

Comparing The Progression And Contemporary Circumstances Of The “Mail-Order” Immigrant Bride Industry In The United States And South Korea

Jannah Yoo

Seoul International School

Abstract

With the economic, social, and political differences prevailing in contemporary society, the gap between least developed (LDC), developing, and developed countries, as taxonomized by the country's diverse facets, such as gross domestic product, human development index, technology & facilities, and living conditions, is notably wideningⁱ. As a result of the diversity existing between the countries, there has been movement from citizens of the underdeveloped and developing nations immigrating to the developed countries, as a greater means of acquiring a better lifestyle and supporting family back home. Derived from this notion, an industry titled the "mail-order" immigrant brides have come to rise, where brokers connect foreign women from underdeveloped and developing countries to prospective husbands from developed countries. Despite residing in a developed nation, men often came from the middle-class, forcing women to force themselves into perilous workforces. Furthermore, foreign brides face difficulties in visa activities, protecting themselves, and most prominently, persevering through notions of racial discrimination. As society entered the contemporary era, where modern ideas such as women's rights gained a surge of attention and development, an increasing number of developed nations began to recognize the loopholes in the living conditions for immigrant brides and thus adjusted the legislation accordingly. Although this progression was a global phenomenon, the sectors of adjustment and the order in which issues were addressed diversified greatly based on the political atmosphere and history of the nations. Thus, with a foundation in statistics, data, and legislation, this paper looks to conduct a comparative analysis of the compromised living conditions of immigrant brides in two starkly different societies of The United States and South Korea. The focus of the paper will be on factors pivotal to basic living standards, such as the visa acquisition process, protection from

violence, and support for education. As a basis of the comparison, the paper will explore the gender normality and the development of women's rights in each country, as well as gain input from Scandinavian nations, where women's rights are most highly regarded on a global scale. In fine, the paper will suggest a policy reform for each country based on the analysis.

Introduction

Originating from the domestic meeting of spouses through the mail, the so-called “picture bride” phenomenon occurred: an international version, which was the introduction of prospective wives through an exchange of photographs through the mail. The countries involved in this cross-sectional relationship were Japan, Korea, Armenia, Greece, and Italy. Building from this basis, in the late 1880s leading to the early 1910s,ⁱⁱ numerous “mail-order brides” or immigrant bride marriages occurred, where women from countries, conventionally from Asia, moved to the more developed Western nations. Experts correlate this surge as a result of the trend of reforming immigrant legislation in several countries, most prominently seen in the United States. The significance of immigrant brides varies in aspect and intensity per each corner of the world. In this paper, the two countries of comparison will be the United States of America and South Korea. In both the U.S. and South Korea, immigrant brides are critical contributors to the internal, rural community, as well as satisfying the improvement of the national, expanded state, as evident by their contribution to the development of positive social ideas and enhanced fluidity in economic activity.

In a general scope, this paper explores the immigrant bride industry of the United States and South Korea respectively through a historical and contemporary lens, by discussing the impact of its presence in the countries, including, but not limited to, visa processes, protection legislations, and living conditions. The paper will then move on to discuss its findings by presenting a comparative case study on exploring and identifying the pervading similarities and differences between the immigrant bride industry in the United States and South Korea. As closure, the paper will propose policy suggestions with regard to the status of the industry in each country, in an attempt to enhance and improve the circumstances of the participant women in the programs.

The United States: Immigrant Bride Industry

Brief History

The history of the mail order "immigrant" bride industry in the United States dates back to 1619 when women from England traveled to Jamestown, Virginia to settle in the colonyⁱⁱⁱ. Contrary to common belief, these women were regarded highly as strong, independent, and formidable individuals of which their role was pivotal in the cultural & racial enrichment of

America. Marriage was a critical transaction to secure this result; however, in Jamestown, with the colony being almost entirely male a decade after its founding in 1607, a so-called "severe gender imbalance" was jeopardizing its future; women's presence became imperative to secure their forthcoming generations^{iv}. Due to the uncertainty of the particularly meager living conditions, including but not limited to famine, disease, and domestic violence, all of which women were especially vulnerable to, traveling to Jamestown was undesirable for many. In an attempt to counteract such maleffecting rumors, the first ever leader of the mail-order bride industry, Edwin Sandys, released several advertisements offering substantial incentives such as wealthy husbands, security of food & shelter, the dowry of land, clothing, linens, and other furnishings to women who signed up, their target being potential brides residing in England. Unsurprisingly, women, often those living in substandard situations, agreed to follow the marital procedure of marrying the Jamestown men in return for the promised goods. Despite the inauspicious circumstances surrounding the settlement, women traveled great distances to support and improve the conditions for their families back in England; hence, the revolutionary introduction of European women to the States may be seen as one of the first-ever expressions of women's empowerment. However, despite promises of good treatment and respect in the colony, very shortly after their arrival conditions became terrible for many of the

women. In essence, although the experience embarked on as a liberating and empowering journey for the involved brides, the opportunity was soon lined with abominable cruelty and misuse of authority on women. Following this expansion, in the height of the early 1900s, the so-called "picture" mail-order bride's industry began to gain traction in the United States. Following this trend, by 1920, statistics reveal that over 10,000 female Japanese immigrants had arrived on American soil with the sheer purpose of getting married to young single men who perceived this matchmaking as an opportunity. These relationships were established often by physical preference, as mere photos of the women were provided to the prospective husbands as "options"^v. Although these were also opportunities for the Japanese women to fulfill the traditional obligation of marriage and to escape a povertized life in their home country, many were faced with harsher repercussions in America. Despite the majority of the immigrant population being unable to speak English, most women were forced to work in harsh conditions, as their husbands did not make enough money to support a family. Unsafe working environments, abusive marriages, and forced prostitution were commonplace in the lives of Japanese immigrants. Furthermore, due to the anti-Asian hate prevalent in the country, the working women faced harsh discrimination throughout their lives.

Contemporary America

Despite a short period of decrease in quality of life for many women entering the US as an immigrant bride, America remains one of the leading countries for the immigrant bride industry, in terms of diverse aspects, including but not limited to visa procedures, living conditions, financial support, and protection laws. The following section expands on the facets and facilities provided by the U.S. governing body, concerning the treatment of individual immigrant brides and communities.

In response to the surging records of hundreds of thousands of immigrant admittances, the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform inevitably induced several reforms to the immigrant program to meet the needs of the new residents of the country. Throughout the last few years, debate arose in Congress and agencies relating to the issue of reconstructing the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Within this lengthy process, it is recorded that “a number of prominent commentators and government officials, including Alex Aleinikoff, Demetrios Papdemetriou, former INS Commissioner Gene McNary, and Cornelius Scully” had provided insight on the matter of restructuring and modernizing the INS.^{vi} The said suggestions sparked significant discussions regarding the overall admission process of prospective immigrant citizens; aiming to make the procedure more efficient and approachable, the immigration purpose was divided into more targeted groups:

family-related, employment-based, diverse, or overseas refugees^{vii}. Separating the categories for immigration purposes made the process overall much more approachable for prospective residents, as they were able to select the route according to their needs; in a general scope, the governing body acknowledges that the procedures for tourists, temporary workers, transit visitors, students, and treaty traders (Treaty traders are allowed to stay temporary in the US for business investment) all differ^{viii}. In addition to the methodical and clever disassembling of visa acquirement purposes, the immigration services of the U.S. also structured it so that permanent residents living on a temporary visa could adjust their status without having to travel overseas^{ix}. Hence, the American process for acquiring a visa is multifaceted in terms of organization, regulation, and competence for the incoming immigrant body. Instead of adhering to a single strict admission process, the U.S. opens numerous routes for a range of distinct purposes in an attempt to satisfy the needs of the diverse prospective U.S. citizens. Despite the considerate existence of the manifold routes, the general visa admissions procedure consists of secure and strict phases, all of which the U.S. governing body imposed to generate and ensure a safe country.

In alignment with the efficient process integrated within the U.S. government body, the immigrant visa process for a “Spouse or Fiancé(e) of a U.S. Citizen” is correspondingly both obtainable and secure. According to the U.S. Department of

State's Bureau of Consular Affairs, there exist two legitimate ways to bring a "foreign spouse (husband or wife)" to the United States for residency. The first is an "Immigrant visa for a Spouse of a U.S. Citizen (IR1 or CR1)," where an "Immigrant Petition for Alien Relative, Form I-130" is made officially compulsory for permission residency^x. The I-130 is a form that allows a U.S. citizen or lawful permanent resident (LPR) to establish their relationship with an eligible relative who hopes for a permanent residency; *id est*, acquiring a Permanent Resident Card (Green Card)^{xi}. Contrary to common belief, the form is said to be "generally" approved if a relationship is readily qualified and established. Once the form is registered and rightfully accepted, a Green Card could be obtained through the "Form I-485," or the Application to Register Permanent Residence or Adjust Status^{xii}. The second method is titled the "Nonimmigrant visa for spouse (K-3)," a visa category formulated to shorten the duration of physical separation between the foreign citizen and the U.S. citizen spouses by providing the option to obtain a nonimmigrant K-3 visa overseas, then entering the States to await for approval of the petition^{xiii}. Essentially, the option serves as a temporary visa for prospective non-U.S. immigrants that are planning to live in the States. Due to the periodic nature of the procedure, two petitions are required: "Petition for Alien Relative, Form I-130, and Petition for Alien Fiancé(e), Form I-129F"^{xiv}.

Alongside the accessibility of securing visas, the protection of women and the general immigrant population in the States are strongly reinforced through the existence and development of protective legislation. Due to the difference in physical strength and structure, women are especially vulnerable to common issues ranging especially in categories of "particularly intimate partner" or "sexual" violence, much prevalent as though "globally about 1 in 3 (30%) of women worldwide" have experienced such classification of brutality from a "sexually intimate partner" or "non-partner" within their lifetime.^{xv} It is noted that a large portion of this violence is "intimate partner violence," meaning that violence often happens in a closed domesticated platform, perhaps the most disadvantageous setting for women to be placed in. In order to counteract the commonplace violence, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) from the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, administered several laws on violence against women, presented by the Office on Women's Health. The two most prominent laws related to protection against violence against women are the "Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)," which reestablishes the idea that "domestic violence and abuse are already against the law," and that the "law provides services and support for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault," and the "Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)," where the government "helps victims of domestic violence and their children by providing

shelters and resources," through support such as "funding programs and centers"; hence, the U.S. government made notable progression in creating a better social sphere and general environment for women to reside in^{xvi}. Furthermore, on top of the existing federal laws for the overall country, each state of the United States provides state-specific laws that are of use to victims and survivors in the instance that domestic violence happens. For instance, the state of Florida holds several injunctions for protection against domestic violence, as well as easy access to apply for restraining orders^{xvii}. In addition to the state-specific laws in support of women, there also exists protection kits, such as the "Toolkit to End Violence Against Women" launched by the "National Advisory Council on Violence Against Women," the U.S., with a supposedly dedicated singular focus to the immigrant female body^{xviii}.

In addition to domestic violence, workplace protection laws are reinforced by both federal and state laws, such as the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which allows all genders and ages above sixteen to receive the same minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour since July 24, 2009^{xix}. In addition to the legalized acceptance and emphasized the equal treatment of women in the workforce, the federal law further enforces the idea of putting closure to possible overtime or overexertion of women in the workplace by protecting all workers through an "FLSA Overtime" sector: that "employees must receive overtime pay for hours worked over 40 per workweek"^{xx}. Like such, laws

specific to the workforce limits the exploitation of workers by setting a limit and requiring employers to pay their employees in the instance that such an occurrence happens, subsequently protecting women from ill-treatment or social oppression/pressure. In parallel with the discussion of women in the workforce, pregnancy, and maternal leave is an analogously troubling factors for career women. To alleviate the burden on women and their pregnancies, "The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978" was established: to "amend Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit sex discrimination based on pregnancy"^{xxi}. The terms specifically state that women "shall be treated the same for all employment-related purposes," despite their affecting condition of "pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions"^{xxii}; in essence, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act protects female workers from the common employment discrimination often induced by employers in the hiring procedure or during their careers on the job.

Despite the well-established financial and legislative portions of supporting the common female, the United States, in parallel with the status of several additional developed countries, must work to establish and maintain a positive and supportive atmosphere for women as part of their coexisting communities. For instance, it is stated that in reality, "migration streams" were "dominated by women"; however, ironically, "a few immigration researchers" are aware that legal

immigration to the United States has been dominated by women^{xxiii}. Essentially, no matter how women make an impression and carry an overwhelming presence in the migration flow of the U.S., the role and power of females in the migration field has been entirely “neglected”^{xxiv}. Not only does this illustrate the ignorance that women have faced throughout history, but it also relays a social message that certain aspects must be restored and rectified for women to feel as though they are part of American society.

An Analysis of the Quality/Positive Aspects

To briefly analyze the given positive aspects of the immigrant bride industry, this subsection will set its focus on the discussion of quality facets playing in favor of the immigrant female body. Critical aspects, including but not limited to general workplace equity, protective legislation, and financial support of immigrant brides are guaranteed in the United States. Even within the stated necessity of generating a better social ambiance for the women, there still pertains an immense amount of potential per the nature of liberalism and granted freedom of individual or group self-expression. It is said that such social movements are powerful forces to “draw particular attention” to “institutional schemas,” often holding the potential for “significant impacts”; generating alterations to preexisting wrongful schemas and sometimes even leading to “block reform”^{xxv}. Hence, in the discussion of the well-established aspects of social welfare for women,

the assets of the United States certainly exert powerful external regulation as well as grant the availability and potential for its citizens to voice out lingering issues of discrimination. In essence, the country builds off from a consistent and compelling environment for the lives of immigrant brides, all the while opening new routes to social reforms that hold potential for women.

An Analysis of the Substandard/Negative Aspects

In analyzing the substandard aspects of the immigrant bride industry in the United States, the most imminent asset the country must work on developing is the internal perception of the immigrant brides. While the legislative structure and regulations regarding the treatment and protection of immigrant brides in America are cordially managed, the mainstream public persistently lacks the acumen to view immigrant brides in a positive light.

As mentioned in the journal entry from Hypatia, “the experience of immigration is often a difficult one for both men and women, involving moving great distances from the familiar contexts of one's homeland to the rigors of life in a foreign country, where they face not only the disempowering unfamiliarities of the new context but also prejudice and discrimination”. Furthermore, the article states that the situation is especially burdening for women immigrants in the States, as the “shift” to America often “exacerbates” the “gender-linked vulnerabilities and powerlessness”^{xxvi}. The situation is dire and often

linked to gender, leading to the formation of assumptions and stereotypes, such as women being overly dependent on their husbands, and lacking individuality: "knowledge, resources, and choices" that are available for the commonplace male race. Essentially, the general societal atmosphere seems to be heading towards a direction where women are assumed to be deprived of "autonomy"^{xxvii}.

Finally, despite the creation of federal and state laws against violence, the issue boils down to whether those countermeasures are effective for American society. Several internal and personal factors heighten the vulnerability of women in exposure to domestic violence, such as "dependent immigration status" on their U.S. citizen spouses, and the "lack of fluency in English"^{xxviii}. Dependent visas affect immigrant women in terms of generating difficulties in being employed due to the unstable nature of their visas, while the language barrier hinders social presence and formulation of relationships in their new home. As a result of the immigrant bride relationship settling on a short period, women consequently lack an adequate timespan for learning the foreign language of English successfully; hence, the linguistic barrier often leads to social ostracism for the women, as they are prevented from forming meaningful relationships with the community around them, and are normally limited to conversations with their husbands- with arduous effort.

Contemporary Analysis US Immigrant Bride Industry

In essence, the lives of immigrant brides who reside in the United States are thoroughly verified in terms of visa processes, including the procedure of acquirement and validation visas, legislative laws, including legislation and protective rights, and living conditions, including the overall treatment and social atmosphere revolving around the issue. A highly beneficial aspect for immigrant brides is the humane treatment of their population, meaning that women are respected, generally welcomed, and present in the social sphere. Per the aforementioned statistics and resources, a brief analysis creates the argument that one facet that the U.S. should work on is to verify the status and further guarantee the safety and security of individual females.

South Korea: Immigrant Bride Industry

Brief History

With its commencement in the early "1960s," the "strong state" of "economic development" in South Korea thrived and continues to pervade and influence the East Asian country's reputation and global recognition as a technological powerhouse in the 21st century^{xxix}. As a result of the rise of such a wealthy and powerfully established nation, in the peak of the 2000s, female migration in Asia had noticeably increased, especially those moving from "China and Southeast Asia" to "East Asia," most prominently South Korea^{xxx}. Statistics provided by the Korea National Statistics Office state that

marriages in South Korea increased by "fivefold" during the years 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005, from "6,945" to "30,719" residents: a striking "75 percent" of inter-Asian cross-border marriages happening in South Korea^{xxxii}. With female marriage migration leaping through the boundary of a mere "social phenomenon," it has become a "migratory pattern and trend" in Asia^{xxxiii}.

In essence, the overall female migration and commencement of the mail-order "immigrant" bride industry in South Korea was a consequence of the rapid and overtly successful technological advancements in society. Since the closure of World War II, South Korea's steady affluence and prosperity sparked a light within the young females of East Asia, and its influence has affected the contemporary immigrant bride industry today, recording high statistics of 887 thousand persons in 2021. Although this is the first "net negative migration (Incoming migrants - outgoing migrants)" that South Korea faced "since 2006," it demonstrates by a sheer numerical value that international immigrants are largely prevalent within the country^{xxxiii}.

The common reflection of 21st-century South Korea in global media revolves around the high-tech, futuristic, and overall jovial lifestyle. As much as life is presented, publicized, and commercialized as luxurious in the contemporary *Hallyu* media, the prestigious lifestyle depicted is normality nearly exclusive to the native Korean

population. Furthermore, the famously strict legislation and South Korea's regard for citizens' safety is a double-wielded sword: while the system itself undoubtedly excels in protecting its people, the same management consequently generates an arduous and particularly difficult process for the foreign population. Immigrant brides are especially burdened by this aspect, as an innumerable part of their population lacks fluency in Korean, one of the most time-consuming and difficult languages for a foreigner to learn— even when perceived on a global scale. However, the lengthy process is in favor of the immigrant brides, as most, if not all of the required application documents for the visa are to sanction a successful, healthy, and safe marriage.

On April 1, 2014, South Korea began to implement a new system (revised on October 10, 2013) on the requirements of acquiring a marriage migrant visa, also referred to as an F-6 visa. There exist five criteria for applying for an F-6 visa: "sponsoring a foreign spouse will be limited to once every five years," "income requirement," and "requirement for Korean language capability (a requirement for communication capabilities between the Korean national and his/her foreign spouse)," "residency requirement," and the "3-year lapse after naturalization through marriage". All five forms must be submitted in different application files. The first requirement of sponsorship of a foreign spouse state that the sponsor, or the Korean national, is prohibited from sponsoring another foreign spouse if he/she

had already done so within the span of the last five years. The second income requirement states, "A visa will only be issued if the income (before tax) of a sponsor meets the income requirement based on the number of household members announced annually by the Minister of Justice," meaning that the Korean national cannot marry an immigrant bride without earning the specifically requirement amount of funds to support the marriage. The third requirement of language fluency, often the most troubling for immigrant brides, states that F-6 visas cannot be given to married couples that have difficulties in communicating with each other, meaning that either "an F-6 visa applicant (marriage migrant) should have a basic level of Korean speaking capabilities," or "the marriage migrant and his/her Korean spouse can communicate well with each other in a foreign language other than Korean". A document proving the foreign spouse's proficiency in Korean, such as the Korean language test, or a sufficient score of Level 1 or higher in the TOPIK exam, must also be submitted for an F-6. The fourth criterion of the residency requirement states that "a sponsor must have a residential space where a marriage migrant can reside upon entering Korea". This requirement eliminates the possibility of ill-treatment in a shelter less experience for the immigrant bride. The fifth criteria of the 3-year lapse after naturalization through marriage states that "if a sponsor is a naturalized Korean through marriage with a Korean national, and it has not been 3 years since the sponsor acquired Korean

nationality, sponsorship of a foreign spouse is not permitted," further minimizing the probability of fraud and the materialistically driven wrongdoings of illegal brokers^{xxxiv}. In essence, although the procedure of acquiring an F-6 immigrant visa is a rather exhausting process, once verified, the result nearly guarantees the legislative safety and secure lifestyle of the immigrant bride and her residency in South Korea.

In contrast with the powerful legal protection and welfare granted to immigrant brides, the social stigma held against women pervades, even in the modernized era that the country has reached today. Being a country with deeply rooted conservative beliefs, especially that of patriarchy, the importance of continuing generations, pride in family work, etc., the ideology permeates particularly into the countryside of South Korea, where modernized theories are yet to be integrated within the rural societies. Coincidentally, it is often in the countryside, in the homes of generations of farmers, of these immigrant bride marriages are prevalent. Oftentimes, unmarried single men in their late 30s to early 40s marry a foreign bride due to the persistent urging of their fathers. For example, "Park Kunjae . . . married a Filipina marriage migrant at the age of thirty-three," mentioned that he "did not want to get married in that way," but went due to his "father's pressure". The following anecdote reveals one of the most significant cultural themes of South Korea: patriarchy and/or the dominance of men in the household. Furthermore, it is mentioned

that Park Kunjae's father "felt bad for his son who could not even function as a guy," relaying an internal meaning that the father wanted offspring to lead the future generations of the traditional farming family^{xxxv}. In parallel with this idea, the South Korean public often views these immigrant brides as means of bringing children to the households that they are married into. *Id est*, there is a lingering perception of immigrant brides as items being bought online, due to the existing stereotypes of men as "buyers' of vulnerable women from poor countries"^{xxxvi}. With the perception of the young foreign brides as purchased, women are prone to suffer domestic abuse from their husbands, who deem their spouses as objects that they rightfully paid for; thus, they can consequently rightfully damage them. Statistically, from 2011 to 2019, the number of domestic violence occurrences surged from 6,800 to 50,000 cases^{xxxvii}. As implied by the numerical representation of data, domestic violence is both ineradicable and abhorrently prevalent in South Korean society today, especially due to the favor of the culture laying toward men.

4-3: An Analysis of the Quality/Positive Aspects

On the surface, the immigrant bride industry appears to have more downsides than positive aspects; however, there certainly exist benefits, particularly unique and attributed to the country of South Korea, that impact the women that are involved in the industry.

Shortly after the end of the Korean War, women's rights movements developed in South Korea over the last number of years, persistently bringing the "two universal" issues of "modernized societies": of "equity" and "worker exploitation" to the discussion ground^{xxxviii}. This process was pertinent to the growth of South Korea, as the rapid industrialization and modernization of the country depended on the availability of a workforce in the country. During this period of growth and progression, women were perceived as another set of hands to work with. Despite the complex integration of Confucian traditions and contemporary ideologies, modernization has allowed openings for several opportunities for women in South Korea, meaning that there have consequently been alterations in educational accessibility and an expansion of employment options. Women who are well educated today are generally accepted by society, and they often go so far in their ambition as to climb societal hierarchies: to occupy more substantial political status and positions.^{xxxix}

In parallel to the positive social situation and scope, the immigrant brides in South Korea have been positively influenced by this newfound surge and ambition in women. For instance, 31-year-old Kim Hana, an immigrant bride from Nepal, now works as a non-ethnically-Korean female Foreign Affairs Officer, playing a critical role in the police community as a communicator between the Nepalese and Korean worlds. At the same time positivity is also prevalent in the social movement

sphere. Won Ok Kum, an ethnic Vietnamese completed a high-level education course in South Korea: possessing a master's degree in law administration. Furthermore, she broke the conventional gender normalities and was previously granted a position of leadership: holding the title of the honorary mayor of Seoul. Fueled by her achievements, although she lost, she mentions that she indeed ran for the MP position for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party. Building off from a personally motivating experience of helping out Vietnamese workers who had been arrested for striking over their work conditions, she continues her campaign for a law to strengthen the monitoring of discrimination against migrant workers. Despite facing several drawbacks and social prejudice, such as the lack of addressing her using customary honorific terms, she constantly drives herself to make a change in South Korea, and she mentions that South Korea grants her the power to make real change, whereas, in Vietnam, she could not imagine holding such a great authority^{xl}.

In essence, despite the existing risk of domestic violence as aforementioned, South Korea allows for several opportunities for women, including the immigrant bride population, to gain access to education and proper employment. Viewing this conclusion from a larger scale, although the integration of such liberalist views is taking time for the public to adjust to, due to the Confucianist nature of the country, it is justifiable to state that South Korea has a slow yet supportive view toward

expanding the role of women in the societal workforce.

An Analysis of the Substandard/Negative Aspects

Compared to the provided services and the overall formulated social atmosphere of the United States, immigrant brides face several downsides in South Korea, which include the lack of personal safety, limitations resulting from social stigma/maltreatment, and racism. With South Korea being quite a conservative country, its roots are deeply connected to the philosophies of the Confucianism value: "filial piety," or the devotion to one's family^{xli}, oftentimes restricting gender roles, the society has failed to dismantle the conservative bias which often imposes disadvantages on women; in fact, the culture itself is severely limited and embodies a racially singular population. In an overarching analysis, South Korea has failed to integrate the common liberal societal views within the contemporary lifestyle of many developed countries; hence, a critical aspect would be altering the perception of immigrant brides in the society; presenting the foreigners in a positive and supportive light.

South Korean society presents the immigrant bride relationship as a "solution" for Korean men who are "desperate" to find wives. In short, foreign brides are viewed as products for Korean men to arrange and purchase, with the common notion being that it is entirely plausible to mistreat their spouses; to treat them like objects rather than human beings. Biracial marriages were considered

to be a national embarrassment, as it was perceived as a last resort for unfortunate men who had no romantic partners. This belief is largely due to the lack of education from a young age, or rather, the engrossment of South Korean education in their racial purity and cultural singularity. South Koreans believe that there is a single bloodline tracing back to Dangun, a common ancestor and mythic founder of the Koreas^{xlii}. This myth is taught from a young age; consequently, South Korean students are taught to be prideful of their ethnicity. This sense of pride is overly reinforced so that it becomes an acceptable social norm for the society to deem themselves superior to the foreign race. However, this radical promotion of ethnic singularity will no longer be plausible in the growing Korean society, as an increasing amount of foreign brides are entering the country, transforming South Korea into a multiethnic society. For instance, in the year of 2004, the number of Koreans marrying foreigners rose to 38 percent: a substantial population count of 35,447, accounting for 11 percent of the newlyweds in South Korea the same year^{xliii}.

Furthermore, when these foreign brides are introduced to Korean society, they are forced to undergo cultural assimilation, such as making kimchi, respecting the elderly, and speaking the Korean language^{xliv}. Although there exists the lingering idea of cultural respect and understanding for foreign countries in Korean society, South Koreans hold a heavy philosophy best accounted for by the phrase "When in Rome,

Do as the Romans Do," along with the notion of Occidentalism, or a "dehumanized viewing of the West," lingers in the society^{xlv}. Thus, cultural assimilation of foreign brides as they marry into Korean families is expected, most notably as a means of exerting racial superiority against Western groups. Despite it being an agreeable fact that a basic understanding of Korean culture must be established during the time of the foreign bride's residency in South Korea, overexertion of cultural assimilation is unjust and unnecessary.

In essence, thought processes of racial superiority and over-forcing of assimilation within the South Korean culture, as well as the lingering racial prejudice and negative perception of the immigrant bride industry, are facets that must be addressed and adjusted.

Contemporary Analysis South Korean Bride Industry

In short, the circumstances in South Korea are socially unsupportive but structurally supportive of the immigrant bride industry. Internal factors, such as domestic violence, pervade several households of Korean husbands and foreign brides. Prejudice and forced cultural assimilation happen within the smaller households, especially in families where the heritage and generational trends are deemed significant. Logistically, the South Korean society supports women and the immigrant bride population, as evident by the accessibility to employment, and the overall secure and efficient process of obtaining an F-6 foreigner

visa. Per the aforementioned statistics and resources, a brief analysis creates the argument that one facet which South Korea should work on is to create a supportive atmosphere and generate legislation promising the safety and security of each immigrant bride in the case of internal domestic violence.

Comparative Case Study

Introduction to Gender Norms

Gender norms and stereotypes pervade at both a global and marginal level: since the birth of modernization, the incorporation of contemporary views has been observable through the integration of the said values within countries and their societies. The line has been rather clear cut between the two countries that this paper is discussing: the United States and South Korea. Essentially, this paper acknowledges that the differences in the existing gender normalities correlate to the diversifying factors which influence the immigrant bride population. Ergo, this section will examine the established gender normalities and/or stereotypes implicated within the United States and South Korea, with a greater focus on determining the positive and negative aspects of each respective country.

Gender Normalities of the United States

The existing gender normalities of the United States are defined by the integration of liberal and contemporary views. In the States, “women’s desire for autonomy and success is seen as an

important intermediary variable in the development [modernization] process,” id est, women with ambition are highly regarded in American society. In addition, industrialization in the United States reduced the social impact of disparity between the biological male and biological female's physical strength; rather than focusing on the meager differences in physicality, American society set its focus on improving the intellectual conditions for women, for instance, increasing women's mobility and freedom of action. Instead of devaluing women for what the general population lacked, the country set its focus on identifying and further enhancing the circumstances for women, increasing the number of opportunities available for the benefit of the population.

In connection to the available employment opportunities, women are further encouraged to work, rather than being tied to the traditional role of a housewife. Furthermore, Paid Parental Leave is made legal and available by the Federal Employee Paid Leave Act, otherwise known as FEPLA, "covered under Title 5 following in connection with a qualifying birth of a son or daughter or the placement of a son or daughter with an employee for adoption or foster care". Since October 1st of 2020, up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave are to be covered^{xlvi}. Although it is not mandated, employees are often shown to be flexible in allowing their female counterparts to take parental leave. In general, a positive atmosphere surrounds the idea of women

partaking in the workforce, with numerous industries fluid and flexible. In addition, women also play substantial roles in the political sphere, as evident by former First Lady Michelle Obama^{xlvii}, and the current Vice President, Kamala Harris' occupation of office^{xlviii}.

Gender Normalities of South Korea

In contrast, gender normalities that pervade the society of South Korea, are shone in a much more conservative and traditional light, especially as the country is dominated by its deeply-rooted Confucianist ideologies. In contemporary Korea today, neo-Confucianism and its constituting principles are prevalent as part of their society. With an emphasis on hierarchical systems based on age, sex, social status, and moral objectives, women were consequently expected to be passive, chaste, dependent, and obedient to men, who were normally the individual who both determined and represented the societal standing of the household^{xlix}.

Influenced by the need for economic and industrial development, employment opportunities did surge for women from the end of the Korean War to today; however, it is a commonality to see male-dominant industries, spurring gender inequality in the workplace^l. Male dominance consequently restricts women from reaching upper levels of industrial hierarchies, thus limiting their female counterparts to fulfill leadership roles, as evident by the 2020 statistics which state that a minuscule 20.9 percent of the

manager or leadership positions were occupied by women^{li}. As such, despite the improving conditions for women in terms of employment, internal difficulties exist, as women are still expected to fulfill the modern epitome of Confucianism principles: it is implied that families much prefer women to be a housewife than to work in public. Nonetheless, the social atmosphere surrounding social activism for the promotion and/or movements for gender equality is much more supportive. South Korean media are also increasingly exposing Korean films and television shows, such as "The Handmaiden" by Park Chan-wook, where two women take revenge on their male tormentors, and "Crash-landing On You," a television show where a wealthy heiress stands independent to set up her own business and achieve success, where the protagonists are strong and independent women, determined to succeed on their own, which brings about a sense of hope, progression, and integration of modern values into the traditional Korean society^{lii}.

Projected Future of Each Respective Industry

In the case of the United States projected future, the impact of numerous current events and the rise of several social movements and self-expressions of groups, including the recent "Indianapolis abortion rights protest of 2022," will certainly further enhance the social atmosphere of women, consequently leading to the better treatment and perception of the immigrant brides^{liii}. Circumstances and living conditions for

the immigrant bride population appear to be psychological benefits. By correctly identifying and resolving the central issue of the lack of independence in the immigrant bride's lives, the United States will be a successful and well-structured country for the immigrant bride population to reside.

In the case of South Korea's projected future, the impact of current events and the rise of several social expressions will also further enhance the positivity surrounding the issue of women and their role in South Korean culture. By identifying and resolving the pertinent issue of overconfidence and the sense of superiority of racial singularity, South Korea will likely turn into a moderate base for the immigrant bride population to reside in. Furthermore, if Korean and global media continue to present South Korea in a positive light, as defined by their rapid industrialization and implied strength of women, the country will increasingly turn into an attractive nation of residency for the immigrant bride population.

Policy Suggestions

Reflecting Upon the United States

In discussing the circumstances of the United States, it has the upper hand in the logistical construct of a healthily structured society, such as the overall living conditions and legislative policies, especially those related to that domestic violence, when compared to the situation in South Korea. A policy suggestion for the United States

would be the reinforcement of safety on the individual level. As one of the leading industries in the world, the United State is particularly skilled in addressing issues to the population as a whole, but the protection of individual immigrant brides are as necessary. Building off this notion, the U.S. must also consider the intellectual capability of foreign women as a whole, further expanding employment opportunities for the immigrant bride population.

Hence, the policy suggestion for the United States is as follows: consisting of a supported English language program, construction of employment opportunities designated for the immigrant bride population, and an overall acknowledgment of the intellectual capabilities of women.

Reflecting Upon South Korea

In discussing the circumstances of South Korea, the country embodies a positive attitude toward the rising power of women, but the welcoming atmosphere seems only to extend to the ethnic-Korean female population. For South Korea to achieve a more supportive perception and stance of being a plausible country for the contemporary immigrant bride industry, neo-Occidentalism, and cultural homogeneity must be slowly integrated into an acceptance of the multilateral assemblance of races.

Hence, the policy suggestion for South Korea is as follows: instead of reinforcing the deeply rooted ideology of Occidentalism and cultural singularity, the Korean society must adhere to contemporary

ideas of integrating modern ideologies, such as accepting the presence of foreign brides: of advancing toward a developed, multicultural identity of South Korea.

Reflecting Upon Auxiliary Countries

According to the Global Gender Gap Report of 2022 by the World Economic Forum, the top five countries consisting of a gender-equal society were the following: Iceland, Finland, Norway, New Zealand, and Sweden^{lv}. In the aforementioned ranking, four out of the five are Scandinavian countries or the nations of the Nordic Region. To further explore what factors, make the region excel in the issue of gender equality, and to adhere to the political, economic, and social scope of the excelling countries, this last subsection will focus on identifying and analyzing the positive aspects of what consists of a gender-equal nation.

A prominent factor of equality that all Scandinavian countries have in common is the equivalent perception of gender, meaning, the concept of women active in the domestic sphere and men active in the workplace simply is not solidified in Nordic societies. Since the 1995 Equality Act, which "requires authorities to systematically promote equality and to change circumstances that prevent de facto equality between women and men," the Finnish Constitution states that "no one shall be treated differently to others on the grounds of gender or other personal attributes." Furthermore, gender equality is implemented in societal activity,

working life, pay, and employment^{lv}. In Sweden, there has been a "rapid acceptance of women providing financial support than of men engaging in household tasks"^{lvi}. According to a journal article entry from Demographic Research, the gender revolution in the Scandinavian (Sweden) nations has had an impact on two main spheres: the public sphere of employment and earnings, and the private domestic sphere^{lvii}.

In fine, a positive aspect of which both the United States and South Korea must adopt from the gender-equal Scandinavian societies is the support of the distribution of domiciliary and external industry work across both genders, ultimately leading to the blemish of the pre-established boundary between stereotypes and prejudices between the two genders.

Conclusion

To conclude upon the discussion of the gender normalities of the United States and South Korea and its effect on the formulation of contemporary circumstances of the mail-order "immigrant" brides, there are numerous points of comparison and contrast that could be formulated upon the analysis between the two countries. While the living conditions for immigrant brides are generally more favorable in terms of protection from violence and support from the public, the issue of discrimination and lack of education for the immigrant population. On the other hand, in South Korea, the lives of foreign brides are favorable in terms of visa acquisition and logistical

purposes; however, there exists an impenetrable ideology of ethnic superiority of one's race. In essence, the gender normalities that pervade each country and the positive aspects of the Nordic nations, must be accounted for in progressing toward a more gender-equal society.

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