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The Marriage Market: The Mail-Order Bride Industry in the United States!

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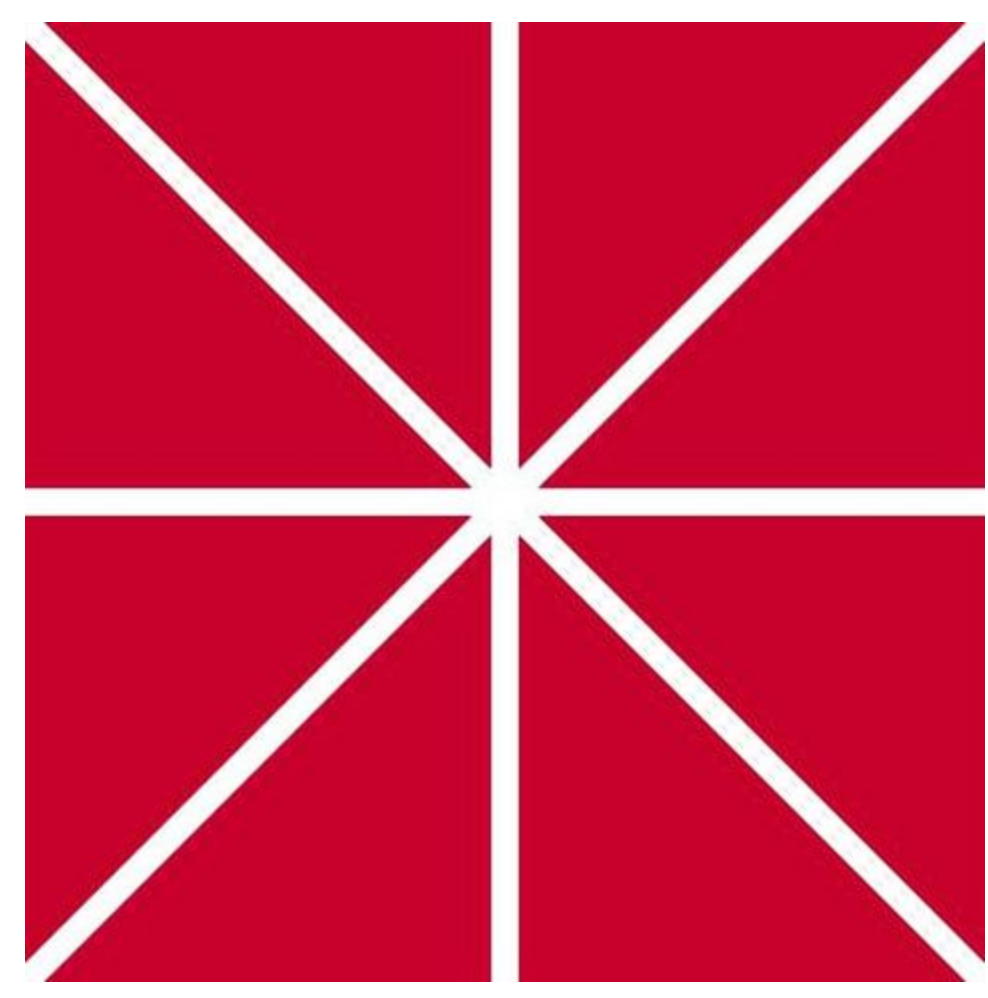


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The Marriage Market: The Mail-Order Bride Industry in the United States

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Introduction to Research:

- The aim of this study is to explore the Mail-Order Bride Industry as it exists today as well as its impact on attitudes towards women and marriage around the world.
- The Mail-Order Bride Industry has earned over \$2 billion in revenue in the U.S. in 2010.
- The areas of the world I have chosen to focus on are Eastern Europe (Russia and Belarus) and East Asia (The Philippines) because many women enter the United States as Mail-Order Brides from these countries.

The Mail-Order Bride Industry:

- A content analysis study on marriage brokerage websites revealed the anonymity of the Internet as contributing to inequality amongst wealthier and poorer countries and between genders.
- The typical male consumer for the website AnastasiaDate is between the ages of 35 and 60 and makes over \$100,000 per year. This reflects the typical U.S. consumer.
- Marriage brokerage websites charge separate fees for the translation of email messages, handling immigration paperwork, video chatting and in person meetings.
- A single email can cost up to \$8, while an in person meeting known as a "romance tour" can cost several thousand dollars.
- The purpose of Marriage brokerages is not to promote cultural exchange, but to gain profit from charging men in first world countries to connect them with women in third world countries.
- This reflects trends of outsourcing and the taking advantage of poorer nations by wealthier ones.
- Agencies actively recruit women in economically depressed countries.

Commodification of Women and Marriage:

- This industry has many similarities to prostitution and involuntary servitude that are veiled under the guise of marriage.
- Consumers choose women based on physical characteristics before personality or other characteristics, making women a commodity.
- Men typically seek women to fill traditional domestic and sexual roles within the household.
- Agencies provide significantly more protections for men than women.
- Young women are equally viable as partners to older men as older women.
- Women generally seek marriages with foreign men to escape poverty with the hope of a better life.
- Lack of available men in war torn countries in Europe, such as Russia, also contribute to limited options for single women.
- Women in the Philippines and Russia experience cultural pressures to get married.
- In the Philippines, women have the added pressure of providing money and status for their families.

Research Questions:

- What is the nature of the mail-order bride industry today?
- How has the mail-order bride industry impacted views about women and marriage around the world?

Data and Images:

Data Collection Methods:

- Content analysis of marriage brokerage websites
- Collection and analysis of scholarly journals and news articles

The block contains two screenshots of marriage brokerage websites. The left screenshot is for 'www.volgagirl.com' and features a 'Featured gallery' of women's portraits, contact information (877-330-2665 USA, 886-432-5888 Canada, 011 7 8482 798363 RU), and a 'JOIN FREE HERE' button. The right screenshot is for 'www.asianbridesonline.com' and shows a homepage with a navigation menu, a 'JOIN NOW' button, and a 'New!' announcement.

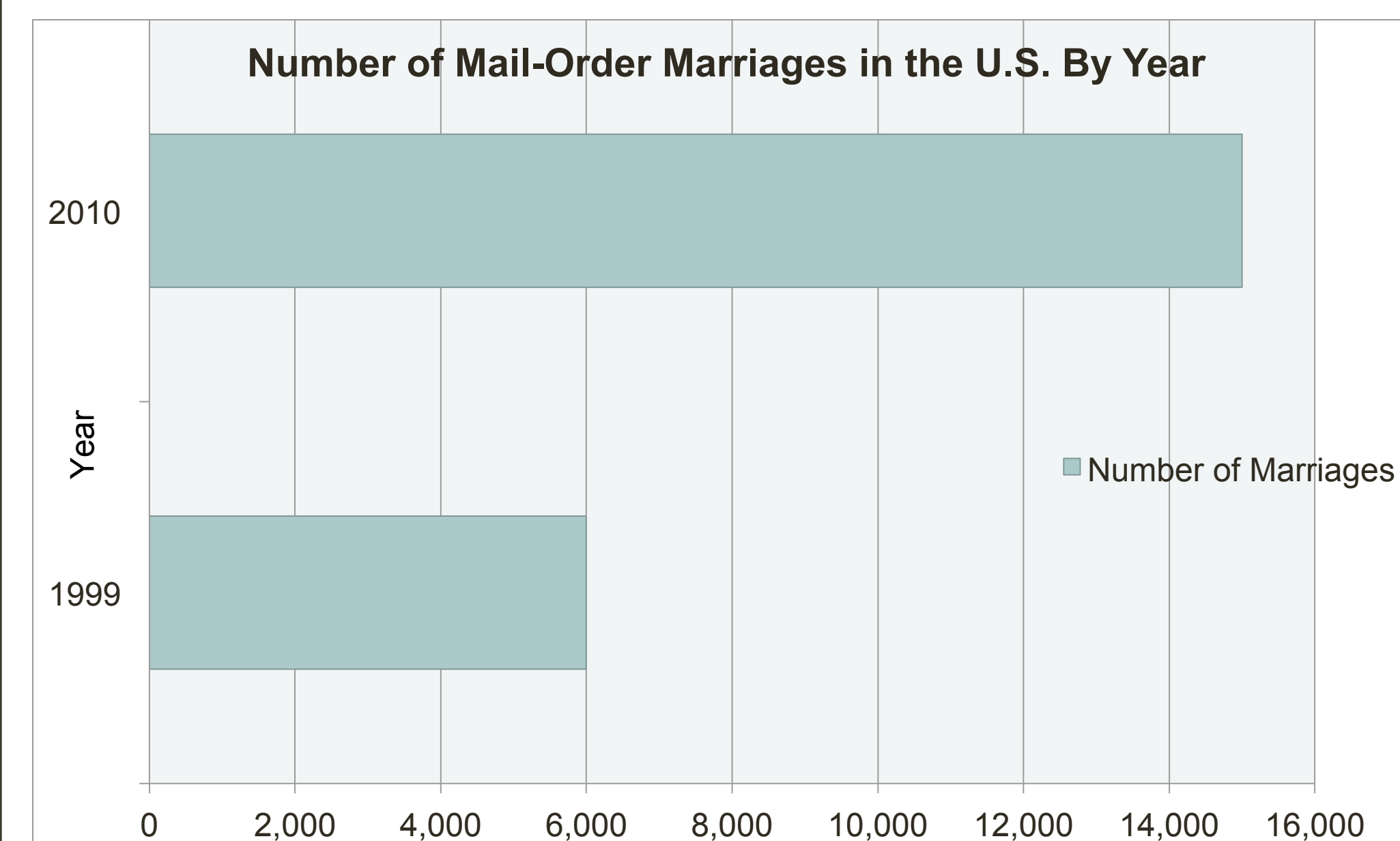


Table Interpretation:

- The number of mail-order bride marriages has more than doubled in the United States from 1999 to 2010.
- In 1999 there were approximately 200 international marriage brokerage agencies in the United States.
- In 2010, there were twice as many agencies.

- A desire for marriage is often racially based as women seek Caucasian men from the United States, Canada and Australia.
- Many women experience domestic and/or sexual violence in their marriage.

Laws and Policy Solutions:

- Regulation similar to prostitution laws are on approach offered by many scholars
- In the Philippines, an attempt to outlaw marriage brokering has failed due to insufficient regulation of Internet activities.
- In the United States, an attempt to regulate the industry has been made through the use of background checks of male clients.
 - This has also proven ineffective as clients argued it violated their right to free speech
 - Male clients now only voluntarily provide information to marriage brokerage websites.
- In Belarus, anti-human trafficking laws proved equally ineffective as agencies began to operate in the "underground economy."
- Stricter enforcement, stronger penalties and collaboration among nations is needed to regulate this industry.

Conclusions:

- The mail-order bride industry is harmful to the promotion of women's rights.
 - It stems from profit driven motives and provides little protection for women.
 - Women become commodities.
 - Women often agree to it for economic or social/cultural reasons.
- The mail-order bride Industry is changing the way families operate in many nations and has negatively affected views about marriage and women around the world.
- Policy solutions similar to those employed for prostitution and human trafficking as well as cooperation between nations are ways to combat this industry.

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