

## **INTERPERSONAL AND FAMILY RELATIONS IN TRANSCULTURAL/ TRANSNATIONAL MARRIAGES**

International marriage migration is a visible and growing aspect of Australia's immigration program and it establishes enduring personal links between individuals and families across national borders. This study explores international marriage migration to Australia and the personal, family and community relationships that are constituted through intercultural marriages. It includes a focus on the recent development of internet courtship and marriage. The research will particularly focus on Filipino and Indonesian spousal migrants to Australia and their wider family circles, including their children and extended families. It will be concerned with men who migrate as spouses, as well as women. A key feature is an investigation of the social identity and experiences of children of intercultural marriages. The research approach incorporates interviews and fieldwork with intercultural couples, their families and communities in Indonesia, the Philippines and Australia, as well as involvement in on-line chat groups, e-lists, and bulletin boards with men and women seeking spouses through the internet. Interviews with marriage agencies and immigration officials and agents will illuminate current policies and practice in the area of marriage migration.

The phenomenon of women from developing countries seeking spouses in developed countries has attracted much media comment, usually condemning both the men and the women who seek these attachments. The women are typically depicted as 'mail-order brides' – gold-diggers who use Australian men to escape from poverty – while the men are often described as losers and social misfits. Such negative stereotypes may influence immigration policy and practice in approving visa applications for prospective spouses. This research will contribute to a rigorous questioning of negative stereotypes of people in intercultural marriages and will develop our understanding of this important migration category. Research results will shed light on marriage, gender and family relations in Australia; immigration policies; multiculturalism and internet-mediated courtship and marriage.

Engaging with intercultural couples, the research will ask: what are/were men's and women's motivations for marriage and their personal aspirations, what are their experiences after marriage, how did internet couples come to advertise on the web? What issues have become sources of difference and how are they resolved? What are their relations with members of their partner's extended family? The project seeks to understand how children of such relationships negotiate personal and family identities and help shape new family forms. How do they relate to their parents, other family members, and people in their social environment? How do the ideas about these relationships in popular circulation shape the lives/experiences of children and their relationships with parents and others?

Dr Kathryn Robinson is the chief investigator on the project. She draws on 25+years of research on Indonesia, including studies of marriage and family relations, and migration for her study of Indonesian migrants in transnational marriages. Dr Nicki Saroca is herself married to a Filipino and has children in this relationship. She has lived in the

Philippines and in Australia, has conducted research on transcultural marriage and has active contacts with Filipino communities in Australia.

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