

APPENDIX A

THE "MAIL-ORDER BRIDE" INDUSTRY

AND ITS IMPACT ON U.S. IMMIGRATION

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The Industry

An American man seeking a foreign bride may avail himself of over 200 different services in which foreign women advertise for husbands. There are two types of such services. In one type, the so-called "mail-order bride" industry (representatives of the industry prefer the term "international correspondence service"), women's names, photos, biographical sketches, and addresses are presented in hard copy brochures or on the Internet. In these services, the agency provides the photos and descriptions of the women, who are not charged for this listing. Men who wish to obtain the mailing address of any of the women they would like to contact are charged a fee of from \$2 to \$5 for each of the mailing addresses.

The other way to contact potential spouses is through e-mail "pen-pal" clubs. These services are generally free of charge. In them, men and women provide biographical data, an e-mail address, and an indication of what type of relationship they seek. Some of the larger, more established of these pen-pal clubs are One-And-Only.com, Friendfinder.com, Match.com, Kiss.com, and Date.com. In these clubs, one can find nearly 10,000 foreign women seeking marriage or long-term relationships. Since these services require access to computers, the women tend to be older and better educated than those listed in the "mail-order bride" catalogs and to reside in more developed countries such as Japan and Russia.

The women are obtained through advertisements in local newspapers and popular women's magazines and, most commonly, through word of mouth.

Based on a scanning of the services listed and information provided by the agencies themselves, we may estimate that between 100,000 and 150,000 women from a variety of countries (including the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia) annually advertise themselves as available for marriage. The great majority of these women are from two major areas: Southeast Asia, including the Philippines, and Russia and other countries of the former Soviet Union.

The Philippines provides a large number of the Asian listings, despite the fact that "mail-order bride" activities have been illegal there since 1986, while Thailand, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Korea, and Japan are also seen often as the woman's native country.

In recent years, a large increase in listings has been due to the influx of services focused on women of Russia and the former Soviet Union. Nearly half (69) of the 153 services listed in one

source feature such women. In addition to Russia itself, the Ukraine is the most common country of origin.

The agencies vary considerably in the number of women listed, the geographical origin of the women, and in the length of time they have been in business. One of the largest and oldest of them is Cherry Blossoms, which has been operating since 1974 and lists over 6,000 women at any one time. This company's listings reflect the general pattern of national origin of the women seeking husbands: of the 6,000, over 4,600 are from Asia (3,050 from the Philippines), 1,700 from the former Soviet Union (mostly from Russia and Ukraine), and others from Latin and South America and Europe.

These businesses can be highly profitable. Bob Burrows, president of Cherry Blossoms, reports that his agency serves over 1,000 men per month who pay up to \$200 each.

The growth of these services has been phenomenal. Glodava and Onizuka (1994) report that there were 100 such companies in existence at the time of their writing. In mid-March of 1998, when work on this present report began, there were 153 listings in goodwife.com and in early May, less than two months later, there were 202. This list of links breaks down the agencies into four sections--Asian, Latin, Multi-ethnic, and Soviet--based on where most of the women currently reside. As can be seen in the table below, the current rapid growth is due largely to agencies representing women from Russia and the former Soviet Union.

	March, 1998	May, 1998
Asian	38	55
Latin	20	24
Multi-ethni	26	28
Soviet	69	105
Total	153	202

The Women

An analysis of the listings in recent issues of five popular catalogs featuring 1,400 Asian women found that 70 percent were Filipino (despite the fact that Republic Act No. 6955 makes such listings illegal), many of whom are "in-service" as domestic workers in other countries, 16 percent Indonesian, 8 percent Thai, 2 percent Malaysian and Japanese, and 1 percent Chinese and Korean. In terms of age, 20 percent are 16-20 years of age, 41 percent are 21-25, 24 percent are 26-30, 11 percent 31-35, and just 4 percent are over the age of 35. That is, for the Asian women, 61 percent are under the age of 25. There is a large difference in ages between these Asian women and their counterparts from the former Soviet Union. For the 1,700 Soviet women listed currently by Cherry Blossoms, just 8 percent are under 20, 23 percent between 21 and 25, 25 percent between 26 and 30, 20 percent from 31 to 35, 14 percent from 36 to 40, 7 percent aged 41 to 45, and 3 percent over 45. That is, just 31 percent are under 25 compared to the 61 percent of Asian women.

Why do foreign women want American husbands? Many sources suggest that these women are searching for a "better life" in terms of socio-economic factors--they do, for the most part, come from places in which jobs and educational opportunities for women are scarce and wages are low. However, when the women themselves are asked this question, the answer generally indicates an attraction to American men (they look like movie stars) and an aversion to native men. Americans, they say, make good husbands while Filipino (Thai/Indonesian/Russian/etc.) men do not. Americans are thought to be faithful to their wives, while the native men are cruel and run around with other women. True or not, this is the perception.

The Men

David Jedlicka (1988, cited in Glodava and Onizuka, 1994) surveyed 607 American men seeking mail-order brides and received 206 responses. He found that the men were generally white (94 percent); highly educated (50 percent with two or more years of college, 6 percent with M.D.'s or Ph.D.'s, only five did not complete high school); politically and ideologically conservative; and

generally economically and professionally successful (64 percent earned more than \$20,000 a year; 42 were in professional or managerial positions). Their median age was 37. The men came from 44 states, with 22 percent from California, and 84 percent lived in metropolitan areas. Fifty-seven percent had been married at least once; most had been divorced after an average of seven years of marriage, 35 percent had at least one child, and 75 percent wished to father additional children. When asked about their religious affiliations, 48 percent of the men identified themselves as Protestant, 23 percent as Catholic, 15 percent as belonging to other religions, and 14 percent as having no religious affiliation.

Why do American men want foreign wives? Most of the personal reports from American men who have married women through these agencies talk about "traditional values." That is, American women are thought not content to be wives and mothers but seek personal satisfaction through their own careers and interests, while the foreign woman is happy to be the homemaker and asks for nothing more than husband, home, and family. Again, true or not, this is the perception.

Although Jedlicka states in his conclusions that his research shows the men who choose the mail-order methods for mate selection appear ". . . above average . . . certainly in their communication skills," and "exceptional in the sense that they are trying cross-cultural marriage to improve their chances for loving and enduring relationships," he cautions that such conclusions are thin at best and such interpretations from these data are not warranted. His experience and the observations of others show that, contrary to responses in questionnaires, those who have used the mail-order bride route to find a mate have control in mind more than a loving, enduring relationship.

Of the 30 mail-order bride couples Mila Glodava (Glodava and Onizuka, 1994) encountered between 1986 and 1993, only two were close in age (4 -6 years difference). In the other 28 there was a 20 to 50 year difference in age. Older men, says Glodava, often want women "they can mold" and therefore do not want those who are too educated. "They would just become like any other American woman," they said. She concludes that, "It is apparent that power and control are critical for the men."

It is interesting to note that the views above on native and foreign men and women are not limited to the Occident--a similar attitude exists in Taiwan. According to "Taiwan Moves to Boost Women's Marriage Prospects" (The Associated Press, Aug. 30, 1996, by Annie Huang), many Taiwanese men prefer brides from other Asian countries because they feel Taiwanese women--who tend to be better educated and more affluent--expect too much from their husbands. Due to this attitude, Taiwan has imposed a limit on the number of brides from certain countries that can enter Taiwan each year--360 from Indonesia, 420 from Burma, and 1,080 from China. On the women's side, many of them are seeking Western men since, they say, Taiwanese men want to marry only hard-working obedient drudges while Taiwanese women have discarded this traditional role and are seeking equality and mutual respect in marriage.

Success Rates for International Services

In a survey done for this report we sent e-mails to 102 of the services and received replies from 28. We asked what percentage of their female clients married U.S. men.

Few agencies kept any records of engagements or marriages; some because they are too new for their clients to have had time to marry, some because they have no interest in following up on their listings. Of those that provided estimates of marriages, the ones listing predominately women from Russia and the former Soviet Union countries provided the highest figures--10 percent to 40 percent. Those whose women were largely from the Philippines and Asian countries gave lower estimates--none to 5 percent. In most cases, these estimates were for marriages to men from any country, not specifically the United States.

The only agency that provided firm statistics was Encounters International. This agency has been in business since 1993 and presents 450 Russian women in its current listing. They report 102 marriages to date between Russian women and U.S. men and, in addition, keep records of births, divorces, and locations of the couples. If it is assumed that the agency's listings have remained relatively constant at about 500 women each of the five years of its existence, then 102 of the 2,500 women, or approximately 4 percent, have found and married American men.

According to a report from the Commission on Filipinos Overseas (Paredes-Maceda, 1995) mail-order brides constitute 10 percent of the marriages between Filipinos and foreign nationals. Between 1989 and 1994, 95,000 Filipino men and women were engaged to be married to foreigners, the great majority of whom met their partners through work or personal introductions. Of the foreign men who married Filipinos, 44 percent were U.S. citizens.

According to the women themselves (in written replies to a 1996 questionnaire from the author), approximately 10 percent of these women are successful--they find and marry a man through the service. There are, then, around 10,000 marriages a year between women listed by these agencies and men who use the services. Of these 10,000, around 4,000 involve U.S. men. The remainder is distributed among Canadian, Australian, European, and, increasingly, Japanese clients.

Based on these data, we may estimate that 4 percent of the 100,000 to 150,000 women seeking U.S. husbands through international services find them; that is, "mail-order bride" and e-mail correspondence services result in 4,000 to 6,000 marriages between U.S. men and foreign brides each year.

This figure, 4,000 to 6,000, represents an increase from previous estimates (e.g., the estimate of 2,000 to 3,500 given by Kadohata, 1990) due, no doubt, to the recent increase in both e-mail correspondence services and the agencies specializing in Russian and Ukrainian women.

Impact on U.S. Marriages

According to data supplied by the U.S. Census Bureau, there were 2,395,000 marriages in the U.S. in the 12 months ending June, 1997 (and 1,154,000 divorces in the same period). The 4,000 to 6,000 marriages involving international services represent, then, a tiny portion (.021 percent) of the women who marry U.S. men.

It is interesting to note that, based largely on data provided by the agencies themselves (along with the Commission on Filipinos Overseas report cited above), marriages arranged through these services would appear to have a lower divorce rate than the nation as a whole, fully 80 percent of these marriages having lasted over the years for which reports are available.

Impact on U.S. Immigration

Statistics provided by the Immigration and Naturalization Service for the years 1994-96 show that there have been over 800,000 immigrants per year, of whom about 18 percent enter as spouses of U.S. citizens; e.g., 169,760 of 915,900 in 1996. An additional 14 percent (130,000) of the total immigrants involves parents and children of U.S. citizens.

In any case, the 4,000 to 6,000 women who immigrate through international correspondence agencies represent less than 6 percent of the new citizens. The majority of the women who gain permanent resident alien status through marriage do so through more traditional means, such as by meeting their spouse at work or in school or through marriage to U.S. servicemen stationed overseas.

Both U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens may petition for their spouses. While spouses and minor children of citizens may enter without long waits once the paperwork is approved, entry for spouses and minor children of permanent resident aliens is regulated by annual ceilings. In 1996 about 54,000 spouses were sponsored by permanent resident aliens.

Fraud

There is no question that many of the alien women who advertise for U.S. husbands are far more interested in gaining permanent residence alien status than in gaining a good marriage. What portion of the women intend to use marriage to gain permanent resident alien status cannot be ascertained, of course, since we cannot know what is in the woman's mind, but a reading of the self-descriptions they offer and their willingness to marry men of advanced age and dubious character attests to this intention. The true character of the men is well expressed in Glodava and Onizuka (1994:26), who note, "those who have used the mail-order bride route to find a mate have control in mind rather than a loving and enduring relationship."

The most common times for mail-order brides to leave the marriage, according to Martin (n.d.) are "immediately, 3 months after marriage (receipt of the green card), and 2 years after marriage (receipt of nonconditional permanent residence)."

There are reports of a different kind of fraud--namely, one in which women are recruited into prostitution through the international matchmaking services. This new slave trade has not, however, to the author's knowledge, occurred in the United States, although it is a well documented trade involving Russian women imported into Israel (Specter, 1998).

Abuse

According to "The Health Care Response to Domestic Violence" (anon. 1994), "Within the last year 7 percent of American women (3.9 million) who are married or are living with someone as a couple were physically abused, and 37 percent (20.7 million) were verbally or emotionally abused by their spouse or partner."

While no national figures exist on abuse of alien wives, there is every reason to believe that the incidence is higher in this population than for the nation as a whole. Authorities agree that abuse in these marriages can be expected based on the men's desire for a submissive wife and the women's desire for a better life. At some point, after the alien bride has had time to adjust to the new environment, to make new friends, and to become comfortable with the language, her new independence and his domination are bound to conflict. The problem, according to Mila Glodava (Glodava and Onizuka, 1994) and Uma Narayan (Narayan, 1995), is largely due to the men's unrealistic expectations. While many state a desire for a submissive wife, they find that such dependence becomes a burden. To provide some relief, the husband seeks ways (friends, activities) that will get the wife "out of the house" on occasion. The resulting independence then angers the husband who manifests the anger on the wife, who may have only been guilty of trying to please her husband.

Current INS Regulations

Immigration law concerning marriage to foreign nationals contains numerous safeguards discouraging abuse of this means of gaining U.S. permanent residence alien status. In general, the couple must be serious enough to wait for several months, to file a number of forms, and to pay sizeable fees.

The procedures, as outlined by the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Consular Affairs, are as follows.

The Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended, provides U.S. citizens with two options for facilitating the immigration of future spouses to the United States: the K-1 fiancé visa and the alien-spouse immigrant visa. In many cases, the processing time for a fiancé visa is shorter than that for an alien spouse. Fiancé(e) visa processing can take several months from the filing of the petition to the final adjudication of the visa. Total processing time for the alien-spouse visa can take 6-12 months depending on individual circumstances. While the immigrant visa route may take longer, additional processing in the United States is not required, as is the case for the fiancé(e) visa.

Marriage In the United States: Fiancé(e) Visa

U. S. citizens may file an I-129F petition with INS for the issuance of a K-1 fiancé(e) visa to an alien fiancé(e). A citizen exercising this option must remain unmarried until the arrival of the fiancé(e) in the United States, and the wedding must take place within 3 months of the fiancé(e)'s arrival if he/she is to remain in status. Also, the alien and U.S. citizen must have met personally at least once in the 2 years before the petition was filed. For more information about K-1 visas see the Bureau of Consular Affairs' brochure [Tips For U. S. Visas: Fiancé\(e\)s](#). Legal permanent residents may not file petitions for fiancé(e) visas. They must marry abroad and then file an I-130 petition for the immigration of a new spouse.

Marriage Abroad: Alien Spouse Visa

If a U.S. citizen marries an alien abroad, an I-130 petition must be filed after the marriage to begin the immigration process for the alien spouse. This can be filed either with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in the United States, or, under certain circumstances, at U.S. Embassies or Consulates abroad. U. S. Embassies and Consulates have differing policies on approving I-130s and should be individually contacted about the availability of this service. Many posts have their own web pages which include this information and which can be accessed through the U.S. Embassy and Consulate links page. Prior to departure from this country the U.S. citizen should contact the INS or appropriate foreign service post to ascertain exactly what documents will be necessary to file the immigrant petition for a new spouse. For more information about this option, see the Bureau of Consular Affairs' brochure [Tips for U.S. Visas: Family-Based Immigrants](#). For more information on how to arrange a legally valid marriage abroad, see the Office of Citizens' Consular Services brochure [Marriage of U.S. Citizens Abroad](#).

Procedurally, the process works like this. The U.S. citizen or permanent resident must submit a visa petition (form I-130) to appropriate local INS office to prove that the marriage is *bona fide*, that is, entered into for love rather than simply for the foreign-born spouse to obtain a green card. Attached to the visa petition are the following items: (1) Biographical forms (forms G-325A) for both the husband and the wife with photos attached; (2) Proof of the citizenship status of the petitioner. This can take the form of a U.S. passport, a Certificate of Naturalization or Citizenship or a certified copy of the citizen's birth certificate; (3) A certified copy of the marriage certificate; (4) Certified copies of the documents that terminated any previous marriages of the husband or wife, including final divorce decrees, and certificates of annulment or death; and, in the case of a permanent resident alien, proof of such status. Simultaneously, the foreign-born spouse must submit an application for adjustment of status (form I-485) which is an application for a green card. Items which must accompany the green card application are a completed fingerprint chart and green card photographs, and other INS forms may be required. The spouse can also file an OF-230 with the consulate and be issued an immigrant visa. In both the immigrant visa and adjustment of status cases, the petitioning U.S. citizen or Legal Permanent Resident must also complete an affidavit of support, INS form I-864, on behalf of the alien spouse.

In the case of a mail-order bride, a permanent resident alien would most likely marry the person abroad and then file the I-130. It would be possible for the woman to enter as a visitor or in another nonimmigrant category so the marriage could occur in the United States. The U.S. citizen spouse would then file the I-130 and the bride would file for adjustment of status using INS form I-485.

Conditions

If the marriage is less than 2 years old when the foreign-born spouse becomes a permanent resident, the green card will expire after a two-year period. Both spouses must submit a joint petition (form I-751) to remove the two-year condition within the 90-day period immediately preceding the end of the two-year period. Upon removal of conditions, a new green card is issued reflecting permanent resident status.

If the marriage has terminated by reason of divorce, death of the citizen spouse or spousal abuse, the foreign-born spouse may apply for a waiver of the joint petition requirement.

Recent Changes

Before 1986, when a citizen married a foreigner and petitioned for the spouse, the spouse was granted permanent residence fairly quickly and more or less as a matter of course. In 1986, as a result of concerns about alleged marriage fraud, Congress passed the Immigration Marriage Fraud Amendments (IMFA), which changed the legal process. Thereafter, the U.S. citizen had to petition for what is called "conditional resident status" for the spouse. The couple then had to wait for 2 years after conditional resident status obtained during which time they had to remain married, and then jointly petition INS to adjust the conditional status to that of permanent residence. Both spouses had to undergo a personal interview with the INS, to prove that the marriage was a *bona fide* one, before permanent resident status was conferred on the spouse (Anderson 1993). The two-year waiting period to apply for permanent resident status required by IMFA begins on the date the spouse obtains conditional resident status. Administrative delays can continue for four years or more.

In 1989, the House Judiciary Committee on Immigration, Refugees and International Law held a hearing on domestic violence in marriages between American citizens and foreigners. Representative Louise M. Slaughter testified that many battered conditional residents had no viable legal options. She introduced a bill, passed in 1990, which provided that battery and extreme cruelty, if alleged and proven, could qualify a conditional resident for a waiver during the waiting period. Initiation and termination of divorce proceedings was not required, if abuse could be proven. This legislation also terminated the condition that the divorce had to be for a "good cause." It held that the termination of a "good faith" marriage involving a conditional resident could itself constitute a waiver, without regard to the reasons for the divorce.

The petitioner, however, must present other evidence to support the application for waiver based on a claim of having been battered or subjected to extreme cruelty. Evidence may include, but is not limited to, expert testimony in the form of reports and affidavits from police, judges, medical personnel, school officials and social service agency personnel. The Service must be satisfied with the credibility of the sources of documentation submitted in support of the application.

Recommendations

Current INS rules and policies seem well intentioned in that they allow U.S. citizens and permanent residents to marry and bring to this country alien spouses while providing some safeguards against abuse and fraud.

The existing problems that appear to require some attention involve abuse. On the one hand, the potential husbands might need to be screened. As Sumiko Hennessy, executive director of the Asian Pacific Development Center (anon., 1996), notes, "What you have are older men, people with three divorces, alcohol problems . . .," some of whom have a history of "domestic abuse or problems with the law." To this end, I would strongly recommend that Uma Narayan (Narayan, 1995) be consulted before any new legislation focused on abuse and/or fraud is considered.

At the very least, alien spouses should be informed of their rights and be given names, addresses, and telephone numbers of agencies they may consult if they face difficulties in the marriage, agencies such as: Legal Aid for Abused Women and Children (703) 820-8393; AYUDA (202) 387-4848; National Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (814) 685-1447; NOW (707) 255-2516; and the Asian Pacific Development Center (303) 220-3398.

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