



**International Migration of Women:
A New Commodity Frontier in South Korea's Sex Industry**

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Since the initiation of the so-called foreign industrial trainee program in 1991, the persistence of foreign workers in South Korea today is often attributed to the country's structural dependence on foreign labor.¹ While economic changes provide a context for the increasing salience of foreign labor, structural theories seldom consider the impact on migrants based on gender. By examining the introduction of foreign women in South Korea's sex and entertainment industry, this paper situates this phenomenon within the global context and highlights the specific ways in which commercialization of sexuality based on ethnicity and race represent a new commodity frontier for a country that has just recently begun importing foreign labor.

Because women migrants enter the country under qualitatively different circumstances than their male counterpart, structural explanations alone do not adequately account for substantially different impact the migration process has on women migrants. Foreign women are systematically disadvantaged by entering into a foreign culture that privileges the social status of men. A number of scholars have already noted that the feminization of labor migration takes place in the context of rigid patriarchal systems, which help to explain the coercive and punitive nature of violence directed toward migrant women (Piper, 2003; Abrera-Mangahas, 1998; Shah, 1994). Piper, for instance, defines violence not simply in terms of violation of their labor and human rights, but also "oppressive application of immigration laws limiting options for

¹ Despite rapid economic development during the 1970s and 1980s, South Korea did not import foreign labor until the beginning of the 1990s. Athukorala and Manning (1999) maintain that the flexible labor market, which was largely supported by lower paid female and irregular workers, and the cohesive, nationalist culture successfully delayed the decision to import foreign workers.

employment other than entertainment, domestic work and sexploitation” (p. 724). In this way, both sending and receiving countries structure violence in ways that foster conflicts along the lines of gender, class, and ethnicity. Because the South Korean Government has been slow in making appropriate changes in law to protect foreign women, exploitation and abuse by their employers continue to raise major human rights concerns.

Feminist scholars have consistently critiqued the South Korean culture that reproduces rigid gender roles in favor of men and perpetuates the ideology of powerless positionality of women in society, particularly in relationship to men, as naturally subservient to men’s desires. For this reason, the proliferation of nightlife and sex industry has traditionally centered on entertaining men. However, the adverse conditions in which foreign women find themselves in South Korea became the focal point of advocacy work by extended networks of civil society. Numerous non-government women’s organizations, women’s shelters, quasi-government entities, and government agencies have created political networks domestically, regionally, and internationally in order to empower the lives of foreign women, change the perception toward foreigners, and provide legal protections. These efforts have far-reaching impact on Korean society, in terms of normalizing social relations and instituting changes in law by liberalizing policies toward foreigners.

Internationalization of sexual labor

Although difficult to assess the precise number of women in sex trafficking, an ILO report (2005) makes abundantly clear that it is a global problem.² The current estimate of the global

² According to Article 3(a) of the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (the Trafficking Protocol or the Palermo Protocol), “trafficking in persons shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring

minimum is around 1.39 million persons, and the report claims that most countries are identified as “sending,” “receiving,” “transit,” or a combination of all of these.³ Indeed, sex industry has penetrated every corner of the world and presents major challenges for countries with long-standing tradition of sex trafficking as well as for the most recent ones alike (Okonofua, 2004; Frances, 2004; Tani, 2002; Jeffreys, 1999; Law, 1998). In East Sydney, Australia, where trafficking in women was a historically salient practice during the establishment of prison colonies, the arrival of Thai sex workers today stirs a controversy again over its draconian deportation policies.⁴ Law (1998) maps out a cartography of local-global interface in the promotion of Cebu’s sex industry in the Philippines, which consists of three distinct zones catering to diverse populations. For instance, in Junquera, mostly Filipino men frequent its establishments; whereas Fuente Osmena is a newer district attracting predominantly white, Western tourists. Still, the Japanese clientele crowd the newest district in Uptown Cebu. The segregation of the sex industry reflects “its heterogeneity, its global links, and its status as a

or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.” Exploitation includes, but not limited to, “the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs trafficking includes the “recruitment, transport, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a person by such means as threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud or deception for the purpose of exploitation.”

³ This figure derives from ILO’s second Global Report on forced labour, which uses double sampling of reported cases (ILO, 2005). For specific statistical method, see S.K. Thompson (1992), “Capture-recapture sampling,” *Sampling*. New York: John Wiley and Sons. Anderson and O’Connell Davidson (2004), however, express deep methodological concerns about gathering accurate numerical data on trafficking. They argue that “the most commonly cited statistics on trafficking ... are in any case at best crude estimates,” which are “based upon a series of extrapolations and assumptions, rather than “hard” facts” (22).

⁴ During the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, Japanese brothels contributed to the economic life in the ports, such as Broome, Darwin, and Thursday Island, where inmates engaged in pearling, fishing industries and those hired to work on cargo and naval ships (Frances, 1994).

geographically contested site which is helping to constitute new social and political identities in the Philippines” (Law, 1998: 91). Alongside these countries with the established tradition of sex trade, modern trafficking patterns reflect the preponderance of sex trafficking. In Benin City, Nigeria, Okonofua (2004) documents the systematic ways in which young, Nigerian women are targeted for bonded labor as sex workers in Italy, Spain, Germany, and the Netherlands. A study by Orphant (2001) shows that of some 2,000 women trafficked annually to Italy, an astounding 60 percent is Nigerian women. In Helsinki, Finland, the sudden inflow of marginal groups and the visible presence of foreign women prostitutes are challenging the established cultural and political practices of this hitherto homogeneous welfare state (Tani, 2002). From the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, women are trafficked into or voluntarily leave for Turkey (Gulcur, 2002), Western Europe (Mameli, 2002), and East Asia (Hughes, 2004). The increasing presence of Filipina, Thai, and Kazakh female sex workers in emerging Asian countries also speaks to the complex circuitry of trafficking in a modern era (McGill, 2003).

Accordingly, the preponderance of international sex industry has generated a great deal of literature. From a structural perspective, the uneven development of countries provides the backdrop against which the global sex trade unfolds. The fact that global inequalities disrupt established economic patterns, produce massive displacement of workers, and lead to migrations within and abroad has been well documented (Portes, 1978; Zolberg, 1979; Sassen-Koob, 1981). Due to the lack of economic opportunities for women in underdeveloped countries, they are driven into the informal economy where survival opportunities are often bleak. Such structural conditions provide the push context for female-led migration from rural areas to cities and eventually to foreign destinations. Complementing the structural analysis, many new scholarships focus on other dimensions of international sex industry. These include: the growth

of international networks for smuggling and trafficking women and children (Skrobanek, Boonpakdi and Janthakeero, 1997; McGill, 2003; Kangaspunta, 2003); the salience of organized crime groups, such as the snakeheads, the Russian mafias, and the *yakuza* (Matusui, 1999); the role of state and its failure to monitor and break the chain of trafficking (Jeffreys, 1999; Barry, 1995; Enloe, 1989); the cultural tolerance of forced or other forms of prostitution aided by rapid transit and communication technologies (O'Connell Davidson, 1998; Cheng, 2000; Campani, 1998).

In examining the global significance of sex industry in South Korea, recent studies have generally affirmed the conceptual frameworks of the existing literature on the topic. For instance, according to a study by International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2002), foreign women support the increasing demand in Korea's sex industry. The report shows that foreign women were recruited principally for the American military personnel due to a shortage of Korean women serving the military camp towns. The presence of foreign women in these areas symbolized the arrival of "a full-fledged international sex industry" (IOM, 2002:25). But, this supply-and-demand argument is inadequate in explaining the speed with which the popularity of foreign women spread into non-military camp towns. The quick transition from primarily American to Korean clientele underlies the preexisting cultural and structural environment, which made the adaptation seamless and timely. In another study sponsored by the Ministry of Gender Equality, Seol et al. (2003) shows four main causes of the trafficking in foreign women into sex and entertainment industry.⁵ First, unequal development of countries within the world

⁵ This study was based on interviews of 195 women, most of whom have come from the former Soviet Union countries (89) and the Philippines (106). Interviews and surveys were conducted for three months from 25 August 2003 to 24 November 2003. For additional information, see "Research on the status of foreign sex workers," 2004, Ministry of Gender Equality, Seoul, Korea.

capitalist system and the commodification of sex set the context for funneling young women from less developed countries into South Korea. Second, the profit-seeking international manpower agencies and the clandestine organizations actively promote migration of women. Third, state policies and male-centered culture induce impoverished and unemployed women to go overseas in search of better opportunities. Finally, the male-centered Korean society seeks to fulfill its need for women in sex industry, and the government's tacit approval of such practice has contributed to the proliferation of international trafficking of women into South Korea.

Although these studies capture some important structural dimensions of the sex industry, it neglects an analysis of why the exoticization of foreign women takes place in the context of globalization and the uniqueness of the South Korean experience in its promotion of sexual labor based on ethnicity and race. Conceptually, for Wonders and Michalowski (2001), the expansion of sex industry exemplifies a new way in which the consumption-driven world economy creates new demand for global commodification of desire. They write:

Globalized capitalism demands the continual development of new commodity forms. The consequence is that many elements of social life that once remained outside the realm of commodity exchange must now be commodified.... This, in turn, introduces new forms of labor and new forms of consumption into the global marketplace, of which the expansion of sex tourism is but one example. ...[W]e argue that sex tourism both fosters and is bolstered [by] the global commodification of (primarily male) desire and (primarily women's) bodies as new markets in ways that transcend and shape local institutions and discourses (p. 548).

The heightened flow of “global nannies, maids and sex workers” underlies not only the structural shift from expanding production to expanding consumption (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002), but also the feminization of international migration in the context of both the commercialization of intimate life and the commodification of ethnicity. Hochschild (2003) argues that global re-division of women’s traditional work characterizes an important feature of globalization. This new division of labor reflects the increasing pace with which aspects of intimate and domestic life become objects of sale.⁶ Commercialization of intimacy is a new commodity frontier that begins to erode the emotional role of traditional caregivers. The marketplace where the exchange takes place easily crosses national boundaries, and the increasing level of commercial activity around emotional labor, including sexual intimacy, fuels international migration of women. Interestingly the commercialization of care work has reversed the direction of dependency: whereas, in the capitalist world-economy, Wallerstein (1974) theorized that the countries in the periphery depends on the mode of production of the developed countries in the core, the globalization of care work shows that in fact affluent families in the developed countries depend on international women migrants for child care, domestic work, and sexual services.

The commercialization of care work and its attendant division of labor create new opportunities for exploiting difference. For one, the recruitment of workers produces businesses and clandestine organizations that profit from marketing, sales, smuggling, and trafficking of

⁶ Hochschild (2003:36-37) provides a litany of examples of such commercialization of care work: breastfeeding consultants, baby-proofing agencies, emergency babysitting services, birthday party planners, kiddy taxi services, household managers, holiday decorating, personal gift selection, party planning, night life recommendations. All of these examples of outsourcing tasks that require personal touch and care show how the commodity frontier is encroaching the private sphere of domestic life. Increasingly single men and single women depend on the work of professional caretakers, many of whom are immigrants and undocumented women.

politically vulnerable populations. In one sense, women as sexual workers add on value when they are marketed as “different” than domestic workers. The increased use-value of transnational workers, who are most often differentiated by gender, nationality, and race, supports the illicit network. The commodification of difference through nationality and race adds a unique dimension to the traditional patterns and characteristics of global sex industry. Bridget Anderson (2002) shows how differences in races or nationalities between employers and domestic workers create a form of “social plumage,” which hides the underlying power exercises in the guise of contractual arrangements. Like many migrant women in paid domestic work, foreign women in sex and entertainment business facilitate status reproduction. Commercialization of foreign women as sex objects intensifies such relationships, since their line of work already embodies a heightened sense of social stigmatization. In *The Traffic in Women*, Skrobanek et al. (1997:14) argue that popular ideas of ‘exotic’ women, aided by stereotypical representations and all kinds of license directed at ‘foreign’ women, lead to an intensification of trafficking. This process actively creates and renews the demand for such labor while engendering a new social arrangement. Sassen-Koob (1981) aptly points out that the use of immigrant labor is particularly suited for “firms where the organization of the labor process entails low wages and powerless labor” (p. 72). Firms benefit from labor-supply flexibility (e.g. work hours determined by employers) and organizational flexibility (e.g. employed in areas most domestic workers shun). For these reasons, the replacement of domestic sex workers by foreign women has taken place in many areas of the globe. In the Netherlands, for instance, the shift of sex workers from white Dutch women to Asian, African and Latin American women took place in the 1970s, and recently women from Eastern Europe began to arrive in significant numbers. The presence of foreign sex workers in South Korea today underscores the fact that they are not merely meeting

demand for sexual labor but that the demand for exotic, foreign women is actively created through its marketing and promotion.

South Korea's Sex Industry

Paralleling rapid economic developments of the 1970s and 1980s, the sex and recreational industry visibly exploded in every major city and began to spread rapidly into rural areas.⁷ According to a report by the Korean Institute of Criminology, the sex industry generates approximately \$24 billion worth of economic activity annually, which constitutes 4.1% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2002 (See Table 1). This figure exceeds the combined business activity related to electricity, gas, and water, which accounts for 2.9% of GDP, and almost equals the combined businesses of agriculture, forestry and fisheries, which produce about 4.4% of GDP. In the red-light districts alone, the report shows that 2,938 businesses employ about 9,100 women and generate an annual income of \$1.83 billion.⁸

< Table 1 about here >

⁷ Tremendous diversity characterizes the development of sex and entertainment industry in South Korea. In the immediate aftermath of the Korean War, the large presence of American GIs created demands for prostitution in major U.S. military towns. Economic developments in the ensuing decades generated a variety of sex and entertainment outlets, ranging from massage parlors and exotic coffee and barber shops to expensive bar entertainers, window displayed girls, and the exclusive escort services.

⁸ Many NGOs report that the actual number of sexual workers far exceeds those reported by the government. See the article by Kim Ari Kang, "Only 330,000 Sex Workers?" *Hankyoreh*, 16 February 2003.

While the sex industry has existed historically,⁹ the recent trend shows a marked diversification and expansion (Korean Institute of Criminology, 2002). Aside from the traditional prostitution sites in designated areas of cities, many new legitimate businesses are offering sexual services on-demand. These businesses can be divided broadly into four categories: food and alcohol-related services (e.g. tea houses, cafes, restaurants, room salons, karaoke bars), general health and beauty-related establishments (e.g. saunas, public bath houses, barbershops), recreational venues (e.g. sing-along types with private rooms, modern and traditional dance halls, arcades, movie viewing rooms, motels), and massage services (e.g. sports massage centers, massage parlors). Other types of sexual service outlets support the pervasiveness of the industry. For instance, many brokers have established fake businesses, such as employment referral centers, marriage counseling offices and other event-based agencies, whose covert operation is *de facto* organized prostitution. The development of internet-based chat rooms provides another avenue for marketing and buying sex, not to mention the adult internet sites that explicitly display female bodies (Ministry of Gender Equality, 2004). Table 2 shows the top seven legitimate businesses that offer sexual services on the side; the general hostess bars are like the modern-day saloons where selling alcohol drinks is accompanied by hostesses who join customers in their tables and private booths. A great majority of these establishments offer sexual services where customers are matched up with servers. Astonishingly, almost four out of every ten traditional tea houses—or, *dabang*— which should not be mistaken for modern coffee shops, market sexual labor as a side business prevalent in rural communities and satellite cities.

⁹ John Lie (1995) provides a summary of the changes in sexual work from the state organized female entertainer industry in the 14th century through the Japanization of Korean prostitutes during the colonial rule and the proliferation of prostitution towns in U.S. military bases in South Korea.

< Table 2 about here >

In the context of this expansion, foreign women from the post-communist countries and the Philippines have entered Korea. This change took place during the mid-1990s when the foreign worker population surpassed 200,000 by the end of 1996 and continued to incline sharply until the economic crisis stemmed the tide of international migrants. Despite major economic restructuring in the post-IMF bailout period, the number of foreign workers increased steadily exceeding 400,000 as of the year's end in 2004 (Kim, 2003: 246). However, the trafficking in women as sex and entertainment workers differs significantly from other types of international migration, especially the male-dominated industrial worker migration to South Korea.

Foreign Sex Workers in South Korea

The collapse of the socialist bloc in Eastern Europe paved a way for establishing diplomatic ties with Russia in September 1990, followed by Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in 1992. The formal political relations opened new opportunities for trade, commerce, investment, and tourism.

Russian merchants were the first to enter Korea in search of quality clothing products that were affordable. These small-scale vendors flocked to the East Gate Market (*dongdaemun shijang*) in the heart of Seoul, known for wholesale goods at bargain prices. Although started modestly with

only a handful of peddlers, the reliability of these products soon earned the trust of Russian consumers. By the mid-1990s, the business reached its peak when hundreds of Russian merchants bought nearly \$100 million worth of merchandise annually, ranging from sweaters, hats, and clothes to auto parts, food products, and electronic goods.¹⁰ The opening of additional flights linking Seoul to East Russian cities of Vladivostok and Khabarovsk greatly expanded the opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs.¹¹ At the same time, the increasing presence of these Russian merchants in the East Gate Market area naturally transformed it into a “Russian Town,” where small businesses, such as shipment companies, currency exchange stations, and restaurants, cater specifically to these merchants. Recently the number of Russian merchants has declined, but people from the newly-gained independent states of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan followed on the heels of these pioneers. Interestingly, many third- and fourth-generation Korean-Kazakhs and -Uzbeks (or *Koryoin*), whose ancestors had been forcibly relocated in 1937 from Sakhalin to Central Asia during Stalin’s rule, are now fulfilling an important role in the newly burgeoning economy.

While these Russian peddlers generally remained invisible from the rest of the Korean society, the arrival of dance and entertainment troupes put them in the national spotlight. In the early 1990s, a small group of entertainers began performing in various amusement parks. Leaving the Eastern European countries, such as Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Romania, and Bulgaria, these entertainers were experienced in ballet, gymnastics, mime, and acrobatics. The first major theme park to hire East European entertainers was the Lotte World in 1992,

¹⁰ Choi, Joon-ho. 2001. “Russian Peddlers Pursuing the Gold Rush,” *Newsweek Korea*, 4 July.

¹¹ These new commercial ties opened opportunities for many South Korean companies. In August 1995, for instance, the Korea Telecom and Hanhwa Electronic Information and Telecommunication advanced into Khabarovsk State and supplied some 120,000 telephone lines and cellular paging services (*Hankook Kyongje Shinmun*, 11 August 1995).

which draws some 8 million persons annually. It has surpassed 70 million visitors in April 2002 since its opening in 1989. The Everland, which began in 1976 as a natural park and transformed into one of the largest amusement parks, increased the number of foreign entertainers to 170 in 1996 for its parades and special dance and acrobatic performances. The increasing visibility of “Russian blondes” as entertainers piqued the interests of Koreans whose contact with them had been limited to media images.¹² This idea of bringing the world to Korea at affordable prices is fostering the internationalization of cultures among Koreans who cannot afford to travel overseas.¹³

< Table 3 about here >

In 1998, the South Korean government’s decision to ease the restrictions for foreign entertainers and artists (visa category E-6) facilitated the inflow of women from Eastern Europe. Although this visa category was supposedly limited to professionals in the arts and entertainment, the simplification of the standard for admitting foreign entertainers created an

¹² For instance, the movie, *Intergirl* (1987), directed by Petr Todorovskii, bemoans the sullyng of Soviet women through the life of Tanya, a daytime nurse who works evenings as a foreign-currency prostitute. Against the backdrop of the falling Soviet empire, the term intergirl has become synonymous with young Russian women crossing national boundaries in order to sell sex for money. While the movie depicts how Russia’s downfall produces the embarrassing, intergirl phenomenon, the tragic circumstances often create opportunities for others to exploit. According to one study, there are estimated 500,000 intergirls working in fifty countries. Many are in Europe and the United States, but they have recently gone east to China, Japan, and South Korea.

¹³ The Ministry of Justice (2005) reports that international travel among Koreans reached its historic height at 9 million in 2004, which amounts to about one in every 5 persons and more than doubled in number since 1995. The top five destinations include China, Japan, Thailand, the U.S., and the Philippines. China and Japan account for about 45 percent of the total, which is not surprising given their close proximity to Korea. The number of foreigners entering Korea has also reached a new peak at 5.75 million, of whom some 73 percent entered as travelers or visitors.

opportunity for foreign women to work in a variety of venues. Numerous studies and foreign worker counseling center data reveal that many of these V-6 visa holders enter into contracts with nightlife establishments where sexual services are often integral part of the unspoken rule.¹⁴ The creation of a loophole in the system is not necessarily structural, but reflects the inability of responsible agencies in screening out the illegitimate from the legitimate businesses. Until the changes in 2003, employers worked with the various “performance planning agencies,” which served as contractors for foreign entertainers. Previously the Korea Media Rating Board, a branch of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, was primarily responsible for approving contracts submitted by performance planning agencies; however, due to manpower shortages, most of the contracts were uncontested and unverified by the government agents.¹⁵ This lack of oversight led to tremendous increase in the number of performance planning agencies from 14 in 1998 to 54 in the following year. At the end of May 2002, the number of these agencies skyrocketed to 157 (Ministry of Gender, 2003). Consequently, the number of E-6 visa holders increased from 598 in 1995 to over 8,500 in 2001. Table 3 shows a steady increase in the number of both short- and long-term arts and entertainment visas, especially Russia, the Philippines, and

¹⁴ See, for instance, the following studies: Ministry of Gender, 2003, *Oekukyeosung sungmeme shiltejosa* (An exploratory study of foreign women in prostitution); Korea Culture and Tourism Policy Institute, 2002, *Oekukyeonyein kuknechwiupe daehan jedo gaesun bangan* (A plan for policy changes concerning domestic employment of foreign artists and entertainers); Ministry of Gender, 2004, *ijuyeosungpokryuk jeonmun sangdamwonkyoyuk* (Educating professional counselors of battered migrant women); Migrant Women’s Home “WEHOME,” 2003, *WEHOME bottari* (WEHOME baggage: Unpacking the baggage of counseling contents).

¹⁵ On 16 February 2003, the Ministry of Justice notified the proposed changes, which shifted the oversight authority from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to the Ministry of Labor. This decision was based on the fact that the Korea Media Rating Board does not have adequate manpower to oversee all of the contracts. However, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism is still responsible for organizing and approving “high” cultural events. The Labor Ministry is now charged with overseeing foreign worker employment in recreational and night-life centered businesses. (*Hankuk Ilbo*, *Oekukin yesoolheungheng biza nodongburo ikwan* (Foreign arts and entertainment visa moves to the Labor Ministry) 16 February 2003).

Uzbekistan. The striking feature of foreigners with E-6 visas is that the vast majority of them are women. During its peak period between 2000 and 2003, over 9,700 (or 92 percent) Russian women entered Korea with E-6 visas. Other post-communist countries show similar patterns: some 1,720 (or 95 percent) Uzbekistani women as compared to 87 men; 416 (or 98 percent) Kyrgyzstan women versus 10 men; 181 (or 94 percent) Kazakhstan women and only 11 men. These glaring disparities support the view that women from the former Soviet countries are being funneled into South Korea's entertainment industry. As a consequence, the government has toughened the requirements for issuing E-6 visas, which significantly lowered the number of female migrants.

< Table 4 about here >

< Table 5 about here >

The introduction of foreign women into South Korea's burgeoning sex industry, however, does not depend on a single visa category. Foreign women who enter South Korea with E-6 visas neither automatically work in the male-centered nightlife industry nor do they engage in prostitution. While they are targeted for sexual services, an equally significant increase in the number of short-term tourist visa holders (C-3) is much more difficult to regulate. Table 4 shows that close to 20,000 women from seven former communist countries have visited South Korea on

such visas within the last five years. It is impossible to determine how many of these women have ended up in the sex and entertainment industry, but the increasing number of C-3 visa overstayers (see Table 5) is a sufficient reason to suspect that women from the former communist bloc are gaining entry into South Korea through different routes. Since the year 2000, an average of 13,000 women from the Russia Federation alone has entered South Korea annually with the C-3 visas. The rate of overstaying visas increased steadily: from 7.2% in 2001 to 11.6%, 14.0%, and 14.3% in the following three years. These patterns were especially striking among the Uzbekistani women, ranging from its peak at 60% in 2002 to 30% in 2003.

Foreign Women in South Korea's Sex Industry: Commodification of Ethnicity

On 23 August 2002, eight women from the Russian Federation were arrested and transferred to the Immigration Bureau (Office of Exit and Entry) for allegedly engaging in lewd and decadent services. They had been working unlawfully as “bar girls” and “strip show entertainers” in Pusan, but the charges also included prostitution.¹⁶ Initially, Filipina women were recruited to work as bar hostesses in American military bases throughout Korea, since many were able to speak English with their patrons.¹⁷ However, the popularity of Russian women among Korean

¹⁶ *Kookje Shinmun*, “Russian Intergirls Arrested en masse,” 23 August 2002.

¹⁷ According to a study by Korea Church Women United Counseling Center for Migrant Women Workers (2002), Filipina women generally learn about work opportunities in Korea through the former employees, relatives, neighbors or local manpower recruitment agencies. Most of the women must go through either an audition or an interview where a Korean manager may be present at the site in order to handpick potential employees. The employers, then, contact the Performance Planning Companies, which prepare necessary paperwork for obtaining the E-6 visas. Employers also generally foot the bill for administrative and air plane tickets for the women, and they make sure that the employees pay back in excess of the original amount.

men created expanding business opportunities in sexual services. This shift in terms of the preference for Russian women took place suddenly and coincided with the relaxation of the entertainer and tourist visa regulations. The number of female Russian entertainers peaked in 2001, and the National Police Agency estimated that there were over one hundred establishments, which employ Russian entertainers, in the Kangnam County and the Itaewon area in Seoul alone.¹⁸ One reporter comments that the rumors about “the exotic, white Russian women” shook the foundation of Korea’s night-life industry.¹⁹

With continuing influx of Russian intergirls, reports concerning organized prostitution began to appear in various media outlets. According to a Ministry of Gender study (2003), Russian entertainers generally work in nightclubs where Korean male patrons are most numerous, and they engage in various services, including casual and exotic dance, serving drinks, and intimate encounters with customers. The report revealed that these women are under constant pressure to sell drinks, which typically cost between \$10 and \$20. In some establishments the servers must meet a quota, selling anywhere from 100 to 200 drinks per month. The unspoken rule is that the servers entertain customers for about fifteen minutes for every drink they buy. Employees receive about 22 percent of the sales amount as commission, but if they fail to meet quotas some establishments exact punishments by confining or requiring them to do household chores such as bathroom cleaning and laundering. Another way to fill the quota is to volunteer for *icha* (literally meaning a second course), which generally means leaving the establishment with the customer. In return, the employer imposes a “bar fine,” which depends on the length of the employee’s absence. For instance, the study found that on average

¹⁸ *Newsweek Korea*, “White Flowers Blooming at Night in Seoul: An Estimated Five Thousand Russian Women Work as Entertainers,” 4 July 2001.

¹⁹ *Newsweek Korea*, “Russian Women at the Crossroads of Human Rights,” 4 July 2001.

the boss exacts a \$50 fine for 30-40 minutes, and the price jumps to anywhere from \$200 to \$400 for six-to-seven hours. When employees go on *icha*, it is equivalent to selling 20 drinks. Since their basic pay is considerably lower than other line of work, they must be skilled at selling as many drinks as possible or participate in sexual work with their customers.²⁰

Whereas the earlier Russian women were employed mostly in select establishments in major cities, they branched out into smaller cities of the country. One popular method of meeting a Russian woman today is through internet chat rooms. Disguised as internet dating, these sites provide opportunities for Korean men to find women who meet their specific criteria. Popularly called *joggun mannam* or “conditional meeting,” a person may solicit an interest in meeting a Russian woman. Typically they use a coded language to communicate the type of woman they desire and the specific terms of exchange.²¹ As it turns out, internet chat rooms are often run by an organized group that has established a network with Russian sex workers. Since it is impossible to identify the person on the other end, these cyber operatives use the anonymity and invisibility to their advantage. *Shindonga* magazine revealed a network operation run by a sex worker manager and two of his aides, each responsible for recruiting Russian sex workers and Korean patrons.²² In this particular case, the leader of the operation maintained careful records of all patrons, including their names, phone numbers, outer appearance, and the specific likes and dislikes. Between February and June of 2004, the record book showed a total of 316 cases where the majority of patrons were in their twenties and thirties. This is not surprising considering that

²⁰ The study found that Russian women entertainers received 466,000 won (US\$460) per month. While this amount is about \$50 more than what Filipinas in the same profession makes, it is much lower than the average pay for women factory workers who earn at least 600,000 won (US\$600) per month. For more discussion, see Ministry of Gender (2003:100).

²¹ For instance, a person may type “c m 23, 164/45, 2/15, 69 anal X.” This means “conditional meeting, age 23, 164 cm. in height, 45 kg. in weight, 2 hours for 150,000 won or \$150, but unconventional intercourse is excepted.”

²² *Shindonga*, “New Forms of Prostitution through Internet Chat Rooms,” 1 September 2004.

this kind of contact requires a sophisticated understanding of computer use. Managing a list of clients and sex workers over the internet has adversely impacted the red light districts that operate businesses in open view.²³ Thus, the continuing enforcement of the recently passed prostitution prevention laws may not significantly reduce the number of prostitution cases due to the internet-based sex operations.²⁴

The Ministry of Gender study (2003) affirms the existing reports about the popularity of foreign women among Korean men. The report shows that out of 114 Korean men who paid to have sex with foreign women in the year 2002, 66 percent responded that satisfying curiosity was the most important reason. The second important factor was the group pressure. In terms of the nationality preference, the gap was quite significant: Korean men favored Russian women (67.5%), followed by Korean-Chinese (21.7%), and Filipinas (17.4%).²⁵ Writing for the *Newsweek Korea*, a psychiatrist reflected on the reasons for the increase in the popularity of Russian women:

First, it is difficult not to point out the curiosity factor. Males are sexual explorers due to their inborn male instincts. Males get easily

²³ *Kookje Shinmoon*, "Though their Red Lights are Off, Underground Sex Industry Increases," 22 March 2005.

²⁴ On 22 March 2004 two laws were passed that sought to discourage prostitution and to protect sex workers: "*sungmemebangji mit pihejaboho deunge kwanhan bupryul*" (Law concerning the prevention of prostitution and the protection of victims), Public Law 7212; and, "*sungmemealsun deung hengwiui cheobule kwanhan bupryul*" (Law concerning the punishment for mediating and engaging in prostitution), Public Law 7196.

²⁵ In assessing both before and after experience of sexual encounters with foreign women, the study also asked several similar questions with the same results. For instance, one of the questions asked who their preference was if the cost remained constant across different nationalities. The responses (n=117) were still the same: Russia (47%), Korea (32%), the Philippines (5.1%) and Korean-Chinese (5.1%). The next question asked the respondents (n=118) to rate each nationality on a five-point scale with 25 point increments: Russia (69), U.S.A. (69), Korean-Chinese (52), and the Philippines (46).

bored with mechanistic and repetitive sexual experience. Males are constantly searching for new, exotic and novel experiences. When a touch of thrill is added, the experience is much more exciting.²⁶

While the Ministry of Gender study points out that Russian women are clearly the favorite among Korean men who seek out foreign sex workers, it falls short of explaining the reasons for their preference. The fact that curiosity alone drove these men to seek out foreign women does not explain why they prefer Russian women over Korean-Chinese or Filipinas. Unlike some commentators who attribute men's sexual behaviors to the innate male quality, feminists have long observed that sexuality is socially constructed. Kathleen Barry (1995) comments that "the sex drive does not manifest itself as some innate reality that then determines sexual behaviors" (55) but when "sexuality is made an element of power relations of sexism" that sex becomes a social construction. Speaking of the experience in the West, Barry argues that sexual exploitation has been maintained by treating women as "universalized and therefore not historical, biological and therefore not social" (58). "By choice and desire," Barry continues, "male sexuality configures around disengaged sex ... separate from the human experience..., thereby destroying sexual interaction in favor of sex that is objectifying, the origins of the prostitution of sexuality" (61). In South Korea, as elsewhere, women's sexuality is all too often objectified and reduced to an object of male desire and possession. The symbols of objectification are ubiquitous, and the compulsive and exploitive characteristics of sexuality have become normalized.

In numerous interviews and studies with Korean men seeking sex workers, the above themes surfaced repeatedly. From July to September 2003, Korea Women's Hot Line conducted

²⁶ *Newsweek Korea*, "Korean Men Please Do Not Insult them by Waving Your \$100 Bill in the Air," 4 July 2001.

a nationwide survey on the public attitude toward prostitution and found that some 48 percent of the 1,800 male respondents had sexual experience with sex workers. Moreover, the study added that 54.2 percent of married men had been unfaithful to their wives, showing that their reason for going to sex workers was not limited to finding an outlet for their sexual drive.²⁷ The preponderance of extramarital affairs and of the male-centered nightlife establishments speaks to the cultural and social acceptance of such practices. While recent efforts to crackdown on prostitution may have dissuaded some from soliciting sex workers openly, the general public attitude confirms its deep historical roots. That is, female sexuality is still controlled by male, especially those who have access to money and power. A recent crackdown on internet prostitution ring revealed a diverse list of patrons, including university professors, college students, IT professionals, bankers, and medical doctors (*Shindonga*, 2004). Further probing by the police showed that they all wanted to satisfy their fantasy about having sexual encounters with Russian women.

If objectification of women as passive sex objects provides an amorphous target, then race and other visible markers sensationalize women's sexuality by reifying the general category of desire. The important question is how the female sexuality of Russian women has become accented and why they are more desired than others. To begin, skin color is an important indicator of beauty and femininity in Korea. Traditionally, a whiter skin symbolized a higher social status separating it from the working class, which disclosed a life of outdoor labor. Reflecting this age-old method of valuating social prestige, a great number of skin care products promote miraculous recovery of blemished, tanned complexion with skin whiteners (Hart, 1990). But, skin color alone is not a sufficient measure of beauty. It must be combined with other

²⁷ *Yonhap News*, "Half of All Men Experienced Sex with Prostitutes," 21 October 2003.

factors that highlight the socially desirable criteria for femininity. Age, for instance, is another important category that captures the nascent symbol of femininity: innocence. Numerous age-defying products, such as lotions, serums, correctors and essences, have flooded the market for women's beauty care, not to mention the popularity of plastic surgery. Asian women and teenagers are increasingly nipping, tucking, sucking, injecting, and implanting, in order to conform to the ideal body type. But, what is the standard of beauty among Korean women? "The culturally loaded issue today," a Time reporter comments, "is the number of Asians looking to remake themselves to look more Caucasian" (*Time Asia*, 5 August 2002). One of the doctors in Seoul has found a way to make it less painful for Korean women to change what the Koreans call *muu-dari* or radish-shaped calves by severing a nerve behind the knee that eventually helps the muscle atrophy up to 40 percent. Based on these indicators, it seems that, except for the lighter skin tone, the traditional conception of beauty in Korea has changed to fit a Western standard.²⁸

Many Korean men seek after Russian women because they satisfy not only their physical desire for sexual encounters, but also the latent psychological need to overcome the racial complex. Symbolizing Western dominance and power, the arrival of Russian women in South Korea's nightlife scene instilled a sense of spurious pride among Korean men. While Korean women are seeking surgical perfection in ways that conform to Western concept of beauty, Russian women are often mistaken for models seen on billboards and television advertisements. The unabashed nature of modern advertising fosters imagination that normalizes commodification of female bodies, and the easy availability of these women turns their fantasy

²⁸ The most popular surgery among Asians is blepharoplasty that removes excess fat above the eye, so that the shape of the eye looks more round by creating a crease above it. Whereas Westerners use botulinum toxin or botox to remove wrinkles, Koreans inject a dose of poison in their cheeks in order to make the face look less flat and wide. For more discussion, see "Changing Faces," *Time Asia*, 5 August 2002.

into a reality. A commentator for the *Newsweek Korea*, who claims to have heard the following statements from his school friend, conveyed the hidden motivation for wanting a Russian woman: “Look! It’s like planting a Korean flag on the belly of a Western woman. That is the cure (for overcoming inferiority complex of being an Asian in a Western dominated world)! That is capitalism at its finest: Money buys whatever you want. After that experience, my spirit lifted, and my confidence soared.”²⁹ The objectification of Russian women in the context of global sex trade precedes the effort to market new commodities for international consumption and allows ordinary males to easily sample “products, experiences, bodies and identities” (Wonders and Michalowski, 2001:552). Russian women are themselves viewed as tourist destinations, where the display of female bodies in windows, magazines, videos and computer screens is used as “simulacra” to allow the tourist or the voyeur to fulfill his desires.³⁰

Duality of Sexual Exploitation: Sex Workers Exercise Agency

Interviews with sex workers reveal that they invariably complain about working and living conditions.³¹ The disciplinary mechanisms that constrain their action and mobility are the principal reasons for their complaint. Imposition of unattainable rules by bar owners creates a

²⁹ *Newsweek Korea*, “Korean Men Please Do Not Insult them by Waving your \$100 Bill in the Air,” 4 July 2001.

³⁰ Recently, a restaurant owner in Seoul created quite a sensation by building a glass booth that displayed a Russian woman inside. The idea behind the spectacle was to allow the patrons to enjoy a beautiful woman while they dined. See “Marketing Dispute over a Woman inside Glass Booth at a Restaurant,” *Chosun Ilbo*, 7 June 2004.

³¹ See, for instance, the following interviews: Korean Church Women United Counseling Center for Migrant Women Workers (2002); *Joongang Ilbo* (1 September 1999); Migrant Women’s Home “WEHOME” (2003).

long-term bondage-like situation for the employees. Failing to meet employer expectations, they may be subjected to threats, intimidation and violence. Physical confinement is an extreme form of individual unfreedom to which many employees are subject; others have lodged similar complaints of verbal, physical, sexual and psychological abuse by their employers, managers and patrons. Sex workers are vulnerable to these kinds of abuse, unthinkable in other employment sites: Imagine confining an employee to a dark, solitary room for being late to work, or reducing salary for not meeting arbitrary goals, whether it is making cars for a motor company or selling drinks in restaurants. Their overcrowded living arrangements reflect the mentality of their employers who view the workers as instruments for making money. O'Connell Davidson (1998:17) argues that, though these types of formal relations certainly have bearing on the type and degree of compulsion, sex workers are also subject to materialistic forms of domination.

Despite the varied forms of personalistic and institutional constraints, sex workers find ways to challenge oppressive situations and exercise relative forms of power. On 20 April 2005, a judge in Seoul ruled that the club owner had psychologically abused three Filipina women by unduly pressuring the women to provide sexual services and ordered him to pay \$10,000 in punitive damages to each woman.³² This court case illustrates the important fact that foreign sex workers are not passive victims of institutional abuse; they manage to exercise agency by mustering support from a variety of resources. Their co-workers represent one such source of support, providing psychological relief from the insufferably agonizing life of emotional labor by sharing stories, strategies and laughter. Teela Sanders (2004: 273) underscores the significant role humor plays in the lives of sex workers when they “consciously manipulate humour as a

³² Although this case was ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, the bar owner had already funneled all of his assets to someone else and was unable to pay the women. See the article, “Victims of Forced Prostitution Win the Case but are not Compensated,” *Hankyoreh*, 20 April 2005.

social and psychological distancing technique.” “The role of jokes,” Sanders continues, “is to relieve anxiety and fear, breach inhibitions and act as a ‘safety valve’ for difficult subjects and feelings” (274). Other women use their employment to meet potential boyfriends and husbands who can support them emotionally and financially. Many foreign sex workers date American soldiers stationed in South Korea because they can help with remitting money to their families back home, buying daily necessities, and purchasing drinks at the bar. Despite intense ideological and social stigmatization, sex workers use selective and strategic methods to improve their situation and to realize more ambitious goals, such as making enough money to return home, getting married and going to another country like America. The active presence of NGOs that provide shelter and counseling support symbolizes a safe haven for these women. Some notable NGOs opened their shelters and offices in the heart of red light districts, offering a multitude of services for runaway sex workers. Representing advocacy efforts of NGOs, *hansorihoe* (Association of Repressed Voices), which consists of thirteen independent shelters and counseling offices for sex workers, was formed in 1986.³³ Since its inception, the association’s work ranged widely from conducting independent investigative research and holding regional workshops and conferences to distributing educational materials for public and providing direct care services, such as shelters, telephone hotlines, and counseling. The persistence of these organizations helps the sex workers achieve its stated goal: to eradicate prostitution and to work toward achieving a society where every human right is respected.

³³ Most of these organizations are located in and around the capital city areas: House of Tabitha (Dongduchon), Durebang (Uijeongbu), Magdalene House (Yongsan), New Day Shelter for Girls (Kuro and Sungnam), Saeumtuh (Pyungtaek), House of Sonia (Chunhodong), Yeosung21 (Pusan), Community for Independent Living (Dobonggu), Affectionate House (Inchon), Korea Church Women United (Jongnogu).

Conclusion

Due to the rapid globalization of economies, South Korea has come to depend on the labor of foreigners. While the change in its status from labor exporter to labor importer took place only in the early-1990s, South Korea has introduced a variety of labor importation programs.³⁴

Appropriately, a number of studies have emphasized the structural causes of migration from sending to destination countries, examined the various ways in which migrants utilize both formal and informal networks in making decisions, and provided policy recommendations based on the experiences of other countries that have had similar experiences. Unfortunately, discussions pertaining to foreign worker policies have treated the migration process as a gender-neutral phenomenon. As such, the unique experiences of women have been inadvertently undermined by the underlying assumption that foreign worker migration is largely a male-dependent process. This is somewhat true among foreign workers who are employed in manufacturing, fisheries and construction. However, the same globalization pressures affect women differently than men both in sending and receiving countries. Working predominantly in the informal sectors, women are particularly vulnerable to economic downturns and often venture overseas for employment in areas where they take on the role as international emotional laborers as nannies, maids, and sex workers. The attraction of foreign women into South Korea's sex and entertainment industry should not be viewed simply as a function of the supply and

³⁴ For comprehensive discussion of South Korea's foreign labor programs, see the following: Kim, (2003), "Insurgency and Advocacy: Unauthorized Foreign Workers and Civil Society in South Korea."

demand equation in the sex industry, for it does not explain specifically why there is a considerable degree of separation among foreign sex workers in terms of patron preference.

The various social situations of countries in the international circuit of sex industry provide necessary but not sufficient condition for migration. As O'Connell Davidson (1998) explains, the social relations of prostitution manifest in the context of specific institutional settings, such as the legal, social, political and ideological. The arrival of sex workers from Southeast Asia, the Philippines, and the former communist bloc into South Korea represents a new way in which the country is experiencing the commodification of female sexuality as distinctly differentiated by the newly created concepts of beauty and desirability based on ethnicity and race. For this reason, foreign sex workers in Korea appeal to diverse groups of people who have developed unique sensibilities of sexual desire as a socially constructed concept. Rather than seeing Korean men's sexual drive as innately a male quality, it must be situated in the specific context of desire construction in which the foreign sex workers represent a new commodity frontier where the new images of desirability are being constructed and marketed. The expansion of this new frontier depends on how these images become available to the public, the extent to which commodification of female sexuality become socially accepted, and the willingness on the part of the policy makers to develop, support and implement successfully various measures to protect sex workers and to prevent systematic importation of foreign sex workers. In this regard, the role of NGOs will be of paramount importance as they advocate for the rights of sex workers, make available the voices of these women to the public, and build countervailing images about foreign women in Korea.

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Table 1 Distribution and Scope of Sexual Labor Market in Korea

	Number of Workers	Number of Employers	Annual Income (thousand US\$) ¹
Sexual labor as a side business ²	241,114	57,938	16,496,600
Sexual labor as the main business ³	9,092	2,938	1,831,800
Other ⁴	79,012	19,224	5,787,900
Total	329,218	80,100	24,116,300

Source: Korean Institute of Criminology, 2002.

Notes:

¹ Currency conversions are based on the approximation: 1,000 won = US\$1

² Sexual services are offered as a side business; these establishments include karaoke bars, coffeehouses, massage parlors, barbershops, and motels

³ Most red light districts where sexual services are their primary business

⁴ Mostly mobile sex businesses where contact is made through phones and internet

Table 2 Rate of sexual service availability among legitimate businesses

	General hostess bars	Dance halls with bars	General bars	Tea houses	Private singing rooms	Barber- shops	Massage parlors
Availability of sexual service (%)	79.9	45.6	9.0	38.7	18.2	11.3	37.9
Average number of female workers	4.97	5.53	2.52	3.36	n/a	2.56	7.29

Source: Korean Institute of Criminology, 2002

Table 3 Selected Foreigners in Korea with Arts and Entertainment Visas (C-4 and E-6)

		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total	% women
Russia Federation	M	632	703	642	819	795	3,591	
	F	1,886	3,868	3,433	2,169	711	12,067	77.1
Philippines	M	520	542	435	412	422	2,331	
	F	1,185	1,651	874	1,034	1,875	6,619	74.0
Uzbekistan	M	13	60	26	5	7	111	
	F	331	911	428	98	69	1,837	94.3
Ukraine	M	54	80	144	255	223	756	
	F	101	155	272	270	185	983	56.5
Belarus	M	27	37	42	60	84	250	
	F	64	81	69	77	108	399	61.5
Mongolia	M	22	70	81	71	76	320	
	F	12	53	66	53	72	256	44.4
Bulgaria	M	6	38	83	71	60	258	
	F	5	34	69	79	50	237	47.9
Kyrgyzstan	M	0	6	3	1	2	12	
	F	29	111	150	127	1	418	97.2
Romania	M	20	52	49	26	69	216	
	F	4	36	51	21	44	156	41.9
Kazakhstan	M	4	6	1	7	7	25	
	F	39	77	39	41	5	201	88.9

Vietnam	M	6	5	1	13	2	27	
	F	21	81	6	8	1	117	81.3
Moldova	M	8	7	11	13	13	52	
	F	15	14	12	8	9	58	52.7

Source: Ministry of Justice, Korea, "Immigration/Emigration Statistical Yearbook" (*chulipkuk kwanli tonggye yeonbo*), 2000-2004.

Notes: C-4 visas are issued to foreigners who seek temporary employment for less than 90 days in such areas as entertainment, professional sports, modeling for advertisement and fashion, lecture, research, and technical instruction. E-6 visa category is reserved for foreigners who engage in paid activities for more than 90 days in the arts and entertainment, including music, art, literature, entertainment, performance, play, sports, advertising, and fashion modeling.

Table 4 Foreigners in Korea with Short-term Tourist Visas (C-3), 2000-2004

		2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Russia Federation	M	15,381	16,311	18,783	21,836	19,466
	F	12,041	11,633	13,040	15,301	15,415
Philippines	M	15,448	13,646	14,738	13,830	14,980
	F	8,250	6,675	7,792	6,000	6,433
Uzbekistan	M	4,046	4,134	4,490	3,411	3,178
	F	2,041	2,121	2,196	2,260	1,941
Mongolia	M	2,542	2,483	1,513	1,624	2,184
	F	2,958	2,702	1,554	2,087	2,834
Vietnam	M	2,671	2,664	2,867	2,048	2,453
	F	903	1,006	1,037	748	1,253
Ukraine	M	1,367	1,752	1,640	1,811	1,813
	F	249	317	332	362	357
Kazakhstan	M	1,315	597	1,069	849	740
	F	1,122	664	837	732	715
Kyrgyzstan	M	413	292	410	269	526
	F	463	327	285	365	443
Belarus	M	108	89	129	192	175
	F	95	69	92	133	93
Moldova	M	434	184	135	83	106
	F	54	37	59	27	30
Romania	M	9	4	7	6	29

	F	5	8	3	2	9
Bulgaria	M	4	5	15	7	5
	F	1	1	1	6	2

Source: Ministry of Justice, Korea, "Immigration/Emigration Statistical Yearbook" (*chulipkuk kwanli tonggye yeonbo*), 2000-2004.

Notes: The C-3 category applies to foreigners who visit Korea for travel, medical treatment, relative-visiting, goodwill match, events, conference, cultural art, training, religious ceremony, academic data-gathering, or for other purposes similar to the above during the short period of time. However, profit-making activities are excluded.

Table 5 C-3 Short-term Tourist Visa Overstayers by Nationality, 2001-2004

		2001	2002	2003	2004
	Total	85,594	97,596	40,716	54,404
	Male				
	(M)	49,110	56,693	22,880	30,631
	Female				
	(F)	36,484	40,903	17,836	23,773
Philippines	M	4,763	4,441	1,229	1,655
	F	2,858	2,908	896	1,244
Mongolia	M	6,197	5,167	n/a	3,167
	F	5,374	4,627	n/a	2,619
Vietnam	M	1,171	1,124	353	418
	F	329	332	114	144
Uzbekistan	M	4,282	4,443	2,009	2,231
	F	1,186	1,318	680	764
Kazakhstan	M	547	507	288	342
	F	355	330	168	266
Kyrgyzstan	M	n/a	367	173	401
	F	n/a	165	124	238
Russia	M	1,203	2,160	2,510	2,396
Federation	F	834	1,509	2,143	2,197
Ukraine	M	594	447	83	151

	F	60	62	11	32
	M	436	365	53	78
Moldova	F	45	66	5	11

Source: Ministry of Justice, Korea, "Immigration/Emigration Statistical Yearbook" (*chulipkuk kwanli tonggye yeonbo*), 2000-2004.