” in Australia is not likely to be resolved, but it is nonetheless important to maintain it in order to counteract the complacency of some commentators who claim that Australia, with the exception of the tortured relationship with its indigenous black population, is a zone of racial harmony. In this paper we want to contribute to this debate by presenting some findings from the research project focusing on employment outcomes of three recently arrived “visibly different” refugee groups and the possible role of discrimination in these outcomes.

We have used the term “visible difference” or “visibility” as a less value-laden concept than race, as it does not carry the unwanted historical connotations of racial hierarchy. The concept of visible difference simply denotes a visible minority status in a particular social environment, which stems from the culturally and historically defined “normal” or “standard” majority self (cf. Hage, 1998; Jakubowicz et al., 1994). The degree and meaning of visibility of particular migrant groups in mainstream Australia has changed with the historical context. For example, while in the 1910s Greeks and Maltese immigrants in Australia were seen as “cheap black labour” (Murphy, 1993; Yiannakis and Appleyard, 2002), such a perception is unlikely nowadays.
The negative impact of visible difference may have increased in Australia in recent years as a result of a revival of xenophobic attitudes triggered by internal and international events such as the “Tampa crisis” in August 2001 (where asylum seekers from a crippled vessel were denied access to the mainland; see Manne with Corlett, 2004) and the September 11th terrorist attack in New York a few weeks later (Jupp, 2002; Dunn, 2003), which have seen those from Muslim backgrounds publicly vilified (HREOC, 2004). The focus of Australian racism appears to have shifted from Asians, who nowadays tend to migrate to Australia under the skilled or business migration categories, to immigrants from the Middle East and Africa, who tend to be refugees.

In this paper we compare the labour market experiences of three groups – recent arrivals from ex-Yugoslav, Middle Eastern, and “black” African backgrounds – who are “visibly different”, that is, recognizable as different from the white, Western-clad, and English-speaking Australian majority in various ways: by their non-English speaking background and therefore “accent” when they speak English; by skin colour and bodily and facial features; by dress and attire, often connotative of religious denomination; or by a combination of these “visibilities”, together with various degrees of cultural difference. It is likely that these three groups, being “visible” to different degrees and in different ways, encounter different levels and types of prejudice in mainstream Australia and consequently suffer various degrees of disadvantage in the labour market. Ex-Yugoslav communities, for example, among many other European migrant groups, are nowadays considered largely “invisible” (Gale, 2000), and perceive themselves as part of “white Australia” although they remain recognizable by their accent and names (Colic-Peisker, 2005). Middle Eastern and African groups are both considerably more visible. For those from the Middle East the focus is often on religion (Islam), with ethnic origin (usually perceived as “Arab”) and the cultural differences inferred from it combining to produce a prejudicial gaze (HREOC, 2004). This has had special salience in the past several years since September 11th (HREOC, 2004). Africans are perhaps the most visibly different, both through phenotypical features, and, for Muslim Africans and those who wear traditional clothing, through differences of dress, and the cultural differences inferred from these characteristics (Asekeh and Tilbury, 2004).

These refugee groups arrived in Australia during the 1990s and early 2000s. As elaborated below, we look at human capital factors (primarily language proficiency and skills) in relation to employment success, and the reported, as well as implied, impact of prejudice and discrimination based on visibility. We only considered people on permanent visas and designed our sample to be indicative rather than representative, enabling us to focus on a specific subgroup of refugees.
and explore their experiences in the labour market in some depth. Specific refugee factors, such as the effect of traumatic experiences on mental health cannot be excluded from consideration, but we have tried to move the emphasis away from pathological constructions of refugees as predominantly “damaged” individuals (see Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2003; Rajaram, 2002: 247). In addition, our respondents have been in Australia for seven years on average, by which time the acute impact of these factors would have subsided.

The data presented in this paper were collected from July to September 2004 through a survey of 150 refugees. Fifty questionnaire-based face-to-face interviews were conducted with people of working age from each of the three refugee groups. Bilingual interviewers conducted the interviews, although we targeted respondents with functional English, as the latter are more likely to be in the workforce or looking for work. The questionnaire covered respondents’ demographic characteristics, job-seeking practices, and their experiences within the job market. The last section consisted of questions concerning general satisfaction with settlement and social and emotional well-being. In a number of questions, respondents were invited to provide comments, which three-quarters of them did, thus providing additional qualitative data. These data are presented below as direct quotes.

THE AUSTRALIAN POLICY CONTEXT

The congratulatory representations of Australia’s race relations by politicians, most media, and some social scientists, remain contentious, but it is beyond doubt that Australia has some of the world’s most stringent anti-discrimination legislation and is the least racially segregated among comparable “settler” societies (Adhikari, 1999; Jupp, 2002). In the early years of settlement, nineteenth century immigrants to Australia came from a range of backgrounds, including Chinese, Arab, Japanese, Malay, Pacific Islander, West Indian, and African (Jupp, 1998; Pybus, 2001). Consequent concern for social cohesion resulted in the enactment of the *Immigration Restriction Act* and *Pacific Island Labourers Act* in 1901, which restricted immigration to those of British or at least European descent, thus establishing the “White Australia Policy” (Jupp, 2002). These acts were the first large pieces of legislation passed by the parliament of the newly federated Australia.

The “White Australia Policy” was substantially modified in 1966 to allow the migration of qualified “non-whites” on the basis of their ability to assimilate readily and their possession of qualifications useful to Australia. The Australian *Racial Discrimination Act* (RDA) was passed in 1975 as a basis for
non-discriminatory immigration and employment policies and other institutional practices. Section 15 of the RDA\(^4\) states that it is unlawful for employers or persons acting on their behalf to refuse work which is available to anyone who is qualified, or to dismiss them or treat them less favourably on the grounds of their race, national or ethnic origin, or that of their relatives. Other legislation at national and state levels also promotes equal opportunity in employment.\(^5\)

Australia has always taken an economic rationalist approach to immigration (apart from a small proportion of humanitarian and family reunion entrants), restricting intakes to those whose labour and skills are expected to be useful in the current economy. Until the mid-1970s, unskilled immigrants were in demand as “factory fodder” for Australia’s post-war economic growth (Jupp, 2002). In more recent times, higher levels of skills were required in the changing job market, and in 1979 a “points system” was introduced to select skilled immigrants, reflecting a new “human capital” approach. This approach favours younger immigrants with skills and qualifications, relevant work experience and English language skills. On the basis of a large longitudinal survey of immigrants, the Australian government claims that the increasingly rigorous points system has resulted in much improved employment outcomes for those who arrived from 1999 to 2000 compared with a cohort arriving from 1993 to 1995 (DIMIA, 2002: 11-12). Research consistently indicates that the diversity in employment outcomes among Australia’s overseas-born is a product of four factors: English proficiency, length of residence in Australia, educational qualifications, and visa type (Jones and McAllister, 1991).

**REFUGEES AND EMPLOYMENT**

Those who arrive under the humanitarian category do not fare nearly so well in the employment market (Jupp, 2002). In other words, employment outcomes for refugees are consistently worse than for any other entry category. Refugees, or those from “disturbed situations”, as Jupp (2002) calls them, have higher rates and longer duration of unemployment than immigrants from other streams, as Table 1 indicates (see also Hugo, 2001).

The significantly worse employment outcomes for refugees may be partly due to the fact that they are not carefully filtered for their “human capital” through the visa points test (Castles et al., 1992: 84). They may, therefore, have on average lower levels of skills and English-language proficiency, and perhaps be older and have more health problems compared with those from other visa categories. However, they are apparently selected for their “resettlement potential” (Iredale et al., 1996), a phrase that indicates an informal application of
“human capital” principles in the humanitarian stream. Consequently, the 2001 Australian Census shows that, except in the case of Somalia-born and Bosnia-born, the recently arrived refugee communities have a higher proportion of the tertiary educated than the general Australian population (DIMIA, 2005). Table 2 shows the rates of higher qualifications and unemployment for selected recent refugee communities in Australia (those predominant in our sample).

TABLE 1
UNEMPLOYMENT RATES FOR VARIOUS VISA CATEGORIES (PRINCIPAL APPLICANTS, 1999-2000 ARRIVALS)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Entry visa category</th>
<th>6 months after arrival</th>
<th>18 months after arrival</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


TABLE 2
HIGHER QUALIFICATIONS AND UNEMPLOYMENT IN SELECTED REFUGEE COMMUNITIES (2001 AUSTRALIAN CENSUS DATA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Higher qualifications (%)</th>
<th>Unemployment rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>22.4</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eritrea</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>28.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>46.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>34.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In comparison, the rate of higher qualifications among the Australia-born is 18 per cent according to the latest (2001) available census data (ABS 2002).

The “lack of human capital” explanation and the “refugee-specific factors” explanation combined do not seem to adequately account for poor employment outcomes for refugees, hence our desire to explore the degree to which “visible difference” also affects refugees’ success in the labour market. By controlling for the variables of entry category, human capital and length of Australian residence, the impact of visible difference, and ultimately, discrimination, can be isolated with more confidence. In this paper we present the initial results of the survey in the form of descriptive statistical tables, and some qualitative data in the form of quoted respondents’ comments.

EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES OF THREE REFUGEE GROUPS

Our respondents came from a range of national and ethnic backgrounds. Among the ex-Yugoslavs the majority were Bosnians. For the Middle Eastern sample, the majority came from Iraq. The majority of the African sample were from Somalia (about half), followed by Ethiopia and Eritrea. We instructed our interviewers to “snowball” a sample with particular characteristics – those with formal skills, whose English was at least functional, and who were, or wanted to be, part of the workforce. Therefore, our sample is deliberately skewed toward better educated, employable people of working age and consequently does not match the census profile of the main national groups represented in our sample (Bosnians, Iraqis, Somalis, Ethiopians, and Eritreans). In terms of age, our sample only roughly reflects the census profile of the communities involved, in that Bosnians (who make an overwhelming majority of the ex-Yugoslav group) are somewhat older than the other two groups. Overall, 38 per cent of respondents were female, 62 per cent male. While the ex-Yugoslav subsample was predominantly female (58%), the other two subsamples featured considerable male majorities (72% and 74% respectively), possibly also reflecting the norm of male breadwinning. In terms of age, around 85 per cent of the African and Middle Eastern samples were aged between 21 and 50, whereas 26 per cent of the ex-Yugoslavs were older than 51 years old, perhaps reflecting an on average older population of ex-Yugoslav migrants compared with those from the other two regions.

Please note that the first three columns of each table show percentages that represent the subsamples (n=50) and the last column shows the percentages of the total sample (N=150). This method of representation allows for comparison of the three subsamples, which is the main intention of this paper.
As Table 3 shows, all respondents in our sample reported having at least 12 years of schooling (which in these countries usually means vocational qualifications) and a large proportion of each subsample had a university or postgraduate degree. This “overeducated” sample serves the purpose of our research very well: the highly educated are likely to have more cultural and human capital than a representative refugee sample so their patterns of employment should more closely reflect those of other visa categories. A large majority of our respondents had lived in Australia for five years or more at the time of interview: 96 per cent of ex-Yugoslavs, 80 per cent of Africans, and 58 per cent of respondents from the Middle East. A considerable proportion of the Middle Eastern subsample were recent settlers: 42 per cent had been in Australia for less than four years at the time of the interview.

**TABLE 3**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Education Level (%; N=150)</th>
<th>Ex-Yugoslav</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Middle Eastern</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High School 12 years</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE* diploma</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-grad qualification</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Technical and Further Education (tertiary non-university education).

A lack of English-language skills is an obvious explanation for difficulty in the labour market. Jones and McAllister (1991: 5-6) have predicted that “someone who rates his or her English speaking ability as ‘not well’ or ‘not at all’ could expect to experience between two to three times the probability of unemployment of a control group with otherwise similar skills and qualifications”. In our sample, ex-Yugoslavs reported significantly lower English proficiency on arrival than the other two groups. While as many as 90 per cent of ex-Yugoslavs stated they had either “no spoken English” or “basic English” this figure was 60 per cent for Middle Easterners and 34 per cent for Africans. A dramatic 96 per cent of ex-Yugoslavs stated they had either no or only basic English writing skills on arrival, while this figure was 70 per cent for Middle Easterners and only 30 per cent for Africans. This is consistent with the fact that many ex-Yugoslavs learned other European languages during their schooling, rather than English, while for many African arrivals English was the second language spoken in their home country. Table 4 shows that the language proficiency for ex-Yugoslavs significantly improved by the time of the interview (on average seven years later). However, only 52 per cent placed themselves in the top two categories of
written English, in contrast to 68 per cent of Africans and 72 per cent of Middle Easterners, who assessed their English at the time of interview to be either “fluent” or “very good”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4</th>
<th>CURRENT ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (SELF-ASSESSED) (%; N=150)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex-Yugoslav</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spoken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No English</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No English</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>40.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluent</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The levels of English on arrival provide a potential advantage to making a start in their Australian life for Africans and to some degree for Middle Easterners, compared to ex-Yugoslavs. The implications of this could be significant in early job searching. At any rate, significant majorities in all three groups assess their current spoken and written English as “very good” or “fluent”, indicating they are capable of competing in the skilled job market. So, we will examine the employment status of each group. Please note that we targeted people who were looking for work or were currently employed and not those outside the workforce such as stay-at-home mothers and full-time students.

Table 5 shows that those from ex-Yugoslav backgrounds are faring better than Africans and Middle Easterners. Only 14 per cent of ex-Yugoslavs classified themselves as unemployed, compared to almost one-third of Africans, and over one-third of respondents from the Middle East. Given that the length of residence is similar for the three groups, and ex-Yugoslavs assess themselves as worse in English and have a somewhat lower level of qualification than the other two groups, this is an unexpected result. It is even more surprising given that
the ex-Yugoslav sample is predominantly female and also middle-aged, “competing” with the younger male majority in the other two groups. This discrepancy points to several possible paths of interpretation. The whiteness/European-ness of ex-Yugoslavs may represent an advantage in Australia – as an “invisible” form of human capital. However, one should not lose sight of the fact that the rate of unemployment of ex-Yugoslavs is still significantly higher than the current 5 per cent in the general Australian population.

**TABLE 5**
CURRENT EMPLOYMENT STATUS (%; N=150)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ex-Yugoslav</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Middle Eastern</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10 hours pw</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-20 hours pw</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-30 hours pw</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed full-time</td>
<td>52.0</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>42.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The long established ex-Yugoslav communities in Australia may be of benefit to new arrivals who seem able to avail themselves of community support in finding jobs. However, earlier research reported that using one’s ethnic networks in job searching may lead to downwards occupational pressure and loss of occupational status (Bloch, 2002; Colic-Peisker, 2003). Table 6 shows a massive loss of human capital in all three groups.

**TABLE 6**
WORK BY QUALIFICATION (%; N=150)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ex-Yugoslav</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Middle Eastern</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appropriate</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above qualification level</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below qualification level</td>
<td>80.0</td>
<td>44.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>49.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Totals do not sum to 100 due to different understandings of the question by respondents/bilingual assistants. All but 2 per cent of ex-Yugoslavs responded to the question, yet 14 per cent had reported being unemployed. It is assumed that many of these unemployed ticked the “working below qualification level” box. On the other hand, 36 per cent of Africans and 42 per cent of Middle Easterners did not answer the question, reflecting more closely the numbers reporting they were not employed.
As shown in Table 6, a much higher proportion of ex-Yugoslavs reported that they worked below their qualification level, compared to the other two groups, although for all groups the figures were significant. Apart from the community job support factor, their initial lack of English and the availability of low-skilled jobs may have worked in the direction of “downskilling”. Half of all respondents report having a job below their qualification level (see Rydgren, 2004 for similar results in Sweden, and Lamba, 2003 for almost identical results in Canada), and only one-fifth of ex-Yugoslavs and Africans and one-third of Middle Easterners have jobs appropriate to their qualification level. Illustrative comments indicate that taking any available job was sometimes a pragmatic decision made on the basis of economic necessity or acceptance of structural disadvantage through their own experiences of job seeking or community knowledge. The comments illustrate this.

A middle-aged Bosnian woman:

Safety was my priority when I applied to come to Australia. I did not have high expectations about getting a job in my field [as a teacher], but I believed I would not have many problems to find a labouring job as Australia is a rich and developed country.

A Bosnia and Herzegovina engineer turned taxi driver:

[...] It would take me too long to update/improve my English skills and work experience and there is still no guarantee I would get the job. I cannot afford not to work for a long period of time as I have the family to look after.

An Eritrean man:

I have been told that there is discrimination in jobs that require qualification, but not in labour jobs. Many people come in and go out as they please in the factory that I work.

There appear to be general, widespread difficulties for refugees in finding work (see Table 7).

Over the past decade Australia has experienced economic prosperity, with unemployment levels the lowest in 25 years – currently less than 5 per cent across the nation, with considerable labour shortages. Despite this, a majority of our respondents, and especially those from the Middle East, reported having difficulties finding work. Respondents were also asked about discrimination in the job market (Table 8).
**TABLE 7**

EXPERIENCED DIFFICULTIES FINDING WORK (%; N=150)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ex-Yugoslav</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Middle Eastern</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TABLE 8**

EXPERIENCE OF DISCRIMINATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET (%; N=150)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basis of discrimination*</th>
<th>Ex-Yugoslav</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Middle Eastern</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language ability</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accent</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>32.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appearance</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious customs</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *Participants could select more than one category.*

The amount of reported discrimination – when different grounds of discrimination are added together – was highest for the Middle Eastern group. While the Africans, perhaps surprisingly, reported the lowest level of difficulty finding work (still 50%), they provided many written comments expressing their frustration at their lack of success in the job market. Many Middle Eastern and African Muslim respondents commented on the impact of the September 11th terrorist attack on their lives and their experience of discrimination because of their appearance, accent, and name. Five respondents volunteered stories about being disadvantaged by their “unpronounceable” or Muslim names, and stated that when they either changed their name or used only an initial on their resume, they received more positive responses from employers (see also HREOC, 2004; Quigley and Sankaran, 2005). The attribution of different types of discrimination varied significantly across groups. Language ability was much less of an issue for Africans and Middle Easterners, which is not surprising given their reported English proficiency. Accent, too, seems to be seen as more of an issue for
ex-Yugoslavs, although for Africans, accent (what some refer to as “African
English”), together with appearance, are the likely parameters of discrimination.
For Middle Easterners, accent, name and appearance fare equally. The 22 per cent
of Africans who feel they have been discriminated against in the job market due
to religious customs reflects the large proportion of Somali Muslims in our
sample. The only basis of job market disadvantage that pertains to a job-relevant
characteristic, language ability (and accent, if it hampers communication), was
often quoted as a basis for discrimination by ex-Yugoslavs. This is also the main
form of visible (or, rather, “audible”) difference for ex-Yugoslavs in the Aus-
tralian context, as opposed to phenotypical differences.

The following quotes illustrate the perception and experience of discrimination:

An Egyptian man:

I have always been advised during my interviews that I am overqualified for the
job [but] if I applied for a senior position, I was always unsuccessful.

An Iraqi female doctor:

Through my work, I’ve been discriminated against by some people and even
some patients. [Some] refused to be treated by me because of my appearance,
the way I dress, and my accent.

Another Egyptian man:

One hundred and fourteen job applications until I got an interview [...] First job
I got job [for] happened after I changed my name to a Western name.

An Iraqi man:

My name is Mohamed and it is obviously a Muslim name. Every time I put it in
the cover letter with my CV to employers there is no response or feedback, but
when I indicate to my name (just M), employers respond and in good manner.

Below are comments provided by several Somali respondents, illustrating the
ways “African-ness” together with “Muslim-ness” is often a “double jeopardy”:

Many migrants from East Europe who was studying English with me got job
when we applied together, but I could not get. I also believe that my name and
appearance was the reason behind not getting jobs because when I called
companies and I told them my Muslim [name] they changed their attitude. I was
refused too many jobs because of my prayer requirements.
Some respondents inferred discrimination from their labour market experiences:

A Somali nurse:

I think that my colour and my name were major factors in not being successful in getting many jobs.

A Bosnian Muslim:

Through body language I felt many times when I applied for job that I was refused to the job because of my Islamic name and different appearance.

Apart from direct discrimination attributable to individual prejudices, participants also identified a number of structural barriers to employment, as shown in Table 9.

### TABLE 9

**BARRIERS IN SECURING ADEQUATE EMPLOYMENT** (%; N=150)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Ex-Yugoslav</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Middle Eastern</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Problems getting qualifications recognized</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>42.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement to have Australian work experience</td>
<td>68.0</td>
<td>58.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>62.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirement to have referees in Australia</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>48.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of opportunities for work experience in refugee camps</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breaks in working life</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties getting promoted</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>13.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Necessity of having a car</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: * Respondents could select more than one category.

For all groups, the lack of Australian work experience and the related inability to provide Australian references were significant issues. Even for those whose formal qualifications were recognized, this did not seem to be of much worth without local experience. Almost all respondents who provided written comments mentioned this problem. A minority saw this as understandable and justified, while a significant majority described this as a “Catch 22” situation and therefore unfair. Many respondents saw the lack of recognition of overseas experience as a case of “structural discrimination”, an “excuse” to deny them
employment, while perceiving the real reasons as lying in non-work-essential characteristics such as name, appearance, and the religious, cultural, and ethnic differences they imply.

The following comments were typical for all three groups:

A Croatian respondent:

The biggest problem is that our/my work experience was not taken into consideration by employers at all. The fact that I had offered documents of qualification that are recognized did not mean anything to them. Interviewers told me, “We are not interested in what you were doing before; we want to know about your work experience in Australia”.

An Ethiopian respondent:

Employment procedure, criteria, and standard is too inflexible to allow new arrivals to enter job market. The disregard for overseas qualification and experience leads to the feeling of exclusion and in extreme cases the sense of racial discrimination.

Lack of work opportunities and breaks in working life were identified as important barriers by less than 15 per cent of respondents, which is somewhat surprising, given their refugee status. Issues relating to job promotion seemed more important for the older population of ex-Yugoslavs, who had identified themselves as working below their qualification level, and less important for the more recent African and Middle Eastern arrivals, who were still having difficulty getting into the job market, let alone advancing through it. The more practical concerns such as the need for transport were most important to the African and ex-Yugoslav communities, and were significant enough to affect one-fifth of the total sample.

Respondents were also asked whether they were satisfied with their current job. As shown in Table 10, the relatively high job satisfaction among ex-Yugoslavs, in spite of the lowering of occupational status for many people, may be attributed to the fact that they earn a satisfactory income (see Table 11). As our previous research among Bosnian refugees shows, material prosperity, with its culturally appropriate symbols (e.g. a large, well furnished house) is a primary goal for many people, especially after they have lost everything in forced migration (Colic-Peisker, 2003). Therefore, a reasonably well paying job in a situation where family earnings are pooled in order to reach culturally valued material goals (and the status they bring within the community), may be more highly valued than the job status itself (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2003). The
following comments by two respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina illustrate this:

Although my qualifications have been recognized in Australia, I need to upgrade and update my skills. At the moment, I am not prepared to do that and my current job suits me as I can earn enough and have flexible working hours.

We are very happy with what we have achieved so far [in 8 years], which is having a house (loan), a car, and part-time jobs [pay] for bills and loans and supports the children. I am aware I need to improve my English skills and refresh the computing skills […] but I […] will need to sacrifice my job and income to do that, and I am not prepared for that yet.

This point of view may also indicate a pragmatic acceptance that this is the best they can do in the job market, often related to the fact that hopes for a higher-status well-paid job are placed on their children (Colic-Peisker and Walker, 2003). It is, therefore, important to be aware of different aspects of job satisfaction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 10</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT JOB (%; N=150)</td>
<td>Ex-Yugoslav</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entirely</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response*</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>38.0</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *The incidence of no response to this question reflects the fact that a considerable proportion of respondents were unemployed at the time of interview (especially among African and Middle Eastern respondents, see Table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 11</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AVERAGE NET FORTNIGHTLY INCOME (A$; N=150)</td>
<td>Ex-Yugoslav</td>
<td>African</td>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household</td>
<td>2257.6</td>
<td>1521.2</td>
<td>1238.5</td>
<td>1650.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal</td>
<td>913.2</td>
<td>799.2</td>
<td>704.7</td>
<td>801.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A comparison of the average personal and household income among our sample is surprising. The average individual income for ex-Yugoslavs is about $100 a week higher than for Africans, and $200 a week higher when compared with refugees from the Middle East, in spite of the fact that ex-Yugoslav respondents are predominantly women, compared with a large male majority from the other two groups, and that they are less proficient in English. Their household income fares even better in comparison with the other groups – a full $700 more than an average African household, and more than $1,000 more per fortnight than Middle Eastern households. This may result from the fact that ex-Yugoslav refugees often live in dual- (or more) income families, as many middle-aged ex-Yugoslavs live with their adult employed children. The lower income among Africans and Middle Easterners reflect their lower employment levels, and possibly also a norm of single-income families with a male breadwinner. The disparity between the three groups is significant, given their similarity in terms of human capital such as education levels, and the greater English proficiency of the Middle Eastern and African samples. Those from European backgrounds are clearly better off.

Table 12 presents the answers to the question “Are you satisfied with your financial situation?”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 12</th>
<th>SATISFACTION WITH FINANCIAL SITUATION (%; N=150)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ex-Yugoslav</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Entirely</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>36.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>22.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These responses are consistent with the (un)employment situation in the three groups. The Middle Eastern respondents are the least satisfied with their financial situation, reflecting the fact that they have the highest unemployment rate and the lowest income levels. General satisfaction with life in all three groups (see Table 13) exceeds both satisfaction with one’s job and satisfaction with one’s financial situation, indicating that employment status and income level are not the only important factors in determining satisfaction with life among refugees. The majority of respondents in all three groups reported being either entirely or mostly satisfied with their lives.
TABLE 13
GENERAL SATISFACTION WITH LIFE (%; N=150)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ex-Yugoslav</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Middle Eastern</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entirely</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>16.0</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The high proportion of ex-Yugoslavs who are “entirely satisfied” with their lives is surprising, while the distribution of (dis)satisfaction in the other two groups reflects a more expected pattern. The Middle Easterners, who had the lowest levels of income, and job satisfaction, are, surprisingly, predominantly satisfied with their lives. This may reflect a particular philosophical or religious approach to life. In addition, some refugee-specific factors may be at work here: refugees have little choice about their place of resettlement and are unable to return to countries of origin; they came from countries often at war and civil strife, to Australia which is perceived as safe; and their incomes, even if considerably below the Australian average, are high in comparison to their countries of origin. According to media reports, refugees are “grateful to Australia for taking them” and are happy doing low-skilled jobs, even when much below their qualifications (Horsburgh, 2005). These factors should be taken into account in any analysis of refugee satisfaction with resettlement.

VISIBILITY AND EMPLOYMENT: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

There are two main approaches to theorizing migrant employment outcomes. The neo-classical approach relies on competitive market theory which holds that the market is blind to ethnicity/race and functions on the basis of a single rule, maximization of profit, consequently minimizing prejudicial actions by employers (Evans and Kelly, 1991; Fugazza, 2003). In other words, if people have skills the market requires, they will be hired. Consequently, high levels of unemployment and lower average income of new immigrants reflect their lack of experience in the labour market and lack of appropriate skills, including language and job seeking skills. The neo-classical approach to immigrant employment and the associated human capital approach have been criticized for the assumption that neither personal prejudice in hiring practices, nor structural discrimination, exist (Castles et al., 1998; Ho and Alcorso, 2004).
In contrast to the neo-classical paradigm, the critical approach to labour migration focuses on labour movements in response to demands of international capital, and the consequent discrimination and disadvantage migrants experience in the host country (Castles et al., 1992; Collins, 1991; Ho and Alcorso, 2004). This approach sees discrimination as a pervasive feature of socio-economic interaction (Fugazza, 2003) and focuses on the representation of migrants at the bottom of a “segmented labour market” (Collins, 1991) as a result of “non-benign behaviour by employers and barriers to equal opportunity erected by government itself” (Ho and Alcorso, 2004: 254). To take the critical approach to its logical conclusion, it is possible to argue, as Castles et al. (1992: 89) have, that migrants are recruited not just as additional labour, but as a pool of reserve labour, available to meet the vagaries of demand and supply in a market economy, and keep wages down (see Jones and McAllister, 1991). Likewise, the humanitarian intake in Australia ensures that profit-seeking capital has access to a supply of labour to cover undesirable jobs that the local population shuns, as often reported in the Australian media over the last few years (see Steketee, 2004; Horsburgh, 2005). Our findings of the lower levels of employment of refugees and their employment in jobs below their qualifications support this interpretation – they are disadvantaged generally, and within that disadvantage there are degrees of disadvantage resulting from “visible difference”. This may lead ultimately to what Portes and Zhou have described as segmented assimilation, leading, over time, to “permanent subordination and disadvantage” (1993: 96) for certain ethnic groups.

The neo-liberal argument that employers hire those best suited for the job on the basis of their skills and merit, regardless of their other features (Burr et al., 1991: 834), is clearly a simplification of a complex reality. Discrimination in the labour market based on visible difference, as opposed to the market simply reacting to skills deficits, is well documented in research in Australia and comparable countries (Rydgren, 2004; Nii-Amoo Dodo and Takyi, 2002; Lovell Banks, 2002; Borooah and Mangan, 2002; Evans and Kelley, 1991; Essed, 1991; Ho and Alcorso, 2004). American researchers confidently argue that “race and ethnicity play a key role in employment outcomes” and that racial-stratification systems are likely to become even stronger dimensions to labour market operations (D’Amico and Maxwell, 1995).

Our findings support the critical approach to labour migration. There is a clear perception among a considerable number of respondents that there is discrimination in the job market, that they have experienced it and that their visible difference disadvantages them in the course of their Australian resettlement. Significant levels of unemployment and underemployment among our respondents cannot be attributed to the lack of human capital. Both structural and
individual discrimination are perceived by our respondents to be at work. “Institutional racism”, that is structural relations of subordination and oppression between social groups with unequal access to power (Castles et al., 1992) is evident in our findings. As Jupp (2002: 147) has argued, the requirement for Australian experience and rigorous restrictions on recognition of qualifications, act as forms of systemic discrimination for skilled migrants. The problem is compounded for skilled refugees, who in many cases flee unprepared, often without relevant documents and references, and from situations that preclude checking of existing documents. Where qualifications are recognized, a lack of cultural capital (especially of the finer points of local rules of conduct, communications and “etiquette”) (Tilbury and Colic-Peisker, 2006) and the lack of what Granovetter (1974) called “weak ties” with people outside their ethnic communities, which serve to link job seekers to information about job opportunities, clearly affect the refugees’ ability to circumvent structural barriers (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2006).

Interpersonal racism, that is, individual prejudices of those who make hiring and other decisions in the workplace and who may be endowed with a “taste for discrimination” (Becker, 1957; Fugazza, 2003) may also be relevant. Sometimes this appears in the form of “group reputation” discrimination (Rydgren, 2004). For example, Evans and Kelly (1991) found that 30 per cent of “native-Australian” employers would discriminate in favour of other Australian-born potential employees against those “visibly” or culturally different. This may be part of the explanation for the significant difference in outcomes between Middle Eastern and African refugees on the one hand, and the less visibly different ex-Yugoslavs on the other. Thus, while anti-discrimination legislation exists and arguably prevents blatant discrimination, it may also push discrimination underground and make it covert and subtle. The finding that half of our sample felt they had experienced discrimination in the labour market indicates a serious problem. However, another significant and perhaps counter-intuitive finding is that while around half the sample reported experiencing discrimination in the employment market, this discrimination did not cause enough resentment to impact on their satisfaction with life.

We have presented an inter-group comparison which demonstrates that the employment outcomes such as employment status and income of ex-Yugoslavs in our sample are significantly better than those of Africans and Middle Easterners. The highly educated Africans fare significantly worse in these measures than the less educated ex-Yugoslavs; Middle Eastern respondents, also with high human capital, fare worse still. Compounding this result is the fact that ex-Yugoslavs reported lower language ability than the other two groups. These findings may point toward their “whiteness” as a facilitating factor in their
resettlement and labour market integration. Cultural capital factors which help refugees from European backgrounds to succeed (to some extent) in the employment market, and which disadvantage those from Middle Eastern and African backgrounds, may therefore be more significant than some theoretical approaches allow (Evans and Kelly, 1991).

In conclusion, the human capital of our sample was on average very high, so the pervasiveness of unsatisfactory employment outcomes cannot be explained by a lack of human capital, in comparison with either the general population or other visa category entrants. Even less can human capital be an explanation for the more favourable situation of ex-Yugoslavs compared to those from African and Middle Eastern backgrounds. Therefore, discrimination along a number of structural and interpersonal parameters is implied.

NOTES

1. This research project is supported by a three-year Australian Research Council’s Discovery Project Grant DP 0450306. Chief Investigators were Val Colic-Peisker, Farida Tilbury, and Nonja Peters.
2. We will refer to all humanitarian entrants as “refugees” for the sake of brevity.
3. The employment outcomes of those on three-year temporary protection visas, i.e. those who are granted refugee status “on shore”, are complicated by their indeterminate residency status.
6. The gender and age profiles of our sample partly reflect the gender and age of our bilingual interviewers, as they started snowballing from their social networks (for example, both Bosnian interviewers were middle-aged women, whereas both African interviewers were somewhat younger men).
REFERENCES

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics)

Adhikari, P.

Asekeh, G., and F. Tilbury
2004 “‘A different life’: African migrants in Western Australia”, in R. Wilding and F. Tilbury (Eds), A Changing People: Diverse Contributions to Western Australia, Office of Multicultural Interests, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Perth.

Becker, G.

Borooah, V.K., and J. Mangan

Burr, J., et al.

Castles, S., et al.
1998 Immigration and Australia: Myths and Realities, Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards.

Colic-Peisker, V.

Colic-Peisker, V., and F. Tilbury
2003 “‘Active’ and ‘passive’ resettlement: the influence of host culture, support services, and refugees’ own resources on the choice of resettlement style”, International Migration, 41(5): 61-91.

Colic-Peisker, V., and I. Walker
Collins, J.  

D’Amico, R., and L. Maxwell  

DIMIA (Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs)  
2002  “Review of settlement services for migrants and humanitarian program entrants”, discussion paper, Department of Immigration, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Canberra.


Dunn, K.  
2003  “Racism in Australia: findings of a survey on racist attitudes and experiences of racism”, paper presented at *The Challenges of Immigration and Integration in the EU and Australia* conference, 18-20 February, University of Sydney.

Essed, P.  

Evans M.D.R., and J. Kelly  

Fugazza, M.  

Gale, P.  

Granovetter, M.  

Hage, G.  

Harrell-Bond, B.  

Ho, C., and C. Alcorso  

Horsburgh, S.  
Hugo, G.  

HREOC (Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission)  

Iredale, R., et al.  

Jakubowicz, A., and S. Castles  
1986 “The inherent subjectivity of the apparent objectivity in research on ethnicity and class”, *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 73: 5-25.

Jakubowicz, A., et al.  

Jayasuriya, L., et al. (Eds)  
2003 *Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation*, University of Western Australia Press, Perth.

Jones, R., and I. McAllister  

Jupp, J.  


Lamba, N.K.  

Lovell Banks, T.  

Manne, R., with D. Corbett  

Nii-Amoo Dodo, F., and B.K. Takyi  

Portes, A., and M. Zhou  
Integration into the Australian labour market

Pybus, C.

Quigley A., and R. Sankaran
2005  *Some are More Equal than Others: Experiences of Racism in New and Emerging Communities*, Ethnic Communities Council of WA.

Rajaram, K.P.

Rydgren, J.

Steketee, M.

Tilbury, F., and V. Colic-Peisker

Waxman, P.

Yiannakis, J., and R. Appleyard
2002  *Greek Pioneers in Western Australia*, University of Western Australia Press, Crawley.
INTÉGRATION DANS LE MARCHÉ DU TRAVAIL AUSTRALIEN :
L’EXPÉRIENCE DE TROIS GROUPES « VISIBLEMENT DIFFÉRENTS » DE RÉFUGIÉS RÉCEMMENT ARRIVÉS


1. Par souci de concision, toute personne arrivant dans le pays pour raison humanitaire est qualifiée de « réfugié ».
INTEGRACIÓN EN EL MERCADO LABORAL AUSTRALIANO:
LA EXPERIENCIA DE TRES GRUPOS “VISIBLEMENTE
DISTINTOS” DE REFUGIADOS RECIÉN LLEGADOS

Este estudio versa sobre las consecuencias de las “diferencias obvias” en los resultados obtenidos en el mercado laboral con respecto a tres grupos de refugiados¹ recién llegados: los ex yugoslavos, los africanos negros y las personas originarias del Medio Oriente. El estudio se basa en los datos recabados el último decenio, tras una serie de encuestas (150 encuestas en persona, que realizaron encuestadores bilingües) a refugiados asentados en la zona occidental de Australia. De los resultados se deduce que las respuestas difieren entre los tres grupos de distinto origen, pese a las similitudes en cuanto al capital humano y a la duración de la estancia. Nuestros datos apuntan a favor de una interpretación de estos resultados dispares sobre la base de una economía política de la migración laboral, habida cuenta tanto del racismo estructural como del interpersonal, en lugar de una justificación neoclásica que apuesta por un mercado laboral “insensible a lo étnico”. Pese al alto índice de desempleo y al descenso en la categoría profesional, los refugiados con mayor grado de preparación suelen estar relativamente satisfechos con su vida en Australia.

1. Por motivos de concisión, se aplica aquí el calificativo de “refugiados” a todos aquellos que inmigran por razones humanitarias.