

THE CHANGING FACE OF CONSUMER-HUSBANDS:
TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE MAIL ORDER MARRIAGE INDUSTRY
AS A REFLECTION OF CORE-PERIPHERY RELATIONS

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A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts
in Sociology
at
Concordia University – Montreal, Quebec

March 2012

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

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Titled: The Changing Face of Consumer Habits: Transformation In the Mail Order Merchandise Industry as a Reflection of Core-Values Beliefs

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Sociology

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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ABSTRACT

The Changing Face of Consumer-Husbands: Transformations in the Mail Order Marriage Industry as a Reflection of Core-Periphery Relations

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This paper focuses on the social, political and economic transformations that have taken place in the existing mail order marriage industry prior to the development of, and throughout the rise of International Marriage Brokers (IMBs) or “mail-order marriage agencies”. A socio-historical analysis on transnational marriage is examined, as well as a content analysis of ads placed by consumer-husbands. Findings in this study show that there is a distinct permeability among brokers who deal in mail order marriage in terms of sex tourism, prostitution, domestic and care-related forms of work, reflected in migration patterns from periphery to core, and how this reflects the growing demands for traditional values expressed through “care” in western culture.

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I. Introduction

1. Marriage by Mail

Hailed as "heroines of the Philippines economy" by officials, in 1994, over 300,000 Filipina women left the Philippines to seek work in other countries (Fernandez 1997:411). By 1997, the nation constituted the world's largest "exporter" of female labour (Fernandez 1997:411). "Filipinas have been integrated into the circuits of transnationalism in various ways: as sweatshop factory workers in multi-national corporations within the national space, and as entertainers, domestic helpers, nurses, and mail-order brides in international spaces" (Tolentino 1996:49). It is believed that from 1986 to 1996, "50,000 Filipinas came into the United States as mail-order brides. Each year, some 19,000 Filipinas leave the Philippines to unite with husbands and fiances [sic] of other nationalities, the majority of whom are in the United States (Tolentino 1996:49).

This analysis seeks to examine the permeability among care workers and of mail-order brides, particularly through the use of International Marriage Brokers (IMBs). The term mail-order bride "has become a catch-all phrase for women who find their spouses through the mail. The process may be initiated by an introduction service agency, through the use of a catalog [sic], newspaper and magazine advertisements, or a videotape service. It may also be initiated through introductions made by a friend or relative." (Glodava & Onizuka 1994:2). In this sense, the term "mail-order bride" (MOB) is poly-semantic, as are the terms used to describe the international marriage brokers (IMBs) or "mail-order bride agencies" that help facilitate these forms of transnational courtship and marriage, and that these definitions are shaped by the various perspectives of those directly or indirectly involved with the process (Zabyelina 2010: 11). Nicole Constable

takes issue with the definition provided by Glodava and Onizuka, and argues that “women do not recognize themselves as such and that term reflects their [Glodava and Onizuka’s] own biases” (Constable 2003:70). It is difficult to overlook the consumption rhetoric that comes with the term “mail-order bride” as defined by Glodava and Onizuka, particularly with their focus on the marketing aspects of IMBs, such as advertisements and catalogues; the women in question are in fact individuals, and as many IMBs, male and female clients will testify, are not for “sale,” at least not in the literal sense. Many women who seek the services of an IMB also tend to agree with this statement, understandably so (Constable 2003:70; Johnson 2007:39; Larsen 1989:2-3). Wanwadee Larsen articulates common western interpretations of the notion of a “mail-order bride” as an object, stating in the prologue of her book, “The ‘what’ of what had to be said is not merely the experience of *being* Asian in America – small boned, slant-eyed, patient and beige in a predominantly large-boned, round-eyed, hurrying white world – that is a part of it to be sure. But it is far more the *learning* that took place beneath the skin and behind these (to most Americans) inscrutable Oriental eyes. Yes, far from being ‘kitchen appliances with sex organs,’ Asian-American women are as full of questions about life as anyone else. We do indeed have egos, flickering candles capable of flame” (Larsen 1989:2-3). In Constable’s research, she has found that the term “mail-order brides” is virtually unheard of among women who seek courtship and marriage transnationally in China and the Philippines, and many women instead refer to themselves and the men they communicate with as “pen pals” (Constable 2003:70). The term “pen pal”, however, overlooks the nature of transnational courtship and marriage through the use of IMBs. By contrast, Ericka Johnson found a different trend among the Russian women she had

interviews who were seeking foreign husbands. The very act of communicating with a foreign man carried with it a social stigma related to the idea of being unable to find a Russian husband. Furthermore, women who engage in the practice are sometimes “seen as selling oneself for money” (Johnson 2007:39).

However, this paper is less about the women who seek a prospective husband in the West, and more about the men who use these services and what these men represent in terms of western values. For the purposes of this analysis, I do in fact recognize the somewhat derogatory nature of the terms “mail-order bride” and “consumer-husband” as well as the implications therein. While I do agree with my colleagues that these terms are limited in that they reduce the entire process to a simple economic exchange, there has yet to be a more fitting terminology developed for the individuals who utilize the services of an IMB. Constable (2006) has suggested the term “correspondence bride” – however this term is essentially non-existent with respect to IMB and consumer-husband rhetoric, of which this analysis is primarily focused. As such, for the purposes of this analysis, I will continue to use the terms “mail-order bride” (MOB) and “consumer-husband” to describe the women and men who seek marriage transnationally through the services of a matchmaking operation or marriage broker, mainly because this analysis focuses heavily on consumer-husbands and the relationship between core (MOB “demand”) and periphery or semi-periphery (MOB “supply”) states, as well as the social, political and economic implications therein. At present, I am unable to resolve the question of rhetoric in this particular analysis, it is my sincere hope that this study offers some insight into the lives and the social, political and economic nature of these types of relationships.

The most recent study conducted on consumer-husbands was done by Glodava and Onizuka, and was published in 1994. Nearly 20 years later, I began to ask the question if consumer-husbands were still the feminist-hating, middle-aged men with unrealistic standards and expectations for a spouse so vividly described in their work, for instance in one of the many interviews conducted with consumer-husbands, one man states:

“Someone who would put me first in all things; my needs come before anything else. A nice little wife. She does everything in the house, that’s it. She’s my wife and not working for someone else. I think a lot of divorces are caused because the wife works. When both work, the roles get mixed up. I love Evelyn the way she is. If she got a job as a bank teller downtown and did the typical after work activities, going for a few drinks with the ladies, and then starts comparing notes, she could easily be influenced and become a real women’s libber. And that’s a danger. I feel sort of threatened by that sort of thing. As long as she stays the way she is and doesn’t become crazy, we’ll have a good marriage.”

(Glodava & Onizuka, 1994, p.44)

Another consumer is quoted as saying:

“I don’t think the transition was too rough on her. She cried every day for two years.” (Glodava & Onizuka, 1994, p.45)

Given that the industry has undergone rapid transformations, as have the nations from which MOB's originate; it may stand to reason that the face of consumer-husbands has changed as well. Yet, it appears the academic interest over the last 20 years has been largely focused on MOB's themselves, and whether or not these women are active, independent risk-takers using their agency to better their situations (Constable 2003, 2005, 2006; Esara 2009; Lauser 2008; Minervini and McAndrew 2006), or victims of trafficking (Fernandez 1997; Glodava and Onizuka 1994; Hughes 1999, 2000, 2004; Langevin and Belleau 2000; Tolentino 1996), with marriage certificates used as little more than human import documents designed to circumvent various customs and immigration policies (Hughes, 2000a). In recent years have we seen a shift in this focus,

with the work of Erick Johnson and her content analysis of the letters written to MOB by consumer-husbands, as well as the work of Yuliya Zabyelina in 2010, with her content analysis of Eastern European marriage agencies. It is my intention to focus primarily on the consumer-husbands, and how IMBs service their clients. While there are many theories that attempt to explain the growing demand for these types of marriages, these theories originate from the needs of the MOB themselves – the “supply” side of the equation, so to speak (Constable 2003, 2005, 2006; Esara 2009; Fernandez 1997; Lauser 2008; Minervini and McAndrew 2006; Tolentino 1996),. Much of this existing research examines “push factors” among MOB, and to a certain extent overlooks the rapid transformations that have taken place in the industry itself, and not just those of the MOB “supply” nations. By conducting a content analysis of ads by consumer-husbands, as well as an in depth literature review on the topic of transnational marriage, I will attempt to offer an explanation that more closely examines the “push factors” that originate in terms of the demand for foreign brides, the motives of consumer-husbands and what this represents with respect to western values, as well as the consequences of these migration trajectories, in both “supply” and “demand” nations.

With respect to the notions of supply and demand, particularly with those demands that originate in the core and to that which can be supplied in the periphery, as is the case with MOB, I would offer an explanation established by Wallerstein. Wallerstein (1984) argues that factors such as military and economic strength, geographic location, and historical and cultural legacies create an elaborate system of power hierarchies which serve to prevent complete sovereignty among countries in the modern inter-state system. According to his work, as result of this system of power hierarchies, in

order for one region or state to maintain or expand in economic development, it must overwhelm or exploit other regions or states to ensure ongoing economic and political success. The region or state that exercises this form of power over other states becomes known as the core, and the area which is left to serve the hegemonic interests of the core is the periphery (or in some cases, semi-periphery) (Wallerstein 1984). That these (core) needs are met within the periphery or semi-periphery is not a coincidence.

As a final note with respect to terminology, the following terms will be used as synonyms: western nations, western countries, core nations, core countries, core states, MOB “demand” nations, MOB “demand” countries. These terms are generally used in opposition to: periphery nations, periphery countries, periphery states, MOB “supply” nations, MOB “supply” countries, which are also considered as synonyms. Furthermore, the terms semi-periphery nations, semi-periphery countries, semi-periphery states may also be used to indicate MOB “supply” nations, but are by no means synonymous with periphery nations, periphery countries, or periphery states. In addition, the term “domestic workers” is used to signify employment within the home of an employer, be it with regards to childcare, homecare, or hospice care. “Care workers”, by contrast, is a term used to signify those involved in the care industry, which may be domestic or in another care facility, such as a retirement home.

To achieve the objective of this study, I intend to offer a socio-historical summary of the mail-order marriage phenomenon, as well as the changes that have taken place among IMBs in recent decades. In addition, the content analysis I have conducted of consumer-husband’s ads will also be compared with an extensive study conducted by Victor Malarek’s work in 2009 on men who pay for sex with prostitutes, as well as a

content analysis provided by Ericka Johnson in 2007 on the letters written by consumer-husbands to MOB. Finally, the migration trajectories of sex tourists and domestic workers will also be compared with those who use the services of an IMB. The permeability of prostitution and human trafficking among IMBs will also be examined.

II. A Socio-historical Analysis of Transnational Marriage

1. Women as the Building Blocks of a Nation

While some experts agree that the current phenomenon of transnational marriage via IMB originates in the practice of “picture brides” – Korean and Japanese women who immigrated to the western United States and Canada during the early 20th century via transnational marriage (Langevin and Belleau 2000; Tolentino 1996), a recent study on trafficking women in Canada suggests that the practice first began with the so-called *Filles du Roi*¹ (Langevin and Belleau 2000). This French expression describes selected women from France who, in the mid to late 17th century to the end of the 18th century, were transported to the province of Quebec, to assist in populating the region with French citizens. During this period, few women had the financial resources needed to travel to New France – now known as Quebec – and so King Louis XIV of France issued an edict that allowed the *Filles du Roi* to travel overseas, where they were able to choose a prospective husband. During this time, it was estimated that “there were six unmarried men for every girl who reached puberty” (Colletif 1992:60).

While the phrase *Filles du Roi* lends an air of sophistication and nobility, many of the women who came to Quebec were seeking marriage as a form of upward mobility and as an escape from poverty. The expectation among these women was that by marrying a man in New France, their situation would improve, and while conditions in Quebec were far from ideal during this period in history, France was simultaneously undergoing a period of extreme poverty and hardship (Colletif 1992:60, Langevin and Belleau 2000:81). The level of poverty in France during this time can be interpreted as a

¹ The King’s Daughters (Also spelled as *Filles du Roy*)

“push factor” among the migration patterns of the *Filles du Roi*. In addition, these women were not at all familiar with their prospective husbands upon arrival in Quebec (Langevin and Belleau 2000:82), and so a great deal of risk was involved in this type of transnational marriage as well. There is no existing academic literature on the men who married the *Filles du Roi*, nor is there any definitive research on the success or failure of these types of marriages, their link to prostitution or other forms of abuse. Among the estimated 800 women who came to Quebec during this period, there is however only one recorded case of a woman being convicted of prostitution. Catherine Guichelin was tried on August 19, 1675. She had married multiple times, and in one instance, was abandoned along with her children by her husband when he returned to France (Municipalité Yamachie – Genealogical Archives). While this one case is not sufficient to suggest that this edict issued by King Louis XIV of France was intended to overtly commodify the women of France, thereby creating incentives for the men struggling to build the new French colony, this remains nonetheless an attempt to invest in New France, to encourage future immigration and to help secure the colony, which suggests political and economic motives on the part of the French monarchy. The practice of sending women from France to Quebec ended in 1773, when the last group of *Filles du Roi* arrived in Quebec on September 3rd (Langevin and Belleau 2000:81).

“Picture brides” originating from Korea and Japan are more commonly known as the first historical predecessors of what is currently referred to as “mail-order brides” (MOBs) (Tolentino 1996). Since many of these women immigrated to the United States and Canada in the early 20th century, much of the existing research on picture brides was conducted in the 1970’s and 1980’s, in the form of interviews and the collection of oral

histories. Today, very little has been written on the subject, and so many sources on this particular phenomenon are limited to that time period.

Unlike the *Filles du Roi*, picture brides were, particularly among Japanese women, married by proxy prior to departing from their country of origin (Tanaka 2004). Immigration standards in Canada and the United States were far more stringent than those of the colonial era of New France, and so this was a necessary measure in order for women to legally enter the country.

Picture brides who originated from Japan and Korea arrived in the United States during the early 20th century. These marriages were arranged by either a relative or an acquaintance of the prospective groom. “[M]arriage between a man in America and a woman in Japan was agreed upon after the couple – separated by the Pacific Ocean – exchanged portraits and information on their backgrounds” (Tanaka 2004:115). Japanese immigration during this period was primarily concentrated in the state of California, and to a lesser extent, Hawaii, Washington and Oregon, and this practice was – on some level – rooted in the desire among many Japanese migrant workers already in the United States and Canada to form a permanent Japanese settlement in these regions (Tanaka 2004; Boyd 1971). In their essay entitled *A historical overview of Korean immigration to the United States*, Hurh and Kim state that Korean immigrants came to the United States largely in response to the growing demand for inexpensive labour – created by the decreasing native Hawaiian population, termination of Chinese labor due to the Chinese Exclusion Act, the high costs for European laborers, and the increasing migration of existing laborers from Hawaii to the mainland (Hurh and Kim 1984:39-52).

The demand for picture brides was due largely in part to political and economic factors. The anti-miscegenation law of California in 1907 prohibited Japanese and Korean men from marrying white Americans (Tanaka 2004). In addition, anti-Asian sentiment was commonplace in these states, and through public pressure, the United States government adopted the Gentleman's Agreement in 1908, the terms of which state that the Japanese government would discontinue the issuance of passports to all those with the exception of non-labourers (Boyd 1971). Additional problems included generating enough revenue for the trip back to Japan, as well as return tickets for the men and their new wives. Likewise, there was added the risk of Japanese men being drafted into military service – something with which life overseas rendered them exempt provided they remained outside of the country (Tanaka 2004). As a means of circumventing the anti-miscegenation law and the Gentleman's Agreement, as well as the other problems created by returning to Japan, the demand for picture brides took root as a possible solution. Many Japanese relied on the traditional services of a “go-between” or marriage handler to help facilitate these marriages. Not unlike Japanese laborers, Korean men found themselves in a similar situation with respect to limited options for marriage and insufficient means to return to Korea, and so they too engaged in the practice of seeking picture brides (Kim and Grant 1997).

Japanese picture brides, not unlike their historical predecessors in Quebec, were often motivated by economic factors, and to a certain extent, “a yearning for what was, unfortunately for them, an over-idealized and romanticized life in a modern, western country” (Tanaka 2004:123). Korean picture brides, by contrast, married upon arrival, and state that their main reason for leaving Korea was due to the Japanese occupation of

their country during that time (Chai 1979, Shinn Sunoo 2002). Many had accepted marriage proposals from men who claimed to have successful farms or businesses, and sent photographs of attractive, young men. In the case of Japanese picture brides, there were many reports the men did not resemble their photographs, and had greatly exaggerated their success in business and farming. On average, the age difference between picture brides and their new husbands was ten to fifteen years (Tanaka 2004, Boyd 1971). Ethnographic studies done on Korean picture brides also reveal deception on the part of their husbands, specifically with respect to age, physical appearance, and socio-economic status (Chai 1979, Shinn Sunoo 2002). Picture brides often found themselves in “an oppressive life of unending labor,” soon finding themselves working alongside their husbands – on farms, factories, laundries, or as domestic workers and in other places that relied on manual labor – unable to limit themselves to the Japanese ideal of “dutiful wife and intelligent mother” confined to the home (Ickioaka 1980:349).

Throughout this period, Western discourse on “geisha girls” was fairly commonplace, however inaccurate, which may have led in part to the notion that many picture brides were very likely nothing more than prostitutes (Ickioaka 1980; Hirata 1979). It seems highly probable that the general population was unable – if not entirely unwilling – to distinguish the difference between Chinese, Korean and Japanese immigrants. In many of the interviews conducted by Sonia Shinn Sunoo, Korean picture brides state that they were often referred to as “Dirty Japs” (Shinn Sunoo 2002: 80, 144, 282). In fact, despite the differences between Japanese, Korean and Chinese immigrants, Chinese women were seen as diseased, immoral and deviant for engaging in prostitution – regardless of whether or not this belief was rooted in any real evidence with respect to

individual Chinese women – so much so that in 1882 it was among one of the many reasons for the creation of the Chinese Exclusion Act was implemented in the United States (Hirata 1979). While Korean and Japanese women were allowed entry into the country, one can assume that it was unlikely the white population which had expressed such vile sentiments towards the Chinese were more tolerant of this generation of picture brides, regardless of their nationality. This may be partly responsible for the many western stereotypes about Asian women as “lotus blossoms / dragon ladies” that still exist today, particularly among some consumer-husbands and in the pornographic industry, which will be examined shortly.

2. The Myth of Lotus Blossoms and Geisha Girls

The notion of Asian women as seductive, exhibiting deference to men, sexually obedient, and exotic has long been a common theme in western sexual and racial discourse (Tajima 1984:6, Kabanni 1986:67-79). In Tajima’s essay in *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings By and About Asian American Women*, she argues that the lotus blossom / dragon lady dichotomy could be seen in popular culture through multiple images of submissive, seductive, and obedient Asian women in western literature and film – such as *Flower Drum Song*, *The World of Suzie Wong*, *Madam Butterfly* and *Miss Saigon* (Tajima 1984:6). Rana Kabanni, in her work on the Orientalism of European paintings argues that while Asian women were portrayed in western discourse as aesthetically pleasing, sexually submissive and overall silent, Asian men were frequently portrayed as unattractive and predatory. She further asserts that this represents a distinct difference between the western conceptions of sexual difference, in which there is a clear hierarchy of male / female, and instead places the Asian woman at the top of the eastern

gender hierarchy by virtue of her beauty and sexual passivity. Kabanni argues that this type of artwork presents Asian woman as being mismatched with an inferior male, and must be rescued, resulting in her dependency on the European male (Kabanni, 1986: 67-79).

This particular discourse is so ingrained in western culture, that even in the present day; Asian women are viewed along these lines in the pornographic industry. Gail Dines (2010) states:

“It is no surprise that Asian women are the most popular women of color in porn, given the long-standing stereotypes of them as sexually servile geishas, lotus blossoms, and China dolls. Depicted as perfect sex objects with well-honed sexual skills, Asian women come to porn with a baggage of stereotypes that makes them the idealized women of the porn world. In most sites and movies specializing in Asian women, (“Asian” being used in porn as a shorthand for a whole range of ethnicities), we see a mind-numbing replaying of the image of the Asian women as sexually exotic, enticing, and submissive in both the text and pictures. Using words such as naïve, obedient, petite, cute and innocent, the Web sites are full of images of Asian women, who, we are told, will do anything to please a man, since this is what they are bred for. It seems from these sites, however, that Asian women are interested in pleasing only white men because Asian men are almost completely absent as sex partners” (Dines 2010: 124).

In Tanaka’s work on picture brides, it is interesting to note that despite the longstanding rhetoric on passive and obedient Asian women, many picture brides were frequently viewed among other Japanese as vain and ambitious, sometimes even reckless and irresponsible for taking such a tremendous risk by marrying men they had never met. Moreover, the very act of having one’s picture taken and published was viewed in Japan at the time as indecent and vulgar. “...women were also perceived to be shameful and degraded for participating in this commodification of their self-images” (Tanaka 2004:121). While at first glance this may seem to support the notion of the “dragon lady” stereotype, by western and European standards during the early 20th century, there was

nothing unusual or vain about engaging in this type of transnational marriage. In fact, shortly after the last arrival of picture brides, many war brides from Europe came to Canada and the United States after marrying soldiers they had only known for a short period of time – in some cases, a few hours (O’Hara 1985) . In addition, the outcomes of these marriages were unpredictable and it should also be noted that while many picture brides stayed with their husbands and made the best of a bad situation, while others were taken aback by the deception exercised on the part of their husbands, refused to stay in America and immediately asked to be sent back to Japan (Ichioka 1980; Tanaka 2004). In other instances there were numerous reports of *kakeochi* – essentially the desertion of one’s husband. While there are no official statistics on the incidence of desertion in this manner, it is believed to have been quite common since the immigrant press quite regularly published *kakeochi* announcements (Ichioka 1980). As a result of the disappointment and disillusion that came with discovering the level of deception practiced on the part of many husbands, some marriages were also subject to divorce or adultery, while other picture brides worked hard on their marriages and tried to live up to the ideal of the Japanese wife and mother (Tanaka 2004). Many reports from Korean picture brides suggest that they too chose to live up to the ideal of the dedicated Korean wife and mother (Chai 1979, Kim and Grant 1997, Shinn Sunoo 2002).

Tanaka argues that among the picture brides who wished to avoid the difficulties that came with desertion, divorce, adultery or returning to Japan, their only option “...was to resign themselves to the Japanese ideal of the dutiful wife. This meant being a subservient wife, which in turn reinforced existing stereotypes of Asian women as passive and submissive” (Tanaka 2004:116).

3. All is Fair in Love and War

While there are no doubt some very distinct differences between what is known as “war brides,” “picture brides” and the *Filles du Roi*, these women are also legitimate historical predecessors to the current day “mail-order brides.” Key similarities can be noted:

- 1) All marriages of this kind were between men and women of similar – if not identical – cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds;
- 2) Prior to the Second World War, the second wave of feminism was not yet taking root – this is a key point of which I elaborate on further in this analysis. The first wave of feminism was primarily focused on the right to vote and to work outside the home. While this is in fact a feature of broader society, it does speak to some extent of the priorities these women had during this time period;
- 3) The notion of a wife who stays in the home to care for her husband and children was widely accepted and not subject to criticism in the western world until much later.

The term “war brides” conjures up images of the many European and British women who, during the first and second World Wars, came to Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Australia after marrying servicemen originating from these nations. Being the descendant of a British war bride from the Second World War, this particular phenomenon of transnational marriage has always been of particular interest to me. My maternal grandmother married my grandfather after having known him for only nine hours – a notion that to this very day seems unfathomable. While this was not necessarily the norm for most war brides, it was not entirely uncommon altogether. Her story, along

with several others, was published in Peggy O'Hara's book entitled *From Romance to Reality: Stories of Canadian War Brides*. Not unlike the many picture brides and *Filles du Roi* who came to North America before them, O'Hara's work contains stories from women whose decision to marry transnationally left them with unpredictable outcomes. Some lived long and happy lives with their new husbands, others were not so fortunate. During the very early post-war era, many women were forced to endure poverty and hardships, and some were physically and sexually abused by their husbands. While it may be assumed that the margin for deception was minimal – given that these women were fortunate enough to meet their husbands in person prior to crossing the Atlantic – this, unfortunately, was not the case. Many European and British war brides were left abandoned upon arrival to Canada, only to find out that their husbands were already married, or simply refused to acknowledge having ever met their wives while serving overseas. The women, and in many cases, their children born out of these marriages, were forced to rely on the Red Cross to return home to their country of origin, almost immediately upon arrival (O'Hara 1985).

For the first time, interracial marriage was widely established among American servicemen and Japanese women toward the end of World War II (Kitano et al. 1984). Servicemen, for the very first time, were coming home with women of vastly different cultural, ethnic, linguistic and religious backgrounds (Bowen 1985; Cottrell 1990; Kim 1977; Kitano et al. 1984). This trend continued during and after the Korean War as well, between 1951 and 1964, furthering this major shift in transnational marriage (Kim and Grant 1997). Using data from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Kim states that there were approximately 66,681 Japanese, 51,747 Filipino, 28,205 Korean, 11,166 Thai,

and 8,040 Vietnamese war brides who entered the United States between 1947 and 1975 (Kim 1977).

While domestic violence and hardship were not uncommon for many war brides, regardless of their countries of origin, Bok-Lim Kim's study found that due to their low levels of education – between 7th and 9th grade on average; the socio-economic status of their families in Korea or Japan who were generally middle or low-middle class families; as well as language barriers which did not allow Asian war brides to adequately assess their husband's character prior to marriage – all contributed to an extraordinarily difficult period of adjustment for Asian war brides in particular. In addition, this did not allow Asian-American couples to establish primary support systems (Kim 1977). Kim (1972, cited in Kim 1977) also reports that Japanese and Korean war brides were – not unlike European war brides – at times also the target of physical abuse, neglect and desertion.

At the same time that war brides were adapting to their new lives, Simone de Beauvoir had her text *The Second Sex* translated into English, and released in 1953, which sparked the second wave of feminism in North America. While it is no doubt the case that the influx of Asian war brides and the start of social transformations among women in North America had little to do with one another, and that servicemen from Canada and the United States did just as easily bring home wives from any number of nations they happened to be serving in at the time, that they occurred at approximately the same point in history lends some evidence to the current phenomenon of mail-order marriages through brokers, and the permeability with the demand of care and domestic work.

The Second World War led to the increase of women in the workplace, which in turn led to a resulting postwar backlash, in which an overwhelming majority of women returned to the home. Regardless of the progress women had achieved during the first wave of feminism, the rate of women attending college dropped from 47% in 1920 to 35% in 1958. By the mid 1950's, there was a 60% college dropout rate among women in order to marry (Freidan 1963:14). I would assert that this backlash may have been the result of three key factors:

- 1) Upon returning home from the war, servicemen were able to take up civilian employment, thereby decreasing the demand for women in the workplace – especially by those jobs that were predominantly occupied by men, such as factory work;
- 2) Advanced technology allowed women to stay at home without the degree of difficulties experienced by their mothers – for instance, with the invention of the washing machine; and
- 3) Discrimination against women in the workplace or institutes of higher education was commonplace. While women may have been legally allowed to seek work or obtain advanced degrees, there were no laws in place protecting women from discrimination once admitted into a college or place of employment. The difference in men and women's wages alone could easily be interpreted as a form of discrimination as well.

Additional transformations were taking place for both men and women during the postwar era, with respect to individual desires and consumer culture. "*Playboy*, which came out in 1953, articulated a new consumer culture immersed in sexuality that became part of mainstream America. *Playboy* yielded a new vision of the American man; it also represented a new generational thinking that developed around individuality and personal

needs” (Chaves 2011:12). This generational mindset was not exclusive to men, as housewives all across American began to express a growing dissatisfaction with their lives, partly as a result of the shift towards a more individual, consumer-centered mentality. In her book *A Consumers’ Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (2003) Cohen states that “‘The Birth of the Consumers’ Republic,’ introduces the vision that won out, the notion of a Consumers’ Republic that entrusted the private mass consumption marketplace, supported by government resources, with delivering not only economic prosperity but also loftier social and political ambitions for a more equal, free, and democratic nation” (Cohen, 2003:13). While this may have been the objective for achieving a greater sense of happiness and self-fulfillment, the impact of this postwar mindset resulted in further complications that have permeated the social, economic and political fabric of the world today. As a result of this changing mindset, expectations about marriage and gender roles began to change in the west, creating the circumstances which contributed to the need for a relationship untouched by these factors.

Betty Freidan was first to recognize *the problem that has no name*; a growing depression and frustration with the status quo among American women (Freidan. 1963: Chapter 1). In 1963 she published *The Feminine Mystique*, which seeks to address and remedy *the problem that has no name*. While life for the 1950’s housewife no doubt had tremendous drawbacks and, it would seem for many, crushing boredom associated with it. Friedan’s comparisons and solutions were very much in line with the growing rhetoric of entitlement and consumerism. “In her view, marriage was slavery, work was freedom, and freedom was work” (Synnott 2009:48). She associates housework with oppression –

Freidan even goes so far as to compare domestic life for women with a concentration camp (Freidan, 1963:265-268). “For Friedan, housework can be done by ‘anyone with a strong enough back’ (and a ‘small enough brain’) and it is ‘particularly suited to the capacities of feeble-minded girls.’ When Friedan defined housework in these terms, she defined ‘women’s liberation’ for the white, middle-class housewives she wrote for as getting out of the home” (Friedan quoted in Giles and Arat-Koç 1994:4). With women’s return to the labour force and the issue of home and childcare left largely unresolved, this in turn led to the “chore wars.” Just as the demand for foreign labor was created by mainly white, middle class women, so too was the demand for MOBs created by predominately white, middle class men (Glodava and Onizuka 1994: Chapter 3; Langevin and Belleau 2000:85-59).

III. International Marriage Brokers

1. An Industry Cultivated by Commodification Discourse

The demand for mail-order marriages, as they are known today are marked by distinct differences from their historical predecessors. During the First and Second World Wars, and the Korean and Vietnam Wars, men relocated overseas, married, and then brought their wives home for the very first time. The purpose for the relocation was not primarily to seek out a spouse, but rather, to fight a war. Servicemen were therefore able to meet their wives, without the aid of a matchmaking service, and court them in person. Moreover, servicemen were not deliberately seeking out women of vastly different ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious differences, in much the way consumer-husbands do in the present day. It can therefore be argued that transnational marriage, when facilitated through and IMB has distinct differences when compared to other forms of transnational marriage. These differences can be summarized as follows:

- 1) Courtship is established transnationally with the primary intention of such, rather than as a circumstance of social, political or economic factors, such as anti-miscegenation laws or relocation due to war;
- 2) Consumer-husbands are paying for the services of a matchmaker *and* to be relocated temporarily in search of a prospective spouse; and
- 3) The notion of “otherness” is in fact sought out and highly desired by men without any long term understanding of just what challenges these new cultural and linguistic barriers may present in a marriage.

While it can be argued that many servicemen with foreign war brides may too have lacked the understanding of the cultural and linguistic barriers their wives may have experienced, these men were, to some extent, exposed to the culture of their prospective wives prior to engaging in courtship. No doubt, the position of a serviceman is highly unlikely to generate a keen sensitivity to another culture, specifically one of a nation in which he is stationed during a war, however, when compared to a tourist who, only visiting for a few weeks, has gathered a majority of his information about a given culture from IMBs, other consumer-husbands, and letters written by women whose command of English may be marginal, it seems the consumer-husband may be at a greater disadvantage in this case.

Through examining both various IMBs online, and existing academic literature on IMBs, the following presents a timeline of how IMBs have transformed in the last few decades. Marketing to Western men initially took on a simple yet wide scale form. “Matchmaking companies use(d) magazines such as *Car and Driver*, *Stereo Review*, and *Rolling Stone* as well as many ‘men’s magazines.’” (Glodava and Onizuka 1994:12). These ads were not for individual women, but rather for catalogues containing photos, addresses, and general information about various women overseas. Men could either purchase the catalogues and look through them for a prospective bride, or request a free catalogue and, for a fee, then obtain the address and contact information of specific women, depending on the services offered by any particular IMB. Once obtaining the contact information of various women, a consumer-husband could thereby start a “pen pal” relationship / transnational courtship of sorts. In Nicole Constable’s analysis of the content of these early catalogues, she states that there is a general consensus among

scholars that MOB's are commodified women, bought and sold through market rhetoric (Constable 2003:13-14). The very notion of a catalogue carries with it implications of commodification.

Glodava and Onizuka's work on IMB's further illustrates the consumption rhetoric exercised by early marketing campaigns and testimonials by consumer-husbands. For instance, this is illustrated in their work with an excerpt in 1986 from a company called *Asian Presentations*, which writes to men who have made the move to purchase contact information:

“Congratulations! You have taken the first step towards discovering an eternal treasure! For many discerning men, there can be no other choice than a Lady of the Orient. These women possess wit, charm and grace unmatched anywhere in the world. [They] are faithful and devoted to their husbands ... When it comes to sex, they are not demonstrative; however, they are inhibited [and] believe sex is healthy. She wakes up in the morning! You have heard the phrase, ‘A [sic] Women for the 80's.’ We recommend a woman for all time ... An Asian Woman.”

(Glodava and Onizuka, 1994:13).

Asian American Worldwide Services (AAWS) is an IMB that offers additional services as well, including a *Marriage, Visa and Travel Guidebook* (1984), complete with a guarantee to bring foreign brides into a client's country of origin. “Clients may want to choose services *a la carte*. Examples include: personality evaluation, \$30; advertisements in newspapers in Malaysia, \$85; *Marriage, Visa and Travel Guidebook*, \$35; and Club Bulletin subscription: \$17 for one year or \$8.50 for six months” (Glodava and Onizuka 1994:16).

Another IMB, “Rainbow Ridge Consultants ... publishes three catalogues – *Island Blossoms*, *Cherry Blossoms*, and *Femina*, and offers the following: \$275 for one of three types of catalogs [sic]; \$375 for two and \$450 for all three. For \$1000, the

company will screen all the applications from women to find the one who fits the man's specifications" (Glodava and Onizuka 1994:16).

One of the main criticisms of IMBs during this period was that women were not offered the same choices with respect to choosing a spouse, and were thereby in a position of significantly less control – only being able to communicate with those men who first chose to communicate with them, severely limiting their choices (Tolentino 1996). There were no reports of catalogues of western men during this time, save for the occasional personal ad bought and paid for by some consumer-husbands with a few select IMBs, and one "homemade" catalogue of men made without their consent by a broker named Vera in Johnson's research (Johnson 2007:61), nor were background checks on consumer-husbands offered, not until President George W. Bush signed the "International Marriage Broker Regulation Act of 2005" (IMBRA) in January 2006. In fact the only services women paid for, if any, were those fees for initial ad placement, for photographers and translation services once they had received letters (Johnson 2007: Chapter 3). This contributed in part to the early rhetoric of MOB as commodified or even trafficked women.

Testimonials from consumer-husbands (as well as IMB owners and operations – many of whom are also consumer-husbands themselves), further contribute to this notion of women as commodities. Glodava and Onizuka quote the owner of an IMB called *Far East Match* in 1981; "The Philippine women [sic] is content to be at home, content with where she is, content with the relationship, and content to serve the man" (Glodava and

Onizuka 1994:28). Citing an interview by Krich in *Mother Jones*², Glodava and Onizuka also highlight a testimonial from a consumer-husband in a “successful” mail-order marriage; “She is spoiling me, though, with all the attention I get, all of my nails manicured, gives me a shower daily, body massage nightly, shines my shoes and no sooner takes a garment off till she has hung it up. She is well worth the price of your catalog [sic]” (Glodava and Onizuka 1994:28). Another consumer-husband cited in the article by Krich states, “I don’t think the transition was too rough on her. She cried every day for two years” (Glodava and Onizuka 1994:31).

These comments and marketing campaigns reflect a discourse of women as commodities; a discourse which has come under attack in the 1990’s and early 2000’s by scholars (Fernandez 1997; Glodava and Onizuka 1994; Hughes 1999, 2000, 2004; Langevin and Belleau 2000; Tolentino 1996), and mainstream media (Fields-Meyer and Raether 2001; Gavzer 1998). IMBs and some scholars responded by reinforcing the notion that women’s contact information was for sale, not women themselves. Nearly all IMBs cited in this study, as well as many academics (Constable 2003, 2005, 2006; Esara 2009; Lauser 2008; Minervini and McAndrew 2006), have also asserted that these women are not mindless victims, but rather active women using their free agency to better their existing situations for a number of reasons, few having to do with poverty, and more focused on seeking men who will better value them as individuals. While these facts – to some extent – are not in dispute, the consumer rhetoric exercised by IMB marketing campaigns and many consumer-husbands appears to be in a state of cognitive

² Krich, John, “Here Comes the Bride: the Blossoming Business of Imported Love.” *Mother Jones*. Feb. /Mar. 1986.

dissonance with respect to these particular rebuttals. To state that a woman is “well worth the price” of a catalogue, for example, is difficult to justify with respect to viewing her as anything but a commodity.

2. Information and Communications Technology

The advent of the Internet brought about significant changes to the transnational courtship and marriage industry. Not only were IMBs now able to expand their marketing, and reach a wider consumer base, but by no longer relying on “snail mail” the response time between consumer-husbands and IMBs, or consumer-husbands and MOBs had decreased exponentially. In addition, the publication of reviews, testimonials and success stories could be done much faster.

The use of the Internet allowed IMBs to generate income through the use of advertisers as well, rather than paying to advertise in magazines as previously practiced. Many IMBs allow pornographic sites to promote ads on their sites (Hughes 1999), which may also speak to the types of consumers who use these services – if not the sub-textual discourse surrounding MOBs themselves. Furthermore, women also found the use of these websites preferable to paying “per word” in their ads, as websites offered an unlimited word count (Johnson 2007:13).

Zabyelina (2010:44-45) cites the Council of Europe Group of Specialists³ and illustrates the ways in which they have determined how Information and

³ Council of Europe. 2003. Group of *Specialists on the Impact of the Use of New Information Technologies on Trafficking in Human Beings for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation*. Retrieved December 11, 2007 at: www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/trafficking/3_Documents/Reports/02_EG-SNT%282002%2909revE.asp#TopOfPage

Communications Technologies (ITCs) have assisted in allowing IMBs to maximize their profits. For instance:

- 1) *Eased and diffused access* to the Internet. Vast distribution, higher quality images, low operating costs, and frequent updating of information in larger quantities.
- 2) *Affordable* operating costs, as well as secure profits.
- 3) *Confidentiality* of users and *anonymity* is guaranteed through use of ITCs.
- 4) Minimal investment and start-up fees are required, making it a *lucrative trade*.
- 5) Internet provides an excellent *marketing* and *advertising* tool.
- 6) Can be used as a *visual medium*, in addition to being primarily a linguistic medium.

While the technology may have served to transform the industry in highly profitable ways, marketing to consumer-husbands has changed very little. Granted, while there have been some attempts to sanitize – however failure to eliminate altogether – the consumption rhetoric and association of women as commodities; the message of desperation and obedience among women is still very much present on these sites.

Testimonials and marketing on such websites are abundant, and frequently make reference to the disillusionment and frustration experienced by men after several failed relationships in the West. MOB's are still today marketed as obedient, eager to please, simple-minded, traditional and exotic. Comparisons are often made between MOB's and Western women, the latter having been painted either as overweight, pushy man-hating feminists; otherwise thin, made-up, "Barbie dolls" endlessly demanding jewelry and expensive gifts, both withholding genuine affection in order to obtain material goods

from the men in their lives. For instance, on Thai Professional Introductions' website, men are greeted with the following statement:

“If you are one of the growing band of disillusioned genuine single Western gentlemen, who is 'sick to the back teeth' with the new breed of twenty-first century woman. If you are disillusioned with the kind of de-feminised, over sized [sic], self-centred, mercenary minded lady, available on the Western singles scene, who is only out for what she can get.”
(<http://www.thai-professional.com/faq.htm> accessed on April 15, 2012)

By contrast, the women who use these services are portrayed as the very model of compassion, sensuality, and old-fashioned values. Frequently these websites make claims that it is a part of the woman's culture to seek out a much older man, because she finds this genuinely desirable and sexually attractive. In addition, the concept of marrying for upward mobility is diminished and instead replaced by a somewhat derogatory depiction of men as abusive and disloyal in MOB supply nations. Again, by making this comparison (generalizing western women as man-hating feminists, and eastern men as abusive or unfaithful to their wives and girlfriends), IMBs are not outright accusing all foreign men of abuse or infidelity, nor all western women of being self-centered and unbearable; however this is a common theme. By describing western men as highly desirable for little more than being able to raise the bar set by abusive, disloyal foreigners, which initially was set quite low to begin with, the comparison is clear. By virtue of one's citizenship in a core nation and being raised in a different culture that has left many men, to some extent, “softened” by feminism, little else is needed to elicit a very eager, willing response from foreign women. This rhetoric also reflects a form of symbolic violence against men represented by racially discriminatory and elitist ideologies. Symbolic violence against men can be defined in this context in the ways in which IMBs “attack” men in MOB “supply” nations for their failures – be they real,

imagined, or the result of neoliberal economic policies – little is done to benefit the existing situation in these nations, while serving instead to benefit western men. More on this will be discussed shortly. While it is not seen as such, since western society conventionally accepts forms of symbolic violence against men as ordinary and unworthy of addressing (Synnott, 2009:220), this nevertheless is an example of this symbolic violence toward men. Frequently, IMBs state that any comments about men in eastern countries have been made by the women, therefore shifting the blame for this kind of symbolic violence, placing those responsible for the IMB ‘s marketing into the position of an ersatz messenger and little more. While this is in fact also a form of racism, this particular brand of racist ideology extends to men as aggressors and women as highly desirable, which is also a demonstration of symbolic violence of men by men, expressed through racist ideology. For instance, on Thai Professional Introductions, there are examples of this form of violence, which can be seen in a list of “frequently asked questions”. This discourse begins at Question 13:

“Question 13: Why do these ladies want to marry a Western man?

Divorce in Thailand is quick, easy and cheap. Divorced Thai women have little opportunity or desire to remarry Thai men. The old analogy of a Thai marriage where the lady is likened to the back legs of an elephant, and as such is the [sic] stabilising directing influence, is a good analogy. Indeed women are often as important as men, in the economic contribution to the household, but their role is staying in the background behind their men, supporting them.

Many Thai ladies are rebelling against this intolerable treatment by their unfaithful husbands. Many now in fact initiate divorce proceedings, accepting the hardship, and repercussions of their actions. Other young unmarried Thai ladies see this scenario all too often, and have no desire to follow this unsavoury route of marriage, followed by divorce. They are now looking to Western men to provide the stable monogamous relationship which they seek.

They consider that Western men possess important qualities, which are sadly lacking in many Thai men. That they are loving, caring, faithful, and will provide the long term security which they crave.

Question 14: *Do these ladies want to leave Thailand to escape Poverty and hardship?*

No, this is not their prime directive. Thailand has a robust economy, with a shortage of labour in certain fields of employment. In point of fact, the ladies on our books are more than happy to consider a good Western man who wants to live in Thailand with them.

We do not deal in economic migrants!”

(<http://www.thai-professional.com/faq.htm> accessed on April 15, 2012)

A similar rhetoric that places some of the push factors of MOB's largely on the actions of men in MOB supply countries, and not the social, political, and economic situation. This can be seen on by IMB's that operate primarily with women in Eastern Europe and the Russian Federation as well. With respect to Russian men, the comparison also tends to exhibit the same form of symbolic violence against men, stressing the fact that social and economic factors play no part in the decision of MOB's to marry transnationally, let alone play a role in the problems many Russian men experience as primary breadwinners in a marriage. One IMB called Elena's Models offer a lengthy explanation of why so many Russian women seek foreign spouses. The following is an excerpt:

“Yes, really. Russian men are spoiled and expect a woman to wait on them and cater for them, no matter what, and the whole Russian culture is very male-dominated. Not only infidelity [sic] is rampant (see above) but also alcohol [sic] abuse is men's national pastime. The wife is expected to sit at home and do everything, and the man can do what he wants, have a girlfriend, have a drink with friends, and the wife is at home looking after kids, cooking, cleaning etc. This doesn't sound like much fun at all.

To me, western men are much more loyal, faithful and devoted to the marriage as compared to Russian men; western men are more respectful to their wives, take a greater interest in their children, and certainly have much less problems with alcohol [sic] abuse. I see it in my family and families of my friends and all the people I know. There are always marginal cases but all in all, it holds true: **a western man is a better partner in a marriage than a Russian man.** (It's really not about the difference in life standards; Russia is not a poor country; Moscow has more billionares [sic] than New York!)”

(<http://www.elenasmodels.com/russian-women/why-russian-women-marry-american-men.htm> accessed on April 15, 2012)

In an interview with an IMB operator named Vera, Ericka Johnson discusses the reasons why Russian men are not viewed as suitable mates. The first reason, stated by Vera, is the asymmetrical ratio of women to men, in which women make up the majority. Second, the average age that a Russian woman gets married is far younger than her western counterparts, not allowing her sufficient time to get to know her husband, let alone her own wants, needs, desires and means of adjusting within a marriage. The third reason, stated by Vera, resonates with a reality few consumer-husbands consider beyond theories of gender or ethnicity – that Russian men neither pay attention to their families, nor adequately provide for them. Johnson offers some additional insight into this particular point, which will be discussed shortly. In addition, Vera argues that Russian men are heavy drinkers prone to alcoholism (Johnson 2007:52-53).

Johnson (2007) points out that while all the Russian women she had spoken to on the subject agreed with this assessment of Russian men, and that while many of the issues they had complained about were in fact rooted in legitimate problems, there was also a general sense of being cheated that was expressed among the women in her interviews:

“Although it was never specifically articulated, the women seemed to think there was some sort of bargain made between a man and a woman concerning the roles each must have in a marriage. This bargain is built on the man’s responsibility for being the primary breadwinner in exchange for the women taking charge of domestic chores. ... So if he is unemployed, or his paycheck delayed, or he is too burdened by alcoholism to hold a job, there is not much reason to have him around. ... However, when Russian men are not able to meet the expectation that they will financially support the family, rather than renegotiating the terms of the contract, women seem to feel that they need to find other men who can provide for them and their families. ... So perhaps the stringent terms of the marriage agreement make for such an inflexible role for men, and one which has been

particularly problematic during the economic turbulence and resulting unemployment since the dissolution of the Soviet, that they are quickly becoming obsolete” (Johnson 2007:54).

Despite this matter of contention, Russian MOB's are nonetheless marketed as vastly different from the “feminist, mercenary-minded women,” those who treat men as little more than “success objects” so often used to describe western women. On the website of an IMB that deals with primarily Russian and Eastern European women - Lucky Lovers – the answer to the question *Why Russian Women* is addressed by the testimonies of various members. For instance:

“Marina and I were talking about this last night. She does not see a real difference between FSU ladies and American women. I do. The big difference - in my eyes - seems to be that Russian ladies truly value a man when they have found the right one. American women are well aware that they will not have a problem finding another man if things do not work perfectly with the one they have, so they do not seem to care as much.”

(Posted by a member named Fbibob)

(<http://www.luckylovers.net/f/text/91.Why+Russian+Women> accessed on April 15, 2012)

It is interesting to note that this particular woman from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) fails to see any significant difference between women in her country and American women, despite the overwhelming discourse on this very subject. While this consumer-husband testifies that a Russian woman “truly values” a man who is “the right one,” he only compares those American women who end relationships with men they encounter problems with – which may or may not represent a potential lifelong partner. What of American women who believe they too have found the “right one?” Granted, the rate of divorce in western nations has increased in the postwar era and beyond, and is in part due to a lack of desire on the part of many couples in the west to put forth the time, effort, and care needed to

resolve marital problems, (Pavalko and Elder 1990, South 1985), however it is also interesting to note that women in Russia initiate divorce proceedings more frequently than men (Cubbins and Vanoy 2004).

Another response on Lucky Lovers to the *Why Russian Women* question raises another key issue with respect to western culture:

“It's very, very rare to see a real 'lady' here in the UK, with class, sophistication, elegance, poise, manners, decency (not in every regard of course), intelligence, humour and a sense of 'self'. Like you say, way, way too obsessed with 'bling', glitz & the 'cult of celebrity'. The women (I don't really like that term) I have seen, chatted with and read words from here are a real 'breath of fresh air' for me and really encapsulate the term 'lady'. I won't even begin to list all the fantastic adjectives that fill my mind...I'd be writing all night!”
 (Posted by a member named Paddedcell)
 (<http://www.luckylovers.net/f/text/91.Why+Russian+Women> accessed on April 15, 2012)

This particular member raises a key point with respect to the notion of “bling, glitz and the cult of celebrity” and western society, but this mindset is not exclusive to women in the west. While many women may in fact desire such things that are defined and represented by a strong attachment to consumer culture, so too are many men equally attracted to and by the very same things. Men are frequently attracted to women who subscribe to this lifestyle by devoting considerable time, energy and resources to maintain this image of a woman with the right body, right clothes, right products, and the right look. Christopher Lasch (1976, 1979a) first identified this phenomenon with this work on narcissism and the decline of the traditional family. It is interesting to note that Lasch argues that the epoch of the culture of narcissism began in the 1920s, and progressed in the post-war era, heavily shaped by the consumption rhetoric that followed. The narcissistic individual is described as:

- 1) excessively self-conscious;
- 2) chronically uneasy about his health, afraid of aging and death;
- 3) constantly searching for flaws and signs of decay;
- 4) eager to get along with others yet unable to make real friendships;
- 5) attempts to sell his self as if his personality was a commodity;
- 6) hungry for emotional experiences; and
- 7) haunted by fantasies of omnipotence and eternal youth (Lasch 1979b:201).

Other testimonials made by consumer-husbands on Russian and Eastern European women seem to reflect this culture of narcissism and commodification discourse that appear to be in line with the comments and testimonials that appeared in the 1980's and 1990's. For instance, on the website of an IMB called Russian Brides is the following testimonial – which appears on several pages throughout the site:

“For the most open and engaging Russian and Ukrainian girls out there, Russian Brides is where it's at! The girls on Russian Brides just ooze sex appeal, and dish it out in generous portions. I've never had my burger fried so thoroughly! Russian Brides' Live Chat should be re-named Hot Chat, it's so over the top rousing and really get's [sic] my juices flowing. Because of the time difference the girls have it going on non-stop, 24/7. The photos on this site are even hotter than what you'll find in Playboy or Maxim. These girls are naturals, such specimens and the real thing. Believe me, I've been to Odessa and Moscow. The chicks in these places are unbelievable, and Russian Brides has them, served up on a silver platter with all the garnish! Forget mail order brides...these girls are here to flirt with the best of them and get your mojo into high gear. Connect with them for the time of your life in a safe and secure environment.” (Posted by a member named Joseph, from Torrance, CA) (<http://www.russianbrides.com/Russian-girls.htm> accessed on April 15, 2012)

This consumer-husbands states that men should “forget mail order brides” – yet this organization is in fact an IMB nonetheless. The situation is no different with Asian women. On the website for International Love Scout – which is less an IMB and more of

a review-type website for existing IMBs, there is information which can be found on women from various MOB “supply” nations, and what to expect in terms of these women’s personalities and physical characteristics. Women are divided in sections by country, and there is a good deal of information on subjects like physical appearance, religion, and beliefs on what constitute a good wife. For instance:

“Filipina brides are a real catch. The Philippines is the birth place of modern international dating and it is still a hot spot for foreign brides. Filipinas were the first modern mail order brides back in the 1970’s. Women in the Philippines tend to be short, sweet, and very feminine. Beautiful Filipina women can appear as Asian, Latina, European, but most women are an ethnic mix that is difficult to generalize. ... Most hot Filipina brides are going to take their religion very seriously, especially if there are any children involved. You are probably going to have to go to Mass, learn to play bingo, and attend potluck dinners at the Knights of Columbus hall. If she’s sweet, smart, hot, and actually cares about you that’s not so bad, but be a man and draw the line at becoming a Notre Dame fan! ... Also, Philipino [sic] brides have a reputation as being the most submissive of mail order brides. Supposedly, this has to do with their Latin heritage, but I would take this with a big, big grain of salt. ... With Filipino mail order brides the issue of the submissive bride is something you should be aware of even if submissiveness is not on the list of characteristics you are looking for in a wife or girlfriend, because often the hot Filipinas will assume that you want a submissive bride.” (<http://www.internationallovescout.com/gallery/asian/philippines> accessed on April 15, 2012)

Of Thai women, the International Love Scout website boasts:

“There are many positive stereotypes about Thai mail order brides. Physically, they have a reputation for being short, thin, and petite, of being delicate and graceful, and (like many Asian women) of aging extremely well. ... Thai culture does indeed place a high value of wives being respectful and dedicated to their husbands and children, of satisfying their needs and fulfilling their desires. The mistake many Western men make, however, is to confuse this with Thai women being submissive. ... Treat all your prospective Thai brides like ladies. Be polite and attentive in conversation. Don't interrupt when they're speaking. A thoughtful gift, even a small one, is sure to impress. Open doors for them, offer them your arm, or offer to carry their handbag. Although Western women sometimes find such gestures to be insulting, condescending, or chauvinistic, in Thai society they are still considered polite and respectful. ... Consequently, if you are overly physically affectionate to a Thai girl, touch her inappropriately, or expect sex after the date, she will likely think that you are a sex tourist who has mistaken her for a prostitute. This is both insulting and disrespectful, and pretty much guaranteed to

make a Thai woman lose all interest in you. Thai women generally don't believe in sex before marriage. Don't ask for premarital sex, and especially don't demand it. This can be frustrating, especially since Thai dating traditionally involves a nine month courtship before marriage and sex. Ironically, it is this very prohibition against physical affection before marriage that has lent Thai women the reputation for being exotic, sensual, and erotic. Thai women tend to be both romantic and passionate-but when attraction and affection can't be expressed physically, it forces them to find other, more creative ways of expressing it. Consequently, many Thai women are masters of the art of teasing and flirting.” (<http://www.internationallovescout.com/gallery/asian/thailand> accessed on April 15, 2012)

In as much as we can see this dichotomy with foreign women; the lotus blossom / dragon lady, in that Thai women are presented here as either prostitutes for sex tourists, or respectable women seeking long term commitments, I would argue that so too has the western woman now become subject to a similar dichotomy of vapid princess / fat bitch. Pretty girls, while sexually available, lack a mind of their own, while smart girls are not pretty, and no one wants to sleep with them, or are otherwise sexually unavailable – an age old rhetoric in western culture, but clearly apparent in the discourse and marketing strategies among many IMBs. Whenever a prospective MOB originates from a culture that may suggest that she is “less than perfect” with respect to western dating standards or ideals, this is quickly camouflaged as yet another “exotic” quality that has no similarities whatsoever with western women. When consumer-husbands are expected to go the extra mile in terms of respect, patience and gentlemanly behavior, they are quickly reminded of how western women despise such gestures of kindness, viewing them as “insulting, condescending, or chauvinistic” – regardless of how frequently this attitude among western women is rooted in a basis for reality.

In addition, many IMBs now offer “romance tours”, and in some cases, escort services which can in many cases rely on, and help facilitate, human trafficking for the

purposes of sexual exploitation (Bertone 2000; Fernandez 1997; Hughes 1999, 2000a, 2004; Johnson 2007:64-54 Langevin and Belleau 2000). Some IMBs, such as Thai Professional Introductions, focus primarily on other profit-generating avenues, and offer the services of a travel agent, translators, and can assist with marriage arrangements and the preparation of immigration documents as well. Given that IMBs have now been permeated by the demand for more than just lifelong partners in marriage, and are instrumental in the sex tourism industry, it is also this transformation that has led to me question if the face of consumer-husbands has also changed in the last twenty years, and if so, what that face represents. More on this will be examined in the section on consumer-husbands.

IV. How do I Love Thee? Let me Count the Ways

1. Methodology

Data taken from <http://www.cherryblossoms.com> was used to gather information about prospective mail-order brides and consumer-husbands. The variables examined were; 1) the identification number of the specific personal ad examined (to avoid overlap), 2) the sex of the individual, 3) their marital status, 4) age, 5) location (by country), 6) level of education, 7) employment (by industry)⁴, 8) race, 9) frequency of alcohol use, 10) frequency of cigarette use, 11) religion, 12) number of children, 13) number of adjectives and other terms used to describe one's financial situation (such as; wealthy, well-off, financially secure, poor, not rich), 14) number of adjectives and other terms used to describe the financial situation of a prospective partner, 15) number of adjectives and other terms used to describe one's physical appearance or sex appeal (such as; handsome, beautiful, sexy, athletic, seductive), 16) number of adjectives and other terms used to describe the physical appearance or sex appeal of a prospective partner, 17) number of adjectives and other terms used to describe oneself as passive and / or docile (such as; homebody, gentle, patient, caring, loving, tolerant), 18) the number of adjectives and other terms used to describe a potential partner as passive or docile, 19) the number of adjectives and other terms used to describe oneself as active / dominant (such as; active, take-charge, busy, adventurous), 20) the number of adjectives and other

⁴ Given the limitation of the various industries listed on the website, an overwhelming number of women responded with "other." This may be because there was no option for stay-at-home mothers, the unemployed or domestic workers. Often, their ads indicated these categories of employment, but I did not add the categories as the majority of women who chose "other" for their employment status did not offer an explanation. It would seem the website offers more variety among traditionally male employment rather than traditionally female employment. Furthermore, the range of employment among men was extremely varied and represented no particular trends.

terms used to describe a prospective partner as active / dominant, and 21) the maximum allowable age preference for a prospective partner. All adjectives and other terms were taken from the personal ads, and from a list of “top 10 about me” questions that, while optional for all users on the website, provided a more in-depth analysis of adjectives and other terms used to describe a prospective partner as well as oneself. These adjectives and other terms were taken into consideration in order to establish – on some level – the degree of deception to which IMBs and researchers profile both MOBs and consumer-husbands. For instance, are MOBs genuinely interested in men, regardless of their age? Are consumer-husbands primarily focussed on young, sexually subservient women?

A total of 200 women were included in this database, 156 from the Philippines and 44 from other countries (Thailand, Ukraine, Russian Federation, and China). 100 men were included in the study, 43 from the United States and 57 from several other countries (namely “core” nations, most of which have a predominantly Caucasian population). This was consistent with the available ratio of total women and men from any particular country on the website. For this particular website, the majority of men originated from the United States, and the majority of women originated from the Philippines. Only those members who were active within the past 14 days were included in the study. Members who wrote in a language other than English, or listed their home as one country but had an IP identified in another were eliminated from the study. This was done because, although many women work as health care and domestic workers in “core” nations, it was impossible to determine if these women had citizenship in a given country, if these women were first, second or even third generation immigrants, what type of job they may have had, or how long they would be living there. Patterns of transnational

migration among domestic workers and sex workers are almost entirely identical to those of MOB's (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003:276 - 280), and so any case that may have represented this trend was therefore eliminated. Furthermore, men who already lived in the Philippines or China despite having citizenship in another country were not likely to seek transnational courtship or marriages, and so their motivations for using the website were unclear. These men were also eliminated from the study.

Of the men who used the Cherry Blossoms website, few statistical trends can be noted that contradict the existing literature written about consumer-husbands, particularly with respect to Jedlicka's work cited in Glodava and Onizuka (1994). More on this will be discussed shortly. However, the number of inconsistencies with respect to search parameters and information written in the ads was apparent. It seems that despite the favourable odds for men who may have difficulty attracting women in Western nations, not unlike their historical predecessors, the need to be deceptive was present none the less. Men were more likely to provide conflicting information about age preference, the number of children they had, and their employment status, (weight as well, however weight was not used as a variable in this study). In addition, many photos appeared to have been taken in the 1990's or earlier. Among these cases of conflicting information, the search parameters (which contained information that was not written in the ad itself – but rather general demographics used for initial searches), were far more forgiving, for instance, indicating that a man is seeking a woman of any age, yet in the written portion of his ad, he would specify that he is seeking a woman under the age of 30 (for the purposes of statistical analysis, all age preferences that reflected this discrepancy were taken from the written portion of the ad - which was assumed to be a more accurate

reflection of an individual's needs, since these were written by the individual - and not entered in the search parameters). Among those men who relied on the use of older photos, there appeared to be the potential for a wide margin of deceit. For instance, one man who appeared to be approximately 50 years old used a rather dashing, handsome photo of himself in a military dress uniform, and indicated in the search parameters that he was employed with the military. The written portion of his ad indicated that he was 68, and a retired military officer. However, insufficient information is present at this time to determine the full extent of deception on this level. Furthermore, it suggests some sort of insecurity among consumer-husbands despite the repeated rhetoric by IMBs designed to assure their clients that MOB's are not terribly selective with respect to the men they seek, and the that female to male ratio is another factor in their favour.

In addition, I encountered some difficulty finding ads that could be used in the study. Many men simply wrote "contact me to know more" or something similar, with no other information provided. While it is difficult to analyse an individual based on a personal ad alone, many of the men were very specific about what they were looking for, and given the very nature of these websites, seemingly unashamed to write things that would, by western standards, appear somewhat offensive and marginally – if not at times outright – racist. Among those men who had difficulty expressing their desires or communicating with women, otherwise had little patience to write about themselves or about the person they are seeking, they too were eliminated from the study as it was exceptionally difficult to conduct any sort of content analysis on these types of ads.

2. International Marriage Brokers: Findings

The findings support that IMBs are not, as it would appear, exaggerating many of their claims about the women who use their website. For instance, very basic findings illustrate that: 55% of women are aged 30 and under. They range from 18 – 55, and the mean age is 31, the median age is 30, and the mode is 24. 94.5% of women make no mention of a man's physical appearance, 5% of women use one adjective to describe a man's physical appearance, and 0.5% of women use 3 or more adjectives to describe a man's physical appearance. 59.5% of women use 3 or more adjectives or other terms to describe themselves as passive or docile. 71% of women seek men of any age. 40% of women use no terms to describe themselves as active or dominant, and 75% of women use 3 terms or less to describe themselves as active or dominant.

However it is important to highlight that the reasons for these trends among MOBs may have more to do with a language barrier – which was apparent in many of the ads I had encountered – than a legitimate desire to seek out a man regardless of age or physical appearance. Despite their high levels of education, the language barrier can in fact give the false impression that these women are simple-minded and require only the most basic needs. (Welch 2005).

Marketing geared towards men is not only focused on the docile, passive nature of these women, but also on the 5:1 ratio of women to men, giving favourable odds for men who are “less than desirable”. For instance, on the website for Thai Professional Introductions, consumer-husbands are reminded of this:

“... Perhaps you are not ‘Gods [sic] gift to women’, feel that you are past your sell by date, or; are a workaholic, with no time to socialise, or when you do

experience the singles scene, find it very shallow, and are completely disillusioned with it all. Thai Professional Introduction Services are for you!” (<http://www.thai-professional.com/faq.htm> accessed on April 15, 2012)

3. Consumer-Husbands: Findings

Few studies exist on the subject of consumer-husbands. At present, Glodava and Onizuka remain the only scholars to write extensively on consumer-husbands in the last twenty years; much of their work is drawn from a quantitative analysis conducted by Davor Jedlicka⁵ in 1985, in which 607 questionnaires were sent to consumer-husbands, with a 44% (260) response rate.

“Jedlicka, in his often-cited research, found that the men were generally white (94%); highly educated (50% with two or more years of college, 6% with M.D.’s or Ph.D.’s, only five did not complete high school); politically and ideologically conservative (56% identified themselves as conservative, 90% said sex should be between married or live-in partners, 91% preferred to be married, although 62% were pro-choice); and generally economically and professionally successful (64% earned more than \$20,000 per year, 42 were in professional and managerial positions. Their mean age was 37, 22% came from California (the men came from 44 states) and 84% lived in metropolitan areas. Fifty seven percent has been married at least once, most has been divorced after an average of seven years of marriage, 35% had at least one child, and 75% wished to father additional children” (Glodava and Onizuka 1994:25-26).

In comparison, 83% of men in my own study self-identify as white, and their mean age is 50, with a range of 22 to 69. Education levels were also greatly varied in this study; showing 31% of men with “some college” or a “high school” education, 17% with a technical or vocational degree, 27% with a college degree, and 20% with a master’s, doctor’s degree or Ph.D. 5% of men chose to select “other” as their level of education. 60% of men were divorced, 36% single, 3% widowed, and 1% separated.

⁵ Jedlicka, Davor (1988). *American men in search of oriental brides: a preliminary study released as a courtesy to the survey participants*. Texas, 1988.

This study has found that 48% of men claim to have no children; 15% with one child; 20% with two children; 11% with three children; and 6% with four or more children. With respect to the number of children, there were some key problems. First and foremost, while this study reflects many of the same trends as the study conducted by Jedlicka, the mean age of these men reveals a stark contrast. Jedlicka's findings state that the mean age of men in that study was 37 years old, while in my own study, the mean age is 50. It is precisely for this reason that I believe was the cause of some discrepancies with the reported number of children by consumer-husbands. As mentioned earlier, there were on occasion inconsistencies between the search parameters entered by consumer-husbands, and the information entered in the actual ad itself. This, at times, appeared to be the case with respect to the reported number of children. I believe this may have had less to do with intent to deceive a prospective spouse, and rather more to do with the notion of "children" as "dependents." Occasionally, men would enter "zero" children in the search parameters, only to talk about their adult children or grandchildren in the written portion of the ad. Considering that there was ultimately no way to determine exactly how many children a man had in some of these circumstances (the number was not always specified), I chose to interpret "children" in much the same way I suspect many of these men have chosen – in terms of "dependents" and / or "minors." In cases where the number of adult children was specified, the information entered was taken from the ad, and not the search parameters. Of course, this may in fact leave out those men who potentially have adult children and made no mention of them in either the search parameters, nor the written portion of the ad. Consequently, there may be a wider margin of discrepancy with respect to this particular variable.

Additional variables represent the following trends; 44% of men requested no age preference among prospective partners, followed by 17% who were seeking women with a maximum allowable age preference of 30 -35 years old, 13% who were seeking women with a maximum allowable age preference of 36 – 40 years old, and 8% seeking a maximum allowable age preference of 26 – 30 years old, and the remaining 18% sought women specifically over the age of 40. 55% of men in this study made at least one reference to their own financial situation. 39% of men made at least one reference to their prospective partner's physical appearance or sexual behaviour. However, 64% of men used 2 or more adjectives to describe themselves as passive or docile, but only 51% of men used 2 or more adjectives to describe themselves as active or dominant. What's even more surprising is that only 33% of men used 2 or more passive or docile terms to describe a prospective partner, and 37% used no passive or docile terms at all.

These findings paint a very unusual portrait of the type of man who uses the services of an IMB; white, middle aged, politically conservative, divorced, and based on the work of Glodava and Onizuka (1994:28-31), these men may also exhibit a sexist-imperialist personality type. However, the ads that I had encountered reflected many different needs and objectives on the part of consumer-husbands. Through my own observations in compiling the data for this study, I have conducted a content analysis of these ads, and discovered 5 main types of consumer-husbands as represented by these ads. I chose not to conduct a content analysis of MOB's – mainly due to the linguistic difficulties many of these women are faced with. Among those few ads that appeared to have been written in perfect or near-perfect English, it may be possible that a translator was used, which was impossible to identify. Furthermore, women who may have had a

strong command of English may well in fact represent different expectation with respect to transnational marriage, and so this too had to be taken into consideration. As such, I chose to focus this content analysis on consumer-husbands only, to determine which types of ads existed. These types of ads, and the frequency with which they occur, may go towards explaining why so much research is centred around seemingly delusional older men seeking women well over 20 years their junior for a somewhat zero-sum marriage in terms of rights and power. The qualitative findings, however, appear to suggest some key inconsistencies with respect to an exclusivity of this particular type of consumer-husband, as suggested by Glodava and Onizuka (1994:28-31). I have labeled these types King Pins, Lonely Hearts, Soul Mate Seekers, Sex Tourists and Suspected Traffickers. In addition, another type which Victor Malarek (2009:87-91) calls the “Nasty Bastards” will also be examined. These types are (in order of frequency):

- 1) King Pins (or “serial consumer-husbands”). These are men who fit the profile of existing literature in the 1980’s and 1990’s on consumer-husbands with the most accuracy. The majority of these men are 55 and older, however a few men as young as 40 fall into this category as well. These are men who generally seek women no less than 20 years their junior, and may make unreasonable demands with respect to a woman's beauty, sexual behaviour, and degree of conformity or passivity. Occasionally these men use racist and sexist terminology to describe their “understanding” of other cultures and tend to express the very crude belief that the opportunity to experience American or western life will be so abundantly appreciated that women will willingly and gratefully accept a life of sexual favours and domestic servitude in exchange. As a result, they often view themselves as benevolent rather than exploitative, despite their dehumanizing

comments on occasion. In addition, many of these men are divorced, and also occasionally express their frustration – if not outright resentment – of western women, feminist ideals, and any form of women’s liberation. While I am unable to quantitatively prove that some of these men are “serial consumer-husbands” with the variables I have gathered in this study, there is some existing mainstream qualitative data that covers this very topic, such as the work of Louis Theroux (Fields-Meyer and Raether 2001; Gavzer 1988; Thai Brides – Louis Theroux's Weird Weekends, BBC 2000) and some academic sources (Crandall et. al 2005; Springer 1999). Photos in these ads often show men with sports cars, boats, tropical backgrounds, and other representations of wealth. King Pins make up approximately 35% of the ads I had encountered. The continued presence of King Pins, despite a roughly 25 year gap, may in fact have much to do with the unresolved issues of anti-feminism, and sexism in conjunction with racism and economic-statism, which can otherwise be defined as a sexist-imperialist personality type. More on this will be examined in the section on relations between core and periphery or semi-periphery states.

2) The Lonely Hearts. While somewhat similar to the Soul Mate Seekers (discussed later), The Lonely Hearts are also generally made up of men aged 55 and older, some of whom still subscribe to various notions of sexism, racism and economic-statism, particular with respect to Asian women – however I suspect this may, in some cases, be more in line with a generational mindset rather than an consistently exploitative one. Lonely Hearts sometimes take extraordinary measures to distinguish themselves from King Pins, Sex Tourists and Suspected Traffickers (also discussed later). What is distinct about these men is that they are the least likely to express concern for a prospective

partner's age, appearance, or past history. The overwhelming majority seek a woman in the “any age” category. All of these men are divorced or widowed, without exception. Furthermore, the 3% of men who were listed as “widowed,” all fell into this category. The desperation they feel is apparent in their ads. They often use terminology such as “lonely,” “broken hearted,” and “incomplete.” These men are most likely to negotiate some sort of exchange, demonstrating their understanding to some degree of the economic, social and political push factors, and desire for upward mobility many women experience. These exchanges tend to take the form of companionship and care in exchange for citizenship and financial stability, and often financial support for the woman's family overseas as well – although this is most often suggested subtly and not outright offered as a hard and fast business transaction. Moreover, many also express their full understanding of the unrealistic expectations of an older man finding any kind of genuine love from a much younger woman – although they rarely if ever seek a woman more than 10 years their junior. These men make up about 30% of the ads I have encountered. While these types of consumer-husbands and King Pins both make up the largest percentage of the ads I have viewed, I have encountered two Lonely Hearts ads especially worth noting. Both specify that sexual activity was not required on the part of the woman, but rather that she simply ease his loneliness with her presence, care and conversation. There were also a number of these men who indicated that they had some form of disability or illness. Some Lonely Hearts do express their awareness that using such websites is morally questionable, but also express that they feel they have no other choice lest they die alone. These photos often show homes in disarray, and very typical “bachelor” items such as an open can of food on the coffee table, messy dishes in the

background, or homes lacking “a woman's touch.” In addition, there is no existing literature on the Lonely Hearts. These men may have emerged as a result of the continued rhetoric of Asian women as ideal caregivers and domestic workers (Pratt 1997), in addition to some level of a sexist-imperialist personality type, yet perhaps not to the extent as seen by King Pins.

3) Soul Mate Seekers. These consumer-husbands make up approximately 15% of the ads I have encountered. The emergence of this type of consumer-husbands may in fact be the result of increased globalization and technology, as well as the rapid expansion of IMBs, now as readily available as any other dating website. However, there is also a distinct possibility that some Soul Mate Seekers may in fact be deceptive or have ulterior motives with respect to meeting a potential spouse. It is difficult to determine, however more on this is examined in the section on “Nasty Bastards.”

Soul Mate Seekers take extraordinary measures to separate themselves from King Pins, Suspected Traffickers, and Sex Tourists. They almost always express some belief that fate has conspired against them in such a way that their one true love, their soul mate, was somehow born halfway across the globe, and that it is his mission to seek and to find her at all costs. More often than not, men in this category represent a much younger demographic and are almost entirely below the mean age of male users on the site, however a few are above the mean age as well. These men frequently use phrases such as “I am not looking for a maid,” “I am looking for an equal partner in life” or, “someone who can think for herself.” These men seem somewhat aware of the morally questionable implications of using such websites, and they frequently express their distaste for the desires of other male users. They offer tremendous control to women who

do choose to correspond with them (for instance, stating that she is not obligated to see him again should they not “click” during an initial meeting, despite having booked a very expensive trip that may last several more days or weeks), and repeatedly make reassurances that she will not be invited up to his hotel room, she will not be expected to do anything against her will, and she will be respected in every conceivable way at all times. These men also use terminology such as “one true love,” “life partners,” “genuine,” “decent” and “no games.” There is currently no existing literature on this type of consumer-husband, although Erick Johnson does – in her research – interview a couple, Anastasia and John, that may lend some evidence to suggest that Soul Mate Seekers are in fact more common than most academics realize. John, a consumer-husband who sought a wife in Russia, went to extraordinary measures to help his new wife and her son to adjust to life in the United States; by making arrangement so that Anastasia could keep in regular contact once a week with her family in Russia upon arrival in the United States, arranging English classes for both Anastasia and her son, seeking out ways to help her further her education, finding her work similar to that of her old job in Russia, and even taking time off work to assist Anastasia’s son if need be, so that she could remain at her new job. John also made several adjustments himself, by making an effort to learn Russian, and by exercising patience and acceptance with the many ways Anastasia had re-arranged the home and their lives – many of which were vastly different from a typical American home. After receiving an average of forty letters a day, Anastasia commented on how John stood out from the rest. “‘He sounded like a normal man,’ Anastasia said simply, as if that were enough. ‘He wanted real things. He dreams about real things. He didn’t ask about sex and the size of my clothes, so I decided

to answer him” (Johnson 2007:131).

4) Sex Tourists. Unlike suspected traffickers, these men make no pretences about their goals, their desires, and their reasons for travelling overseas. Many of these men advertise a specific date, location of travel, and sometimes even the name of the hotel they will be staying at, hoping to line up some prospective “dates” during their stay. They make no promises of marriage or a long term relationship, however some few do offer hope in the form of vague or cryptic phrases, such as “who knows where it will lead?” or “let's see where this goes.” These men express no desire to bring women into their country of origin, and for the most part, express a “what happens overseas, stays overseas” mentality. While many are somewhat vague about their initial purpose for an overseas visit, terms such as “marriage”, “love”, and “serious” are never used in these ads.

Multiple studies cite the use of IMBs for sex tourists as well as for purposes of human trafficking (Bertone 2000; Fernandez 1997; Hughes 2000a, 2004; Johnson 2007:64-65; Troung, 1990:187; Ryan and Hall 2001:133), and these findings are consistent with these studies. These men make up about 15% of the ads I have encountered. The emergence of this type of consumer-husband may have to do with increased rates of HIV and other STIs among sex workers in countries with a booming sex tourism industry (Ryan and Hall, 2001:143), which, not coincidentally, also happen to represent a majority of MOB “supply” nations as well (Bertone 2000; Fernandez 1997; Lauser 2008). Many IMBs offer to run extensive background checks on the women who use their services, including medical evaluations, and so these websites, while not being used for their intended purpose, may offer a safer alternative for sex tourists. There is some evidence that IMBs have taken these demands into consideration, and expanded their enterprises to

accommodate sex tourists with “romance tours” and the services of an escort agency (Hughes 2004; Johnson 2007: 64-65; Langevin and Belleau 2000:113; Sahib et al. 2006), in addition to other types of consumer-husbands.

5) Suspected Traffickers. Among the 100 ads I had reviewed, I had encountered 2 that I suspect were written by possible human traffickers. Both men were approximately 10 years younger than the mean age (50) of male users on the site, and their main goal was to bring women to their country of origin while taking extraordinary measures to conceal their own identity (one was located in the United States, the other in the Netherlands).

While there have been other ads written by men who do not wish to travel overseas, what makes these ads different are both the promises made by these men (employment as an au pair or a nanny), the unusually high level of financial compensation for such jobs (vastly higher than even the most educated private tutor would make in a core or western nation), the desire to have women visit them for long periods of time (several months or more), the specific age limitations of women (below 30), and the overwhelming secrecy about the identity of the men writing the ads. Generally employment is offered through a “friend” and specifics about the location or the job itself, such as the sex and the ages of the children to be cared for, are non-existent. Their objective is more focused on having a woman travel to their country of origin rather than establishing a relationship, despite using this offer of employment as a viable means to “get to know each other” in one instance. Very few adjectives are used to describe a prospective partner, let alone a prospective employee.

Given that substantial literature exists on the use of IMBs among traffickers (Bertone 2000; Fernandez 1997; Hughes 2000a, 2004; Johnson 2007:64-65; Troung, 1990:187;

Ryan and Hall 2001:133), and with respect to ethical considerations, I felt compelled to file a “reported abuse” claim to the webmasters about these two men. Upon filing out the form describing the abuse, the following disclaimer was posted above the form: *“Without proof of abuse, a report will be recorded but the 'abuser' will not be removed till proof is provided.”* Given that the word “abuser” is in quotations, as well as the “innocent until proven guilty” philosophy exercised by Cherry Blossoms, it seems there is a strong predisposition among this IMB to side with male users in such instances. This too is consistent with countless previous qualitative findings among several scholars (Hughes 2004; Langevin and Belleau 2000:100; Tolentino 1996), citing sexism and a desire to establish and maintain male dominance in all areas by IMBs. I believe, however, that this policy may also have something to do with economics, namely by the fact that male users pay a substantially higher fee to use IMBs than do women – justifying such policies with an economic incentive more than anything else. In short, higher paying clients are given more leeway – of course, in every instance, higher paying clients are always men. While I have no objections with an “innocent until proven guilty” policy, *in theory*, one would assume with the countless reported cases of abuse and human trafficking facilitated through these sites, a more prudent measure would be established in such instances. At the very least, a policy that states it is a website for relationships and not employment should be in place. Furthermore, Cherry Blossoms does not offer any clause or definitions as to what “abuse” consists of.

To further illustrate how these lucrative employment offers can be highly effective in terms of suspected trafficking, I will attempt to validate this discovery of Suspected Traffickers using IMBs against existing literature by Johnson (2007: Chapter

5), who describes a particular case she encountered while in Russia, with a woman named Tanya. Despite the many efforts to sway Tanya away from this “opportunity” among family and friends, the promise of a lucrative job offer can in many cases appear to be worth the risk.

Upon meeting her, Johnson reported that Tanya had just sold her apartment to pay off debts and to buy a ticket to Los Angeles in order to meet a man she had met through an agency, who would set her up with employment in the United States. (Johnson 2007: Chapter 5). A common tactic among traffickers is to use whatever legal channels at their disposal, particularly when these traffickers are relying on trust or ignorance among their victims rather than outright abductions (Malarek 2003:20; Okubo and Shelley 2011:176; Shelley 2010:104-106). Women may be aware, in many cases, that working overseas is be illegal in these instances, and so this can explain the need to fabricate stories to justify their having obtained a student or tourist visa, with the underlying intention of staying in their new country for as long as possible, employed as a waitress or domestic worker. Johnson reports that in her discussions with Tanya, there was some suspicion with regards to whether or not her story about coming to the United States was in fact true. On a tourist visa, she claimed to have been preparing for the wedding of a Russian friend in Los Angeles – a waitress who was fortunate enough to meet, and fall in love with, an American lawyer. Tanya’s sister suggested to Johnson that Tanya was very likely testing out the story which she had planned to give to the customs and immigrations officials in order to determine its plausibility since this was not the story she had told her own family. Furthermore, Johnson asserts that it is highly unlikely that Tanya would have been granted a tourist visa through regular channels, given her income and marital status,

in addition to the fact that Tanya had sold her apartment, which strongly suggests that her story about coming to the United States simply for a wedding is likely untrue (Johnson 2007:96). She later reports that Tanya was not trafficked into prostitution, had managed to find work as a waitress, and married an American a year later. She regularly sends money back to her daughter, who is being raised in the FSU by her grandmother (Johnson 2007:161).

Not unlike the soon-to-be married “friend” she had once claimed to be visiting when first speaking to Johnson, there remains the possibility that this story may also be a fabrication. Considering the tactics used by traffickers once women are under their control, it may be just as likely that Tanya’s happy ending is just as likely to be a life of suffering. Some traffickers do in fact send money to the families of their victims as “proof” of their employment as waitresses or domestic workers (Bertone 2000; Kara 2009:86), which may be a means of self-preservation, particularly when the victims’ families are likely to get authorities involved in a possible investigation. I suspect some trafficked women may also feel ashamed of their situation, and fabricate success stories so that their families will never find out about the true circumstances in which they live. In Tanya’s case, friends and family members had warned her of the possibilities, and tried to convince her to stay in Russia (Johnson 2007:97), so it may stand to reason that admitting the reality of a bleak situation is no doubt a difficult thing to manage. However it is far more common among traffickers to control their victims with debt bondage, forced drug addiction, physical and sexual abuse, torture, humiliation, and threats to either the victims, their families, or any combination thereof (Bertone 2000; Fernandez 1997; Hughes 2000a; Kara 2009:11-16; Okubu and Shelley 2011:206-207).

With respect to consumer-husbands, however, it is important to note that these observations do not represent easily distinguishable categories, since many ads clearly represent more than one category at one time. Rather they should be viewed as ideal types and not hard and fast categories with which all consumer-husbands conform to. Also, one must consider the possibility that some consumer-husbands may not fit into any of these profiles, and may have other motives for using an IMB not mentioned here. Most frequently, there was some overlap with Lonely Hearts and King Pins; however some Lonely Hearts may in fact also overlap the needs expressed by Soul Mate Seekers. King Pins, by contrast, very frequently operate as Sex Tourists simultaneously, in that many are willing, and in fact may be expecting some casual sex during their stay overseas, despite seeking a long term commitment. The distinction is made where Sex Tourists make no considerations for marriage or long term commitments, whereas King Pins do. The line between Soul Mate Seekers, King Pins and Suspected Traffickers can be difficult to distinguish at times. Where there were only two ads that stood out clearly – from my own perspective – as Suspected Traffickers, namely because they were for offers of employment with little or no information on the job itself, or the person offering said job, I will not preclude the possibility that King Pins and Soul Mate Seekers may also have ulterior motives with respect to the women they seek, primarily because they offer some lucrative incentives for traveling overseas – be they real or imagined, one cannot be certain. I do not believe Lonely Hearts are likely to be engaged in these forms of suspected trafficking, simply because what they offer is far from lucrative in comparison to other consumer-husbands. Furthermore, these men rarely if ever seek women in an age category that would be considered profitable by those engaged in this

type of criminal activity. In addition, I do not suspect Sex Tourists to take part in these kinds of activities, primarily as a result of the following:

- 1) They operate on the “demand” end of human trafficking, and benefit from such;
- 2) They express no desire to bring women into their country of origin, and
- 3) According to Malarek, most men who engage in sex tourism view human trafficking as alien and completely disconnected from their own individual activities – preferring instead to subscribe to the belief that all women in the sex industry are willing participants. They believe that demand is entirely separate from supply (Malarek 2009:104).

“One of these john sites conducted a poll asking whether ‘mongering⁶ leads to the international trafficking of sex slaves.’ Almost 75 percent of the respondents said yes, but none admitted to using trafficked women themselves. These are the same men who frequent sex tourist pits like Thailand and rave about purchasing foreign women. ... Even when johns accept that trafficking might lead to the exploitation of women around the world, they often take offense to the suggestion that they, as users, are part of the problem” (Malarek 2009:104). In fact, sex tourists very adamantly divorce themselves from the “unpleasantness” of the many human rights violations made by pimps, traffickers, and other members of organized crime. To associate themselves with these activities shatters the illusion that these women genuinely enjoy sex work, and are willing participants, thereby making sex tourism a thoroughly deplorable pastime.

⁶ Mongering is essentially shorthand for “whore mongering,” a common term used by men who frequent sex workers.

It is also important to consider that this analysis is of personal ads, and not of the individuals themselves. Personal ads, far from being an ideal means of interpreting an individual's true motives or incentives, must be considered as such. It is not uncommon for people, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race or age, to fabricate or exaggerate some of the facts about themselves, and to engage in a kind of commercial self-promotion when placing a personal ad. However in most cases, one specific need or objective on the part of consumer-husbands is more evident than the others. For instance, both King Pins and Lonely Hearts tend to fall into a similar age category, and both make mention of their financial situation – yet for very different reasons. Soul Mate Seekers and Suspect Traffickers may both mention their desire to seek a woman who works or seeks work, and may also set an age limitation on their desired partner, but also for very different reasons. As a result of these observations, it becomes difficult to quantify the level of overlap with respect to the intentions of men who use IMBs. One thing remains clear, however, that consumer-husbands do not all fit the profile of an older man seeking a much younger, docile woman to know her position in the “chore wars” and perform sexual favours in exchange for economic stability and citizenship.

4. Nasty Bastards

One category that may have been overlooked in this analysis is what Malarek calls “The Nasty Bastards.” While no doubt difficult to assess on the basis on personal ads alone, it seems reasonable to assume there is some margin for this type of consumer-husband. In Malarek's work on men who pay for sex, he cites an April 2008 study⁷ on

⁷ Unfortunately, Malarek did not cite this study in his work, however, I was able to find this study and verify Malarek's findings.

110 Scottish johns, where “10 percent of the men believed that rape of prostituted women is not possible. Twelve percent believed that the concept of rape in the context of prostitution simply doesn’t apply. Twenty-two percent said that, once they pay for sex, customers are entitled to whatever they want. More disturbingly, 10 percent admitted they would rape a woman – any woman – if they thought they wouldn’t get caught” (Malarek 2009:87). In Johnson’s analysis of letters by consumer-husbands, one individual stands out – perhaps not quite as brutal as the “Nasty Bastards” in Malarek’s study – Sam, the consumer-husband in question, may have been little more than a slightly disturbed individual, or perhaps Sam was still struggling with the courage to take action against his victims. Sam initially presented himself as a Soul Mate Seeker, writing poetic letters and avoiding the topic of sex until communication, trust and intimacy were well established through letters and phone calls. Unfortunately, as his letters began to focus more on sexuality and physical intimacy, the level of his grammar began to degenerate and his comments were rather crude. However, much like Suspected Traffickers, what little information he provided concerning his own identity was vague at best. Sam never gave Valentina – the woman interviewed by Johnson – his home phone number, let alone called her despite Valentina giving Sam her phone number in Russia. They never once spoke on the phone, despite repeated requests by Valentina. Furthermore, Sam had only ever sent one photo of himself, which was a small, wallet-sized picture of “an overweight, bald man.” Valentina had asked Sam for other photographs, but he refused. She had also received a letter from Sam, but addressed to a woman with a Chinese name.

Macleod, Jan et al. “Challenging Men’s Demand for Prostitution in Scotland: A Research Report Based on Interviews with 110 Men Who Bought Women in Prostitution.” Published by Women’s Support Project, 2008.

Retrieved February 12, 2012 at: <http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/ChallengingDemandScotland.pdf>

After confronting Sam, he assured her that the relationship with the woman in China was over, and that he wanted to marry Valentina. In addition, Sam expressed no desire to come to Russia to meet Valentina, and when she began to pressure him to clarify these unusual factors in their correspondence, he replied saying he was an undercover agent for the CIA, not a teacher as he had initially claimed, and that she would simply have to be patient. Determined to understand what was happening, she again demanded his phone number. Another letter arrived, asking Valentina to stop pressuring Sam, which was claimed to be written by Sam's mother (Johnson 2007:83-85).

Johnson took matters into her own hands upon returning to the United States, and conducted some investigative work on Sam. Sam was neither a teacher, nor was he a secret agent. "The police in Sam's neighborhood knew what he was doing because in the last few years they had been forced to take care of several women whom Sam had invited to come and live with him. These women, from different countries around the world, had arrived at the airport expecting to find Sam waiting for them. They all claimed to be engaged to him and insisted that he had invited them to come live with him. But when they arrived at the airport, Sam was nowhere to be found. The women were instead taken care of by the authorities until they could arrange for a trip back home. Each time the police had confronted Sam about this, he denied that he even knew who the women were (Johnson 2007:161).

The physical, sexual and emotional abuse of MOB's is not exclusive to those engaged in human trafficking. In fact, there are countless reports of domestic violence and homicide among MOB's by their consumer-husbands, some of whom are "serial" consumer-husbands. For instance, in December 2000, 20-year-old Anastasia Solovyova

was murdered by her husband, 38-year-old Indle King, who had a prior domestic violence protection order issued against him by his previous wife, whom he also met through an IMB. It was this particular case that set forth the motion for the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act to be approved (Crandall et al. 2005). Or Susanna Blackwell, eight months pregnant, who was murdered by her husband, Timothy Blackwell, along with three of her friends, less than two years after meeting him through an IMB called “Asian Encounters” (Egan 1996). In September of 2003, Alla Barney, 26, a MOB from Ukraine, was murdered by her 58-year-old husband, Lester Barney, in front of their 4-year-old son. In January 2004, Michelle Nyce, 34, originally from the Philippines, was beaten and murdered by her husband, Jonathan W. Nyce, 55, who then tried to make the crime appear as a car accident. In 1994, Emelita Villa Reeves, a Filipina MOB, was murdered by her husband Jack Reeves, 58, who also murdered his first wife, Sharon Vaughn Reeves, and is suspected of having murdered his third wife, Myong Hui Reeves. The murder of Myong Hui Reeves was never proven since her body was cremated before the investigation took place (Springer 1999).

The distinction between Nasty Bastards, Suspected Traffickers and Sex Tourists may seem unclear initially, however there are defining characteristics of each that cannot be seen in the others. As mentioned earlier, Sex Tourists generally have no desire to acknowledge the element of human trafficking in their own activities. Choosing instead to believe that all sex workers (or at the very least, all sex workers they themselves encounter) are willing, eager participants in a perfectly liberating and satisfying line of work, they express a level of cognitive dissonance that is unmatched among Nasty Bastards and Suspected Traffickers. By contrast, Suspected Traffickers – assuming these

men are in fact engaged in human trafficking – who use IMBs operate as recruiters, motivated by profit. These men “sell” the women they manipulate through elaborate channels of organized crime operations. Many do in fact sexually and physically assault the women they come into contact with, which is a common tactic used to control their victims (Malarek 2003:43), however unlike Sex Tourists, Suspected Traffickers are by no means unaware or unwilling to accept the level of brutality and abuse associated with their objectives. Nasty Bastards are a group of their own, in that these men take perverse pleasure in subjecting their victims to any level of suffering. Issues of profit or human trafficking are irrelevant; their main objective remains to inflict pain or suffering on their victims. Some may operate as Sex Tourists, simply because they are less likely to be imprisoned for engaging in various sexual-sadistic activities in periphery or semi-periphery states (Hughes 1999). There is no cognitive dissonance in this regard, nor is there a need to be motivated by profit. Human suffering is motivation enough. It is difficult to determine the frequency with which Nasty Bastards exist in terms of consumer-husbands, given that there is very little information about these men in terms of statistical data, let alone through the analysis of their personal ads or letters.

5. Consumer-Husbands and Male Anomie

One very informal trend among a majority of consumer-husbands is their distaste for all things feminist. While academic research on consumer-husbands from the last twenty years is largely limited overall, the main message is clear: these men are essentially unevolved and exploitative (Glodava and Onizuka 1994: Chapter 3), any independent researcher can browse these websites and quickly notice the trend of anti-feminist sentiment still present today. Testimonials on such websites are abundant, not

only in those ads written by King Pins in my own analysis, but as demonstrated earlier in my research on other IMBs, and frequently make reference to the disillusionment and frustration experienced by men after several failed relationships in the West. The only consistency between the existing dichotomy of western women as either (sexually available) vapid princess / (sexually unavailable) fat bitch is their apathy for men, as well as for their own children and homes.

In addition, the previous existing profile of all consumer-husbands as “King Pins” does little to explain the overwhelming degree of deception in ads written by consumer-husbands – as noted earlier – and the 55% of men in the study who made at least one reference to their own financial situation. For men who do not wish to be treated as “success objects” by what is characterized as typical western women, it is interesting to note that so many men still feel the need to be deceptive and to make mention of their finances, despite the very obvious disparity between the average standard of living in core nations versus those in the periphery or semi-periphery. By virtue of their citizenship alone, these men are automatically viewed by those in the periphery or semi-periphery as financially secure and able to provide for a family. While the complaints made about feminism on such websites may seem inarticulate and primitive, it would seem the impact of feminism – misguided or otherwise – has affected consumer-husbands and in part helped to shape the existing mail-order marriage industry. While second wave feminism is not to blame for these transformations, it plays a key role nonetheless.

The belief that a man on his own merits – along with his citizenship in a core nation – is insufficient enough to be genuinely loved by a lifelong partner remains nonetheless. The fact that he is from a core nation, and by most definitions expressed by

individuals living in periphery or semi-periphery states, is therefore “rich”, also appears insufficient in this respect. One might suggest that a particular consumer-husband may be competing with other men, yet the current ratio of women to men, let alone the vast number of “success” stories and testimonials by married couples makes this an unlikely possibility. While a consumer-husband may be attempting to escape the scores of “liberated” women in his own country who are presumably self-centered, narcissistic, uncaring and materialistic, it would seem illogical to promote about himself the very attribute that would attract such a woman in the first place. With respect to this behaviour, I offer two explanations. First, despite attempts by IMBs to sanitize the incentives of MOB’s seeking transnational marriage with western men, such as escaping the abuse experienced at the hands of men in their own countries, the very obvious gap between core and periphery or semi-periphery nations is difficult to overlook. Mainstream discourse surrounding MOB’s and transnational marriage tend to associate women who use IMBs with a desire for upward mobility – namely on an economic level and little else, regardless of the countless other push factors that may be operating simultaneously. Therefore, consumer-husbands may find it difficult to ignore this gap, and may not entirely be convinced that genuine love can result largely out of the fact that his citizenship instantly grants him the highly sought after, non-economic qualities that men in MOB “supply” nations lack. As a result, these men rely on the assets that would generally make them a “good catch” by the standards set in their own culture – namely, a successful job and financial stability, especially given that a good number of these men are no longer able to rely on their youth, physical appearance, and in some cases, their patience and desire to remain faithful in a marriage. Second, much the way women are

socially conditioned to rely on their physical appearance and sexual behaviour to render themselves desirable by men in mainstream western society – supporting the notion of women as “sex objects” – so too are men socially conditioned to promote their financial successes and wealth to render themselves equally desirable – supporting the notion of men as “success objects”. It stands to reason that many men have become socialized with this belief to such an extent, that to completely reject it would be crippling to their male identity for many consumer-husbands, just as many women may feel their fading youth and beauty harms their feminine identity. This can also be seen despite the many claims that MOB's are “unspoiled” by western feminism among the vast photos of women in makeup, sexy clothing, and in provocative or suggestive poses – regardless of socio-economic status, these rigidly defined, social constructions of gender may in fact influence behavior more than many people realize.

Given the negative sentiments expressed by consumer-husbands surrounding feminism, the “chore wars” also seem to be a key issue with those men who make use of IMBs, namely King Pins and Lonely Hearts – both comprising approximately 65% of consumer-husbands . What is most surprising today is that the “chore wars” – nearly 40 years later – remain for the most part, unresolved. While women have taken their place in the work force in core nations, men, by contrast, have done little to fill the gap in the home left by those same women (Bianchi et al. 2000; South and Spitze 1994). While men are often accused of being insensitive and lazy for not “picking up the slack” left behind, I would as a counter-argument suggest that the economic-imperialist trajectories some feminists have chosen to follow is what may be partly responsible for this lack of participation on the part of men rather than their sheer refusal to support women. Many

men, far from being lazy and unsupportive, have in fact supported women on numerous levels with respect to emancipation throughout history (Synnott 2009:158-161). Some studies show that men have taken up *some* of the slack within the household, (Bianchi et al 2000; South and Spitze 1994) particularly when compared to earlier generations (yet still not an equal amount to women), despite constant claims by some feminists that housework is both economically worthless and mind-numbingly dull. Again, it is my belief that making constant and perpetual claims that housework and other forms of domestic labour and childcare is beneath the skill level and intellectual capacity of any halfway intelligent person is not an effective means to motivate anyone, male or otherwise. It therefore stands to reason that the demand for domestic workers and those in the care industry has been filled by the very same women who, according to IMBs, have not been subjected to this level of feminist discourse.

Taking this into consideration, it seems only reasonable that many men would turn to IMBs in hopes of re-creating a more traditional marriage. MOB's are marketed as simple-minded and content in the home, characteristics that have been suggested make for an ideal domestic worker or care worker, despite being largely exaggerated if not altogether untrue. By contrast, the mainstream rhetoric generated as a result of the "chore wars" presents the alternative within one's own borders for many men as bleak and undesirable. Either he can partake in daily activities that have been described as oppressive and mind-numbing, if not comparable to a concentration camp, according to Freidan (1963:265-268); or refuse to participate and engage in countless arguments with his spouse in a home – and possibly in the presence of children – that lack care and attention. IMBs, by contrast, offer a different sort of option, one that allows men a third

choice: to seek a bride that will neither ask a man to degrade himself with trivial chores, nor argue with him for not doing them.

Some may argue that this claim is lacking credibility in the sense that it was never the intention of feminists such as Freidan to contribute to the oppression of women. However Freidan herself advocates the use of domestic workers – the majority of whom, today, are women from periphery or semi-periphery states. In fact, Ehrenreich (in Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002:88) argue that despite Freidan's involvement with NOW and their effort to implement the Fair Labour Standards Act to household workers, there is no mention of aspirations and intellectual capabilities of the women paid to perform these tasks. It seems everyone, regardless of their gender, wanted a traditional wife, or at the very least a relationship that was increasingly difficult to find in western society.

A possible counter-argument surrounding this phenomenon may have to do with the notion that domestic workers are not wives, and the level of sexual exploitation is not present. Furthermore, domestic work is paid work, and so women who take part in this activity are in a sense more “liberated” than their MOB counterparts. This argument rests on two assumptions. First, that sexuality within the confines of a transnational marriage of this type is exploitation – making *all* consumer-husbands sexual predators; and second, that domestic workers are free from sexual and economic exploitation. While I will agree that MOBs who are unfortunate enough to trust their futures to King Pins, Sex Tourists, Nasty Bastards and Suspected Traffickers are very likely obligated, if not outright coerced into performing sexual acts they do not genuinely have a desire to partake in (Glodava and Onizuka 1994:62-74), among those who marry Soul Mate Seekers and Lonely Hearts, this seems far less likely. Furthermore, the notion that domestic workers

are in all cases free from sexual, physical and emotional abuse, as well as economic exploitation, is false. However, even if we overlook the reports of sexual and physical abuse on the part of employers against their domestic workers (Constable 1997:148-149; Lan 2006:107), in addition to the countless reports of the economic exploitation of domestic workers (Constable, 1997:137-139; Lan, 2006:52-53; Anderson in Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002:104-114), there are other devastating consequences that have emerged, such as the resulting Parental Alienation Syndrome experienced by domestic workers with children still in their country of origin remains largely unaddressed by academics, if not entirely ignored by employers (Parreñas in Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002:39-54). Transnational marriage allows women to emigrate along with their children, domestic work does not. Few reports exist on the current “care drain” experienced in the Philippines as a result of the mass emigration of Filipina women to other countries currently experiencing a “care vacuum” in search of work, created by consumer culture and increased individualism. The “care drain” refers to the vast migration of women who leave periphery or semi-periphery states in search of domestic or care related work in core nations, the result of which an entire generation of children are being raised without their mothers, and while not all experience Parental Alienation Syndrome, some do (Parreñas in Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002:39-54). Furthermore, domestic workers are caring for children in the West with three parental units – mother, father, and nanny – while their own children are often left in the care of single fathers or relatives (Cheever in Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002:31-38). It would seem the feminist demand for domestic work – when compared to the alternative of mail-order marriages – offer just as many hardships, and a great deal more hypocrisy.

Given the inability to resolve the “chore wars” over the last 40 years, it seems no coincidence that some Western men may very well seem confused with respect to their roles as husbands, and look for alternatives to recreate a time when gender roles were more rigidly defined. Within the profiles I have established through the study of consumer-husbands is the prevalence of failed relationships and divorce. Given these failed attempts to fulfill their desires for a particular family and marital dynamic, it becomes increasingly difficult to establish such parameters within a relationship with western women. Add to this the element of disillusion and desire for control within a marriage, perhaps not in all cases to control women in general, but rather control as a means to re-establish some sense of masculine identity, we can then begin to understand the origin of this anomie, of which I will elaborate on further. Women with a limited command of English, no experience living in a Western nation, some degree of ignorance about their rights, and complete dependence on their husbands as a means of integrating into a new society are no doubt easy to control – perhaps this may also explain why hiring such women is so popular among those seeking domestic workers. Langevin and Belleau argue that the historical predecessors of modern day domestic employers lie in part with the enslavement of black and Aboriginal women in Canada during the 18th century (Langevin and Belleau 2000:2). Any relationship formed under these circumstances can in fact represent a wide margin for a zero-sum game, whether it is a marital relationship or one between an employer and an employee. More on this dynamic will be discussed in the section on social capital.

Male anomie – as a type of gendered identity crisis – among consumer-husbands may also be the result of a form of institutionalization. If we accept that marriage is in

fact an institution, this may go some way towards explaining the high rate of divorce among consumer-husbands. It has become common knowledge that many men adapt poorly to the changes that take place after a divorce or the death of a spouse, and so this too may explain the why almost a third of consumer-husbands are classified as Lonely Hearts using IMBs. If we can accept this notion of anomie by consumer-husbands, it points to a desire to reassert control over one's life and one's identity through transnational marriage, by replacing the life that is now lost to a grieving widower or a man recovering from the trauma of divorce by whatever means at his disposal.

The gap between what is desired and the means to obtain these desires is considerable under these circumstances (Merton 1938), and so I would suggest as an adaptation of this theory, this leaves merely the option of seeking a spouse in periphery or semi-periphery nations. Merton's anomie was never intended for an identity crisis of this nature, however the outcome is similar. Under what other circumstances could such control be established? Risks are present just the same for both MOBs and consumer-husbands. Many of these marriages are claimed to be "authentic," and free from abuse, despite evidence to the contrary. While there are countless documented accounts of consumer-husbands abusing or even killing their foreign wives (Bertone 2000; Crandall et al. 2005; Egan 1996; Fernandez 1997; Springer 1999), no academic literature exists on the number of MOBs abusing, financially exploiting or even murdering their husbands – despite reports of this from online message boards for consumer-husbands, such as Russian Woman Guide and some media report, two of which in the British Daily Mail report British men being killed by their Thai wives (Daily Mail Reporter 2008; Kelly and Drummond 2006).

7. Male Anomie Abroad

The section on IMBs and Information and Communications Technology discussed that a common marketing tactic is to downplay the social, political and economic situation in MOB “supply” nations, and to instead focus on the failures of men in these nations, as well as the problems that feminism has created in the west. Johnson raises a key point, when questioning the issues with Russian men, and whether or not a culturally rigid definition of masculinity and those qualities that make a “good” husband can in fact be impacted by the social, political, and economic situation of one’s country (Johnson 2007:54). Thai Professional Introductions states that “Thailand has a robust economy,” and that they “... do not deal in economic migrants.” While there is something to be said with respect to Constable’s (2006) work on how reducing these motives of MOBs and domestic and care workers to little more than “... want[ing] to move from a poor or ‘backwards’ country to work for or marry a richer person in a more ‘modern’ country” (Constable 2006:3), and how this overlooks the many other reasons women seek marriage or employment transnationally, this economic incentive is still significant in that men in these nations may not be afforded the same opportunity to relocate transnationally. “The structural inequality of such a situation provides a common and readily accepted logic for the growing pattern for female labor [sic] and marriage migration” (Constable 2006:3), but what of male migration patterns? While Thailand may have a “robust economy” from some perspectives, international trade and investment has done little to reduce the overall poverty within the country (Warr 2004). Matsui (1989) lists several reasons why the Philippines experience vast poverty despite the abundance of resources within the nation. These reasons are: a tremendous foreign debt, failure of

land reform, continued corruption, and intensified militarization. Matsui (1989) cites the 1992 U.S. News and World Report, which estimated that the population of the Philippines doubled every 27 years, and the increasing gap between the upper and working classes account for the overwhelming number of those in search of work overseas. Furthermore, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank have established export-processing zones (EPZs) as a means of encouraging foreign investments. In reality, EPZs, presented to the public as a means to help alleviate the foreign debt, have instead “become conduits of global assembly lines and virtual sweatshops” (Tolentino 1996:54). For women, the consequences are bleak. Former Secretary Franklin Dillon argued that Filipino women are now the “domestics of the world ... cheap domestic labor [sic] to clean up after the rest of the world” (News Notes 1987 cited in Glodava and Onizuka 1994:49). Given these bleak circumstances for women, it seems difficult to imagine where men, who may very well live in cultures which define their masculinity through their ability to provide for their families, are left throughout these transformations.

Of course, it is important to note that I am by no means suggesting that these circumstances justify infidelity in a marriage, or alcoholism, or domestic violence, but it does speak to a dynamic between core and periphery, and semi-periphery states. It can be argued that women in these nations should take the necessary steps to transform their societies, rather than escape into core nations where feminism has already served to address these concerns – at least on some level; however consumer-husbands are not alone in their critique of feminism. North American and European notions of feminism have come under heavy fire by the rest of the international community, associating it with

neocolonialist policies, western imperialism, asymmetrical economic development strategies that serve to benefit core nations, and modernization (Basu 1995: Chapter 1). This too, speaks to the dynamic between core and periphery nations expressed in transnational marriage and employment. In fact, in Johnson's (2007) interviews with Russian MOB's, she found that the concept of feminism was essentially an insult to women; associated with an almost militant desire to replace femininity with an uncaring attitude toward all men (Johnson 2007:28-29, 47). It seems unrealistic to expect women to adopt as a solution to existing problems a concept that they themselves view as hate-filled and callous.

Referring back to the "care drain" experienced in the Philippines, fathers and other relatives are now expected to raise their children as single parents, while highly educated women seek work overseas as nannies, maids, and other care givers (Cheever in Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002:31-38; Parreñas in Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2002:39-54). While men should no doubt be active participants in child-rearing, to expect this transformation among men who otherwise view themselves, and have always viewed themselves, as primary breadwinners, while their wives seek out better salaries overseas, it stands to reason that this too may contribute to a growing sense of male anomie. Regardless of how evolved or sensitive a man may be this level of separation in a marriage, combined with the stress of raising a child (or children) as a single parent, is no doubt difficult for anyone.

V. Introduction to Woolcock's Social Capital

1. Macro vs. Micro

According to Woolcock (1998), during the late 1980's and 1990's, two distinct literatures within the so-called “new sociology of economic development” emerged: at the micro level, ethnic entrepreneurship studies, and at the macro level, comparative institutionalist studies of state-society relations. This study is relevant here in that the notion of MOB's, domestic workers and the sex tourism industry experience some overlap, and that this overlap, while experienced on a micro-social level, can also be interpreted through macro-social theories as well, specifically with respect to bottom-up dilemmas of development, which characterize core states, and top-down dilemmas of development, which characterize periphery or semi-periphery states. Woolcock (1998) does, however, suggest that in order for social capital to develop at the micro and macro levels, it must integrate four distinct forms. Social capital, according to this theory, is therefore high in groups:

- 1) that have distinct phenotypical or cultural characteristics;
- 2) that engage in conflict with other groups viewed as more powerful;
- 3) that suffer a high degree of discrimination, and;
- 4) that possess a high degree of internal communication, offering rewards to its members.

This, of course, allows for both positive and negative aspects of social capital, revealing many of the shortcomings of this particular model. These are bottom-up dilemmas of development on a micro level, as well as top-down dilemmas of development on a macro level (Woolcock 1998).

2. The Micro Level: Bottom-Up Dilemmas of Development

Woolcock (1998) describes bottom-up development as taking place at the “grassroots” level, including households, individuals, and small groups which do not include more formal bureaucratic divisions administered by the state. Bottom-up relations function among people with a common neighbourhood, ethnic origin, and so forth, which require integration as an important source of social capital.

Amoral individualism is characterized by a lack of familial and generalized trust, and the absence of both integration and linkage. “‘Amoral individualism’... exists where there is neither familial nor generalized trust, where narrow self-interest literally permeates all social and economic activity, and where members are isolated - either by circumstance or discrimination - from all forms of cohesive social networks.” (Woolcock 1998:172). A slight variation on this could be a sense of anomie identified by Durkheim (1897) experienced by a lack of integration without linkage – one of the hallmarks of modernity (Woolcock 1998). This definition of anomie closely resembles that which is experienced by both male and female clients of IMBs (once MOBs relocate into a core state), as well as domestic employers and employees (also after relocation into a core state). In order to achieve developmental outcomes in poor communities, both linkage and integration must be combined and established. The benefits of intra-community integration will inevitably lead to extra-community linkages, which can, in turn, create additional hurdles to economic advancement should there be too much or too little of either (Woolcock 1998).

According to Woolcock (1998), both classical and contemporary theorists⁸ who study urban poverty and ethnic entrepreneurship, maintain that the need for business groups to forge and maintain linkages that transcend their community is necessary so that:

- 1) threats to undermine, or attempt to undermine the economic expansion of the group through economic and non-economic claims of community members can be resisted;
- 2) more sophisticated market entry can occur, and;
- 3) those individuals who possess superior ability can enter into larger groups.

3. The Marco Level: Top-Down Dilemmas of Development

To further elaborate on Woolcock's work (1998), on the macro-level, there are "collapsed states" at one extreme, where basic law and order cease to exist in any form. Such states lack organizational integrity as well as synergy. These states are closely related to what Woolcock, drawing on Evans (1988)⁹, refers to as rogue or "predatory states," which are able to carry out some narrowly defined agenda; namely as a result of violence and humans rights' violations rather than organizational skill. Organizational integrity lacking synergy can also prove unproductive, such as those societies in communist China and (historically) many in Eastern Europe, which are often characterized by too much government and too little civil society. According to Woolcock, these are often defined as weak states (Woolcock 1998).

⁸ Woolcock cites the following: Cf. Michael Cernea, "Modernization and development potential of traditional grass-roots peasant organizations," in M. Attir, B. Holzner, and Z. Suda, editors, *Directions of Change: Modernization Theory, Research and Realities* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), and Albert Hirschman, *Getting Ahead Collectively. Grass-roots Organizations in Latin America* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1984).

⁹ Evans, "Predatory, developmental and other apparatuses"; Evans, "The state as problem and solution."

To this definition, I offer an amendment with respect to the notion that some MOB “supply” nations may fit this definition, including those that are no longer under communist rule, such as Russia. I would argue that Russia can still be classified as a “weak state” (Menon & Motyl 2007), in that despite the dissolution of the USSR in 1991, involvement by the United States government and the International Monetary Fund has created additional economic problems in the Russian economy, regardless of the rapid increase in international trade. The result was a 50% decline in the GDP in the 1990’s which marked an economic crisis in the country, (Treisman 2007; Menon & Motyl 2007). While the Russian economy has vastly improved since that time with the election of Vladimir Putin, his methods have been heavily criticized being both undemocratic, and failing to address the vast growing social problems in the country (Stent 2008). Stent cites other studies¹⁰ to argue that “male life expectancy remains at 59, by far the lowest of any country at its stage of economic development; the looming HIV–AIDS and tuberculosis crises are only belatedly being addressed; the public health system is inadequate; from 1992 to 2006 deaths have exceeded births by 11.5 million and Russia’s population could fall from 142 million in 2007 to 109 million in 2050.” (Stent 2008:1103-1104).

By contrast, the notion of a high level of corporate involvement within a country may result in the notion of “corporate subjects” (Ikeda 2004). While communist regimes may in fact result in a loss of social capital and control, so too can the erosion of state sovereignty through neoliberal globalization designed to serve American corporate

¹⁰ Eberstadt, N. (2007) ‘Disinvesting in Human Beings: The Perilous Political Economy of Putin’s Russia’, paper presented to State Department, Washington, DC, 24 April.
Goldman Sachs Global Economics Group (2007) BRICs and Beyond (New York, The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc.).

interests, result in a form of diluted citizenship (Ikeda 2004). I will further assert that this notion of corporate subjects (established through corporate interests which serve to dilute citizenship) and as opposed to national citizens, can also represent a “weak state” in that neoliberal economic policies can also affect social capital in much the same way a communist regime can.

4. Mail-Order Marriages and Social Capital

Given that the pattern of immigration in these types of marriages often results from an individual – in this instance, MOBs – originating from a state which is experiencing some degree of top-down developmental dilemma (periphery or semi-periphery), to a state experiencing some degree of bottom-up developmental dilemma (core nations – expressed through the individual experiencing a lack of integration without linkage), this poses a further question surrounding *how* notions of embeddedness and autonomy on a macro and micro level can be used to examine why and how IMBs have grown exponentially over the last 25 years. Woolcock (1998) further asserts that the merging of these notions cannot simply happen rapidly, but must be slowly and carefully established before progressing onto a new and potentially disruptive relationship being formed on a larger scale. As I have established, many consumer-husbands (and to some extent, domestic employers) are likely to experience a type of amoral individualism expressed through the defined parameters of gendered anomie discussed earlier. This is caused by a lack of integration and linkage, yet on a macro-social level, these men almost exclusively come from core nations which exhibit high levels of synergy and organizational integrity, and benefit directly from neoliberal global economic policies. The women, be they MOBs or domestic or care workers, however almost exclusively

come from nations that have low levels of either synergy or organizational integrity – resulting in “weak states” – and are severely limited by neoliberal global economic policies, including the erosion of national citizenship in place of corporate subjecthood, yet on a micro-level, have strong familial ties and a sense of community, characterized by high levels of integration and linkage. It may appear logical to some that a marriage of this type would simply balance itself out, leaving both parties fulfilled in their needs; however there are several inconsistencies with this perspective. It is in fact this perspective that is often used in the latent marketing mechanisms of several IMBs, as I have already examined.

5. Legislation Lacking Integration and Linkage

Furthermore, the conditions that allow for the commodification of such relationships in this capacity depend on these inconsistencies in social capital, and therefore it seems illogical that IMBs would promote a service that seeks to eliminate these existing inequalities. IMBs benefit from weak states, particularly through their inability to enforce laws that seek to eliminate IMBs, as I will demonstrate shortly. It is economically unsound, and may also serve to explain why so many of these services claim to conduct background checks on the men who use these services, but rarely if ever do. In response to pressure regarding the false claims made by IMBs with respect to background checks, President George W. Bush signed the "International Marriage Broker Regulation Act of 2005" (IMBRA) in January 2006 as part of the H.R. 3402: Violence Against Women and Department of Justice Reauthorization Act of 2005, essentially stipulating that:

- 1) men using the services of an IMB must complete a questionnaire on his criminal and

marital background;

2) the “seller” must obtain the man’s record from the National Sex Offenders Public Registry database;

3) the questionnaire and record must be translated to the women’s native language and provided to her, and;

4) women must certify for each specific individual, that she agrees to permit communication (Fields-Meyer and Raether, 2001; Johnson 2007:159).

Problems associated with this law, however, are that they are exclusive to American men, since the American government has no jurisdiction in other countries, and it ignores the backgrounds of men from other core nations. In addition, no verification is made on the questionnaire completed by consumer-husbands, so potentially fraudulent statements are often presented to MOBs as truth and evidence of their future safety. Short of being a *registered* sex offender, the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act of 2005 has done little to assist women seeking a better life through the use of these services.

6. Weak States, Sex Tourism and Commodities

What is also unfortunate about such laws is that despite efforts to elaborate and expand upon them in ways which further benefit MOBs, “weak states” are also a part of the problem. The Philippine government has banned all advertisements for MOB services, yet the law in and of itself is not enforced (Fernandez 1997). Figures in this study taken from “Cherry Blossoms,” as well as the vast numbers of ads by Filipino women seen on several other IMB websites also support Fernandez’s findings in that the Philippine government has not been successful in enforcing this ban. In addition to the

overwhelming number of MOBs from the Philippines, there is a parallel of growth between the sex trade and the tourism industry – not only in the Philippines, but in other “MOB supply nations” as well (Bertone 2000; Fernandez 1997; Hughes 1999, 2000a, 2004; Johnson 2007:64-54 Langevin and Belleau 2000:99). Failure to enforce this law and is not surprising, since former President Ramos of the Philippines was once quoted describing Filipina contract labourers as a “vital export *commodity* in the Philippines’ own economic strategy” [italics added] (Fernandez 1997:415). In response to this, GABRIELA, a feminist-humanitarian organization concerned with the needs of Filipina women, labelled President Ramos “a world-class pimp” (Fernandez 1997:416). This parallel between sex tourism and the failure of governments to counter the notion of women as commodities, even as care workers, is highly relevant because while some IMBs do not offer “romance tours,” or offers of employment – be they real or under false pretenses – several do, blurring the lines for women who may, to some extent, be unaware of participating in prostitution, and also unaware of the profits generated by IMBs from it. While “romance tours” or employment offers are not particularly common with all IMBs, since many stress the women who use their services are sexually inexperienced, this is particularly common among IMBs that specialize in Eastern European or Russian women, as well as some from countries with a booming sex tourism economy, such as Thailand. As a result, the IMB generates income based on the “romance tours” and ads that seek employers rather than spouses, while the women in question may be completely unaware of having engaged in prostitution or suspected trafficking (Hughes 2004). As a result, they are either forced in a more direct way to

work as sex trade workers; otherwise they may be trapped in any number of dehumanizing situations, incapable of seeking help. (Crandall et al. 2005).

7. No Return Policy

Finally, a separation from one's key sources of social capital on the part of MOB's and transnational domestic and care workers – which is most often the case since women frequently emigrate to the homeland of their new husbands or employers, can in fact result in further conflict. For instance, by separating oneself from all micro sources of social capital, such as those characterized by high levels of integration and linkage, to exist in a marriage where one's spouse is lacking such types of social capital may potentially result in one experiencing a very sudden, very strong sense of displacement and a deeper sense of anomie, in that little or no form of social capital that is familiar is readily available. In addition, in those rare instances of men who chose to live among the communities of their brides, combining a pre-existing sense of anomie with a new nation-state, one that is lacking in either high levels of synergy or organizational integrity, can be equally disruptive to one's identity and state of mind.

While it is not the intention of this paper to state that social capital, or lack thereof, can in fact be a motive for marriage, it does illustrate how IMBs, profit from the status quo with respect to the imbalance in social capital, neoliberal global economic policies, and the perpetual establishment of gendered anomie among consumer-husbands. Many scholars suggest either action be taken on a micro-level, by educating MOB's and creating feminist humanitarian organizations that deal specifically with issues of poverty and transnational marriage in countries such as the Philippines, such as GABRIELA (Fernandez 1997; Glodava & Onizuka 1994: Chapter 8), or that action be taken on the

macro-level, enforcing new international legislation that extend far beyond the reaches of the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act of 2005 to include more stringent and inflexible definitions of human trafficking in the criminal code (Crandall et al. 2005).

Rather, a dual approach would seem to fit best, given the micro and macro factors which contribute to these forms of transnational migration and the permeability of trafficking and other forms of abuse.

VI. Core and Periphery Relations

1. Can't Buy Me Love

Nicole Constable's (2006) work entitled *Brides, maids, and prostitutes: reflections on the study of 'trafficked' women* highlights a key point which must be considered; that sex workers, domestic workers and correspondence brides are not one and the same, and by combining these three categories, it may have "the potential for *unwarranted blurs*—or fuzzy shadow lines—between the three categories. I am troubled by the ways in which different types of gendered migration are sometimes blurred together and treated too much as though they are one and the same, in academic, popular, and activist literatures" (Constable 2006:1). She further asserts that in doing so, the notion of all migration from the global South to North has the potential to be considered a form of trafficking. While I agree that individual women in these categories all have vastly different motives for transnational migration, and that sex work, domestic work, and transnational marriage all share a distinct permeability with human trafficking, this analysis seeks to examine those very "blurs" as a means of understanding what they represent for core nations and the values therein. It is the very "blurs" of which Constable cautions us to take note of, that represent a disturbing trend in western society – one which is ultimately incapable of maintaining any means of self-sustainability.

However it is not simply human trafficking which has permeated these spheres, but rather, these spheres have served to permeate one another on their own merits, as we have seen with the demands of Lonely Hearts and Sex Tourists. The rise in consumer culture, neoliberal economic policies, the "culture of narcissism" as defined by Lasch (1976, 1979a, 1979b:201) and the "care vacuum" which resulted in part from increased

female participation in the work force combined with feminist theories that have followed the lines of economic-imperialist ideology and misandry, have all contributed to these blurs. Constable also points out another disturbing trend with this particular discourse, by arguing that Jo Doezema's¹¹ (1998) work on forced versus voluntary prostitution have become obsolete, primarily as a result of:

“[T]he dichotomous notion of innocent and coerced women who deserve rescue, and immoral women who deserve what they get, [which] can be applied to foreign brides as well. In the case of foreign brides, such dichotomous logic relies on a presumed distinction between naive and innocent women who are lured or coerced into marriages on false pretenses but have pure marital motives, versus those who are active agents who voluntarily enter into marriage, knowing what they are getting into, and whose marital motives are deemed questionable or too opportunistic” (Constable 2006:5). While I quite passionately agree that women, *all* women, regardless of their socio-economic status, incentives, motivations, or circumstances, are deserving of respect, equality, dignity – the “blurs” that Constable speaks of represent a trend that has the potential to deprive women of these very basic rights, and to some extent, does contribute to a rhetoric that reduces many women, if not the actual needs they serve – particularly sex workers, domestic workers, and MOBs – to commodities, bought and sold on the international market not unlike the many other commodities produced by periphery nations for core nations. Constable further points out that by relying on these blurs, it presents a means of understanding transnational marriage in such a way that women are viewed solely as

¹¹ Doezema, J. 1998, 'Forced to Choose: Beyond the Voluntary v. Forced Dichotomy' in *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, Redefinition*, K. Kempadoo and J. Doezema (eds.), Routledge, New York, 34-50.

either victims or gold diggers, but of whom all are, to one extent or another, economic migrants (Constable 2006).

However, by examining these “blurs” – or degrees of permeability – it becomes clear that economic incentives may play a part in these decisions for some women, however on the “demand” side of the equation; this is clearly not the case in a most instances. These forms of transnational migration are not merely another means of satisfying consumer culture, and yes, there those who believe in “ownership” of women, and those who believe in “rights” to a woman after having made an initial “economic investment”, be it through marriage, employment, or for sexual services, however it is not simply ownership or rights over another that many consumer-husbands are interested in, as demonstrated by the content analysis provided in the chapter on consumer-husbands.

Christine So (2006) makes a valid argument in that she claims that MOB's serve to fill a growing need in that they can “rescue” American family values. She argues that the very qualities expressed in Asian culture are those same qualities that are so rare in western society. I would assert that this means of “rescuing” lost values is tied in with notions of social capital as well, particularly those in “weak states.” Returning to Lasch (1976, 1979a, 1979:201) and his theories on narcissism, I would argue that with the decline of the traditional family and the rapid growth of consumer culture and narcissism – which in turn led the “care vacuum” in the west – neoliberal global economic policies that benefit core nations would no doubt be the logical result of these transformations. Furthermore, I would assert that widespread discrimination against the poor, or “poor bashing” (Swanson 2001) is also a direct result of these social and political transformations as well. . If we can accept that there is an underlying rhetoric that states

that the world's poor are essentially worthless, it therefore stands to reason that the world's poor would engage in the very same work core nations interpret as economically worthless. In addition, that consumer culture and a growing sense of entitlement is a defining feature of those living in core states. As such, perhaps what the MOB industry has demonstrated, as well as the demand for foreign domestic workers, is that many citizens in core nations are now attempting to "buy back" the very values they had abandoned so long ago. Those values of placing a priority in terms of time and energy dedicated to one's spouse and children are no longer an option for many western women, and men – regardless of their desire to do so. The economy has shifted in such a way that for many families, a one-income household is just not adequate, particularly if there are children involved (Griffin Wulff 1982). As the economy shifted, so too did mentalities, and it is now at the point where reclaiming some of those lost values within the borders of core states comes with some degree of difficulty. The same trend may be seen in the demand for sex tourism – to a certain extent, given its permeability with IMBs. Not all "johns" are sadists, and many – however misguided – are simply lonely and desperate for any form of intimacy (Malarek 2009: Chapter 5). Others travel overseas to live out a fantasy "relationship" that would cost a small fortune in core nations, The Girlfriend Experience (GFE) (Malarek 2009: Chapter 6).

“The girls in Thailand (like the Philippines and to a lesser extent those in Cambodia) are willing to play, and convincingly, the role of a girlfriend, and to not only stay the entire night with a monger but to have sex several times,’ says one such john. What’s more, he adds, ‘and of considerable importance to many mongers’ is that they’re willing to ‘cuddle up and give the pretense of showing warmth and love of the kind that men experience in the best of relationships and marriages” (Malarek 2009:69-70).

Another john reports:

“It is the opposite of the women being treated like a sex toy and the man an ATM machine” (Malarek 2009:71).

The result of these types of exchanges is that many johns feel that the potential for a legitimate relationship is present, and in fact, a good number of men in Malarek’s work admit that by asking for the GFE, they end up falling in love with sex workers. The result of which is almost always devastating for these men (Malarek 2009: 72-74).

While I will disagree that many married men are likely to have sex with the same frequency and ease, as well as the level of “cuddling” and public displays of affection that can be seen in johns who pay for the GFE, and that the comparison between married and attached men with “mongers” on vacation as sex tourists is far from accurate, what these men, and the means with which they seek to obtain it is seek is a clear statement of what is missing from their lives. Their perception or fantasy of what a long term relationship or marriage legitimately consists of has little to do with the reality of such relationships.¹² I suspect a good deal of married or attached men would agree that what a “monger” experiences with respect to the GFE may, by comparison, make their married lives appear lacking and somewhat routine.

What is consistent with each of these relationships, be it domestic or care worker, MOB or sex worker, is the desire to fill a need that cannot be easily met within the borders of core states. In some cases, such as those of a successful marriage (or the fantasy thereof), it should not by any means be “easy.” Long term relationships require tremendous effort on the part of both parties, and at times, keeping one’s love life “fresh” and “exciting” can also require a good deal of effort. Nor should the effort needed to care

¹² In a discussion with my husband about my research on the GFE, he jokingly replied, “Men pay to have sex workers yell at them to take out the trash?” While he intended this to be humorous, it does to some extent reflect the nature of actual married life versus a fantasy of such.

for one's children, or take care of one's home be "easy." It would appear that time and energy spent in ways that do not generate income, or serve to benefit one's own desires directly, are generally not valued in core nations. Expressions of love, such as flowers or expensive dinners, for instance, have also become commodified. Despite evidence that many women find the notion of their spouses doing housework romantic and highly appreciated, few men consider this a legitimate expression of romance (Blair and Johnson 1992).

I am by no means suggesting that western society revert back to a time when traditional family values dominated gender roles, and that women should return to the home, unable to work or to pursue goals beyond that of a wife and mother. Rather, I would suggest that core states examine the trajectory on which they have been, and are moving, along. The notion that one can simply obtain from periphery nations the very thing that many would agree, that money simply cannot buy, is a statement about one's priorities. These things; love, care, compassion, time and effort dedicated to pursuits that would otherwise fail to generate income, are the very things that core nations have sacrificed to establish and maintain their very position as a core state. As citizens of core nations, there may exist more rights, less corruption in government, more freedom, and more options, however to assume that this translates into the notion that there exists more *care* and *concern* for others, be they children, spouses, or those women overseas who serve to fill the resulting "care vacuum" that has been created, is illusive.

2. Welcome to Rape Camp

In addition to "buying love," the very rights and freedoms established in core states may provide some degree of protection from assault and other forms of hate, but

still fail to address the sense of entitlement and consumer culture that has indirectly served to help cultivate these rights. As a result of this generalized lack of care and concern, one can just as easily “buy hate” in much the same way others “buy love.” An example of this can be seen in Dan Sandler’s website launched in October 1999, called “Rape Camp.” Sandler set up his operation in Cambodia, and promoted “‘Asian sex slaves’ who were used for ‘bondage, discipline and humiliation.’ The women on the web site were blindfolded, gagged and/or bound with ropes while being used in sex acts; some had clothes pins clipped to their breasts” (Xinhua News Agency, 8 November 1999 cited in Hughes 2000b:30). “He invited visiting cyberjohns [sic], paying from fifteen dollars for ten minutes to seventy-five dollars for an hour, to ‘humiliate these Asian sex slaves to your hearts [sic] content’” (Malarek 2009:91-92). In a failed attempt to circumvent Cambodia’s officials and avoid being prosecuted, he instead used Vietnamese women who had been trafficked into the country, instead of Cambodian women (Hughes 2000b; Malarek 2009:91-92). Sandler, in addition to promoting Cambodia’s sex tourism industry on this website, complete with advice for first timers, also stated that he had hoped the site would “promote violence against women in the United States ... I hate those bitches. They’re out of line and that’s one of the reasons I want to do this ... I hate American women” (Daitsche Presse-Agentzrr, 14 October 1999, cited in Hughes 2000b:30; Malarek 2009:92)

The international response on the part of governments to Sander’s “Rape Camp” is astonishing. In Cambodia, Sandler could have served up to a mere five years in prison for violating the law on human trafficking and sexual exploitation, however, the United States government intervened, and Sandler was instead deported and banned from

returning to Cambodia. Hughes (2000b) also notes that within the international press, “None of the women were interviewed. No information about their well-being, experiences or wishes was included in the news stories” (Hughes 2000b:31). To this day, there are no reports on what happened to Sandler’s victims, nor has Sandler ever been prosecuted. The subject of men from core nations using women in the periphery to express such hatred and rage has also remained largely unaddressed by the United States and other governments. It would seem that such actions are viewed as deplorable only when they are committed within the borders of core states. Had Sandler committed these crimes in Canada, or Western Europe, he would no doubt be serving a lengthy prison sentence. The actions of the United States government in this instance send a very clear message; sexual exploitation is fine, so long as it doesn’t happen among the world’s rich. At the very least apathy, and at the most, protection from prosecution will be granted for no other reason than by virtue of one’s citizenship. Furthermore, moving from the core to the periphery is essentially a very effective “get-out-of-jail-free” card from those who seek to “buy hate.”

What is also astonishing is the lack of response among American women. As presumably liberated, educated women, one would think that allowing a man such as Sandler to walk free through any neighborhood in the United States would trigger some sort of outrage. One might imagine protests, petitions, and pressure from various human rights groups to have Sandler incarcerated. Sandler received virtually no media coverage in the United States. He simply slipped back into the safety of their borders, his rage was never addressed, he was never ordered to seek psychiatric help, and continues to live among the anonymity of the world’s rich, consequence free. For a nation full of

“mercenary-minded feminists,” little concern is given to women outside the borders of core states.

VII. Conclusions

Requirements to establish and maintain a core state involve key social, political and economic transformations. Many of these transformations have helped to establish rights and privileges that benefit most, while some of those transformations result in a loss of humanity, a “care vacuum” to some extent. Given the nature of relationships between core and periphery (or semi-periphery) states with respect to commodities exchange, there is a growing demand for fictitious commodities, such as love, care, and long term relationships, which are not easily found in core nations as well. These fictitious commodities include care, companionship, domestic work, and other qualities associated with traditional family values. By contrast, there is also a growing demand for consequence free sex tourism, fictitious intimacy, victims of violence, and slavery. By meeting these demands, periphery nations are frequently left incapable of filling the resulting “care drain” within their own borders, or adequately addressing and prosecuting citizens of core nations that exploit women and benefit from the weaknesses that exist in consequence of their global position as periphery or semi-periphery nations.

The diverse profiles of consumer-husbands reflect this relationship between core and periphery states. The continued existence of King Pins and Suspected Traffickers, for instance, represents the pervasive sexist imperialist personality type which can be seen in core nations. Lonely Hearts represent a dynamic of the “care vacuum,” by seeking a spouse with values and beliefs that are difficult to maintain in existing relationships within core states. Sex Tourists may represent a wide range of demands, in as much as there are many different types of “johns” with many different desires, but all of whom still reflect the notion of lost values within the west, and also the pervasive culture of

narcissism that has served to maintain the status quo as well. Soul Mate Seekers are difficult to assess on this level, because while many may seek the values and beliefs in a prospective spouse that are difficult to find in core nations, their behavior – assuming that they are in fact seeking a relationship and are not presenting a false identity for deceptive purposes – represents another trend in core nations. As mentioned earlier, many Soul Mate Seekers express their aversion to other consumer-husbands and some may even express some concern of the seemingly unethical nature of using such websites. I believe these men represent the notion that neoliberal globalization has permeated every facet of one's life, that to make an "ethical" choice is, in many cases, no longer an option; be it for clothing, food, electronics, love or anything else. The belief that what one desires – be it a fictitious commodity or otherwise – which cannot be obtained from within one's own borders, is justified in this sense. Nasty Bastards represent a side of core states that is often overshadowed by the vast freedom, rights and opportunities these states have to offer their own citizens. Far beyond the existence of a sexist imperialist personality type, the need to express violence, rage, hate and other sociopathic tendencies – consequence free no less – is manifested through pervasive sexist imperialist viewpoints nonetheless. Far beyond the notion of "poor bashing" is the belief that certain groups of people, for whatever reason, be it race, ethnicity, gender, or position in terms of core-periphery relations – or any combination thereof – are not worthy of the same rights and dignity as others. This notion, as we have seen, is not only expressed by individual "Nasty Bastards" but also by core governments who work to protect individuals such as Dan Sandler from prosecution.

While I can offer no concrete solution to this problem at this time, particularly that of the care vacuum and the measures with which core nations seek to fill that vacuum, I believe a starting point may lie in Ulrich Beck's (2000b) work entitled *What is Globalization* and his notion of reflexive modernization. If we examine the development of modern capitalism, there has been an exponential expansion up until the development of transnational corporations, at which point this expansion has reached its asymptote. Given that there is no further room for expansion, it is this asymptote which also allowed for the logical reflexive nature characterized by this phase to emerge. The new structures formed by modern capitalism which had replaced previous structures in traditional society were now subject to scrutiny as individualism took root on an entirely new level. For the first time agency took precedence over structure and the long established loyalty to modern capitalism and the seemingly absolute consistency with which corporations delivered upon their promises was called into question. Furthermore, the very nature upon which individuals entrusted corporations with the means to fulfil their needs became questioned, as the modern capitalist corporation was in a sense no longer seen as the generous benefactor, but rather the purveyor of risk and previously undisclosed hazards for humanity.

This process can be summed up through a rather recent and still current debate about the work ethic of younger generations as explored in Beck's *The Brave New World of Work* (2000a). Often it has been argued that younger generations have a weak work ethic, and exist through a sense of entitlement. However, it is through this very sense of entitlement that younger generations are able to reflexively analyze contemporary society and the effects of modern capitalism. If work ethic can in fact be defined as the

previously taken for granted loyalty past generations have exhibited towards corporations, then simply the act of taking for granted the promises delivered upon by modern capitalism is in and of itself, an act of disloyalty. Reflexive modernity is, in this sense, looking the gift horse in the mouth, and rightfully so, according to Beck, as the risks associated with this so-called “gift” outweigh the benefits, and have done so for generations.

That being said, my own suggestions in regards to this particular issue of a generalized lack of care, are as follows:

- 1) The notion that any commodity (fictitious or otherwise) can and should be obtained primarily by periphery or semi-periphery states must be challenged within the core, and a well-developed discourse needs to be established both inside and outside of academic and political circles, including the average citizen, where demand is generated. The notion of separating these spheres (academic and mainstream), must also be challenged, since the very concept of modern capitalism relies heavily on individualism. This is not to suggest, of course, that those in the periphery should be educated to forgo their need for material gain, but rather that some equilibrium between core and periphery must be established.
- 2) The notion that women have a monopoly on “care” – be that of children, spouses, homes, the elderly, the sick, or the lonely – must also be challenged, in core, periphery and semi-periphery states. In addition, misandry in core states must also be challenged. The expectation that women should shoulder the majority of these responsibilities is still present and needs to be addressed, as well as the notion that this type of work is essentially worthless. Men need to invest considerable time and effort to match those efforts made on the part of women in terms of care-related activities. Men also need to be

valued in core nations, and an existing “masculinist” dialogue needs to be established, preferably one that does not evolve along the same failed trajectories that many brands of feminism have in the past. Masculinity and femininity in core states cannot be defined by apathy and oppressive imperialist ideologies, and “gendered anomie” must also be resolved.

3) Those values which been abandoned in place of consumer culture and modernity must also be re-examined. Systems of perpetual wealth established by transnational corporations are ultimately not self-sustaining, and the notion of becoming a “corporate subject” (Ikeda 2004) is something that must also be challenged. We must examine what precisely we are sacrificing these values for, and is it worth it? Resistance to corporate subjecthood must be established.

4) A discourse which seeks to move past the rhetoric of “willing” versus “trafficked” women should be established, and replaced by a discourse where the notion of all people as deserving of fair and equal treatment is cornerstone. Regardless of what is “for sale”, an understanding that some things cannot and should not be bought, regardless of the consequences of such, should be examined. The need to reinterpret our value system is highly significant Sweden has taken the first steps toward this understanding, and has made remarkable transformations in the area of sex work. By now prosecuting those who pay for sex, rather than those who sell it, Sweden sends the message that “the law is a concrete and tangible expression of the belief that in Sweden women and children are not for sale. ... It effectively dispels men’s self-assumed right to buy women and children for prostitution and questions the idea that men should be able to express their sexuality in any form and anytime” (In an interview with Gunila Ekberg, former social worker and

now special advisor on prostitution and trafficking for the Swedish government, cited in Malarek 2009:240). Granted, this still fails to address many problems with sex work, as well as the “care vacuum” and mistreatment of domestic workers and MOBs, however, I believe it to be a step in the right direction.

5) Behavior that is exhibited in a situation of “no consequences” should dictate who we are as people. As in the case with Sandler and his “Rape Camp” website, how the general public, NGOs and governments choose to respond (or fail to respond) to those who benefit directly from “no consequence” situations is also worthy of reflection and must be established discourse among academics, policy makers, and the general public. Referring again to Sweden’s anti-“john” laws, this relatively new legislation also applies to Swedish peacekeepers stationed anywhere in the world (Malarek 2009:245). While military operations do in fact allow for sex tourism, and I believe is very likely a historical predecessor for sex tourism, this policy toward peacekeepers stationed outside of Sweden’s borders is at the very least, a positive first step.

6) Modern capitalism has served to diminish both a sense of impulse control and sense of permanency, which is also worthy of reflection. To discard a marriage, or even a human being, in much the same way one discards a piece of electronics in place of a newer, superior model creates instability and an increased sense of narcissism. This too must be examined.

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