



Research on Family Migration/Reunification: Issues and Challenges

Madine VanderPlaat, Ph.D.
Atlantic Metropolis Centre
Saint Mary's University
Halifax, Canada

The Need for a Research Agenda



- Migration and decisions related thereto take place at the level of the family
- The family as primary socializing agent is central to integration.

Challenges

- Temporal, circular and multidirectional nature of family migration
- Competing discourses of “best interests”
- Moral imperatives

Discursive Issues

- Theoretical marginalization of family migration
- Dominance of human capital model
- Crisis of nuclear family

Methodological Issues

- Lack of an empirical reality
- Tensions between quantitative/qualitative and macro/micro
- Variability in eligibility criteria and definition

Tensions

- Entitlement vs. minimizing fraud/abuse
- Needs of migrants vs. established residents
- Identity vs. social solidarity
- Retention vs. integration

Research Areas

- Mapping patterns, trends and influencing factors in family reunification
- Network analysis of relationships among sponsor/sponsored

Research Areas (cont'd)

- Analysis of relationship between family reunification and inter/intra group social capital formation
- Calculation of socio-economic costs of family separation