

How the Sex Industry Market Determines the Distribution of Smuggling Hot Spots in Taiwan: An Empirical Study of Illegal Immigration of Mainland Chinese Females to Taiwan

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Smuggling Mainland Chinese females into Taiwan has been a devastating problem in the past two decades, due to the fact that China and Taiwan are geographically close to each other and the fact that no major differences exist between these two places with respect to language and ethnic composition. The persistent attraction of huge profits resulting from smuggling is mainly responsible for this serious criminal problem. This paper is an extended study of previous research reported at the Annual ANZSOC conference (Chen 2006) where it was shown that, whether voluntary or coerced by Human Snake gangs (ie. criminal organisations responsible for illegally transporting people across borders), a majority of Mainland Chinese females smuggled into Taiwan are involved in the sex industry. The present research project, which continues to build on the key insight of the previous study, indicates that the need for, and supply of, sex industry workers in Taiwan substantively influences the smuggling of females.

The focus of this research project is to investigate the co-variation between crime hot spots and the sex industry in Taiwan. We divided Taiwan into four areas - East, West, South and North - and examined the number of female illegal immigrants in these four areas, which encompass both coastal and inland areas. The results show that significant differences exist among these four areas. More specifically, the demands of the sex industry market in an area is positively correlated with the number of illegal immigrant females arrested. This project also adopted a qualitative analysis. Fourteen illegal Mainland Chinese female immigrants, as well as 14 police officers involved in arresting illegal immigrants, were interviewed. Some of the key findings were as follows:

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- A majority of illegal immigrants from Mainland China to Taiwan are females, and the main purpose for their illegal immigration is to take part in the sex industry.
- The Human Snakes of Mainland China exhibit certain specific characteristics that result in visible differences in the distribution of smuggling hot-spots in different areas.
- There exists a high correlation between the distribution of smuggling hot spots and the sex industry market in Taiwan.

Motive and Background of the Project

The problem of organised crime (specifically Human Snakes) and illegal immigration has, in recent years, become an important issue both globally and specifically in Taiwan. In the past few years, Taiwan has been one of the main countries favoured by illegal immigrants from Mainland China for geographical and economical reasons. The general situation of illegal immigration in Taiwan is somewhat different from that of other countries. Specifically, illegal immigrants in Taiwan from Mainland China are mostly females and the main purpose is to engage in the sex industry.

In light of the above observation, we can analyse the issue of illegal immigration of Mainland Chinese females from three aspects.

First, the mechanism of illegal immigration can be investigated. A news release on August 28 2003, by the Coast Guard Administration of Executive Yuan, said, 'Take for example agents associated with prostitution gangs of female illegal immigrants. Agents, boat dealers responsible for connection between coastlines of Mainland China and Taiwan, and Taiwanese fisher-boats for transportation in the high seas, work together on illegal immigration. Their division of labor is as follows: some members of the gangs are responsible for preparing sampans, rafts, and fisher-boats in Mainland China; others are responsible for preparing vehicles for escorting and covering the gangs when they arrive at the coastlines of Taiwan; still others are agents who take care of communications between the Taiwan Straits. Members of the gangs in Mainland China are various (including gang dealers, ostlers, Chinese females, brokers, and sex agents)' (Coast Guard Administration, Executive Yuan 2004).

Second, the general situation of illegal immigration can be analysed, as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Analysis of Illegal Immigration in Taiwan

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Month | The number of illegal immigrants is greatest between January and August | The number of illegal immigrants is least in September to December |
| Age of illegal immigrants | 16-18 years is the most common age, followed by 18-20 year olds and then 14-16 year olds. | |
| Coastal landform | Northern area of Keelung and Ilan | Rich in cliffs and reefs, close to seafronts, so easy for getting away; many chimneys and lighthouses act as guides for disembarkation |
| | Taoyuan, Hsinchu, Miaoli and the middle area of Taiwan | Sandy coast and full of windbreaks, suited for illegal immigration in summer if the coastal meteorology is good; rich in shallows, fishing ports, convenient for illegal immigration by small boats |
| | Yunlin and Chiayi | Also sandy coast, full of windbreaks, salt-pans as covering, especially in spring and summer when fog is dense |
| | Tainan, Kaohsiung, and Pingtung | Situated in the southwestern part of Taiwan, influenced less by northeasters in winter; smooth coastlines, rich in fishing ports, suited for illegal immigration |

Data resources: Ruei-T. Cai, (2005), *The Analysis of Spots of Illegal Disembarkation*, statistics from the Coast Guard Administration, Executive Yuan.

Third, there is a theory which claims that, 'viewed from the aspect of demand and supply in the market economy, the reason why Chinese females come to Taiwan for prostitution is that there is good market in Taiwan, which fosters the rampancy of illegal agent gangs. It is the huge clusters of consumers (whoremasters) of various social statuses that create the market, that is, whoremasters initiate the market of sexual transaction' (Ling Jin 2004).

Aim of the Project

Following on from the above background and motive, the aim of this project is to extend the results obtained in an earlier paper by Chen (2006). Taiwan has been one of the main countries favored by illegal immigrants from Mainland China due to geographical and economical reasons. Economical reasons prompt people of Mainland China to immigrate illegally into Taiwan and Human Snakes gangs draw on this circumstance and become agents for illegal immigration. The present study will focus on the correlation between the sex industry market and hot spots of illegal immigration.

This research focuses on how the gangs, as agents, interact with illegal immigrants at the very outset; i.e. how they collude with each other on the matter of illegal immigration. To ensure the success of illegal immigration, the gangs need efficient mechanisms, of which the embarkation spots play a crucial role. Hence, how the sex trade market affects the distribution of illegal immigration hot spots is the main focus of this research.

Smuggling Hot Spots

This section centres on the hot spots of illegal immigration. The main point is supported by the following contention: David (2000) made an appropriate description of the phenomenon of illegal immigration and smuggling in Australia. She wrote, 'although these illegal immigrants are also accomplices of the smuggling, they are victims of Human Snakes'. Similarly, not only people, but border security as well, fall victim to Human Snakes; that is, border security is threatened by illegal immigration. Take Taiwan for example. The fact is that Taiwan is surrounded by seas and there are some 'blind spots' in the seas and coastlines that offer convenient environmental conditions for illegal immigration (Ruei-T. Cai 2005).

Methodology of the Project

This project adopts an 'in-depth' interview approach. Deciding who to interview is crucial, given that interviewees will greatly affect the accuracy of the research findings. In accordance with Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2004), interviewees selected for this study fell into two types:

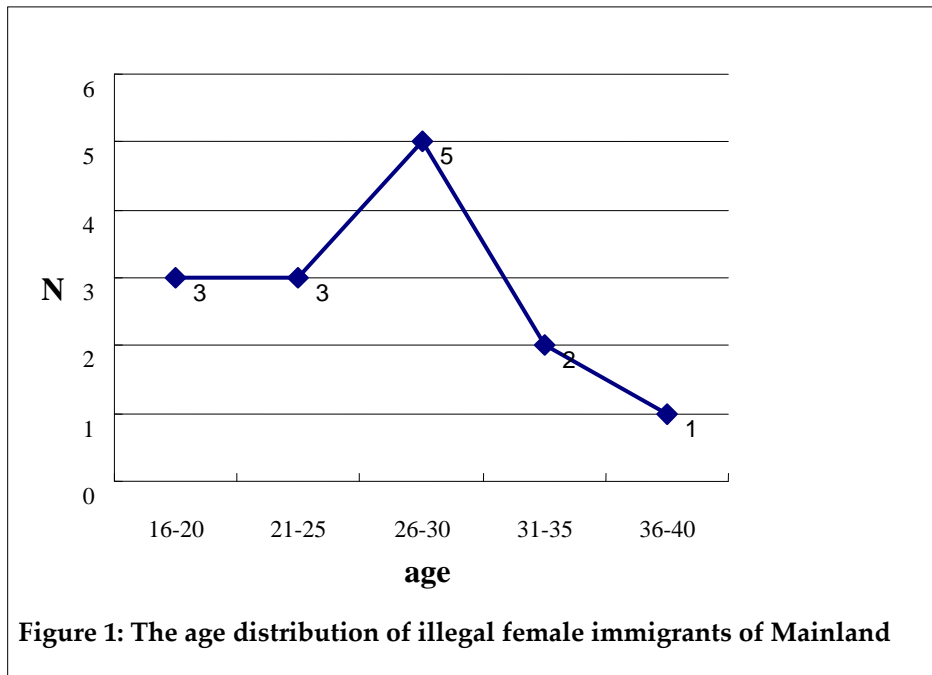
- First, those regarded as ‘knowledgeable informants’; that is, persons who
- had a macroscopic understanding or knowledge of illegal immigration in Taiwan but were not necessarily involved directly with it;
- Second, those who were directly involved in the behavior under investigation.

In accordance with these two types, illegal female immigrants from Mainland China who had experienced the sex trade were interviewed, as were officers who were involved in investigating illegal immigration.

Selection of respondents

Illegal immigrants from Mainland China

To locate illegal immigrants from Mainland China, the first author of this paper went to the Care Centre for Mainland Chinese people in Hsinchu and Ilan, Taiwan. Illegal female immigrants of Mainland China are gathered at these special care centres before being sent back to China. At these centres, interviews were conducted with 14 females on March 24, April 13 and 14, 2006. Most interviewees were aged between 26 and 30 years (as shown in Figure 1). This restricted age range is due to the fact that the care centres for illegal female immigrants have limitations on the type of person who can be interviewed for safety reasons (based on considerations of the interviewees’ stability of emotions and capacities of keeping interview contents confidential). (For further details of the illegal immigrants interviewed, see Table 2).



Police officers with experience in investigating illegal immigration

The main method used to select these respondents was convenience logic: i.e. the samples came from groups with which the researchers had contact, directly or indirectly. The researchers interviewed subjects introduced by experts or initial subjects and interviewed more subjects in the 'snowballing' way to collect the samples. This method is demonstrated by some experienced officers in Taiwan who conducted interviews with help from southern officers who introduced their colleagues for interviewing.

To know whether the police in various areas and performing different jobs hold the same views of illegal immigration, we interviewed officers in different parts of Taiwan : north, east, middle, and south. In doing this, we intended to find three things:

- features of spots favored by illegal immigrants and the locations of these spots
- difficulties faced when tracing illegal immigrants
- possible trends of illegal immigration.

(For details of the officers interviewed, see Table 3).

All interviews were conducted using self-administered questionnaires.

Table 2: Information of female illegal immigrants from Mainland China

| Number | Gender | Age | Location of arrest | Job | State when arrested | Times of having been to Taiwan |
|---------|--------|-----|---|---|------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 950324A | female | 21 | North (MinSheng E. Rd., Taipei City) | prostitution | at work | Once |
| 950324B | female | 31 | North (Pusin, Taoyuan) | prostitution and then kept woman | at home | Once |
| 950324C | female | 19 | North (Taipei) | prostitution | at rest | Once |
| 950324D | female | 25 | North (Jhongli, Taoyuan) | work at company and then prostitution | at work | Once |
| 950324E | female | 38 | South (Kaohsiung) | companion and then bar girl | off work | Once |
| 950324F | female | 30 | North (Taoyuan) | babysitter | shopping | Once |
| 950324G | female | 25 | Middle (Nantou) | Jobless | at home | Once |
| 950414A | female | 20 | North (Banciao, Taipei) | bar girl | shopping | Once |
| 950414B | female | 27 | North (Keelung Railroad Station) | prostitution | “fishing” [□] | Once |
| 950414C | female | 27 | North (Wanhua, Taipei City) | prostitution and then looked after by relatives | shopping | Once |
| 950414D | female | 33 | North (Hsinchu City) | work at breakfast shop | at work | Once |
| 950414E | female | 26 | North (Taoyuan Jhongheng International Airport) | prostitution and then kept woman | back to China by air | Once |
| 950414F | female | 19 | Middle (Nantou) | bar girl | at work | Once |
| 950414G | female | 27 | Middle (Changhua) | prostitution | out with customer | Once |

□Police term which indicates the trap in which the police fix the target who has sent messages involving prostitution, and arrest him/her by tracing the messages.

Table 3: Information of Police Officers with experience of investigating illegal immigration

| Number | Gender | Age | Experience (year) | Department | Area |
|--------|--------|-----|-------------------|--|--------|
| A | male | 31 | 10 | Reconnaissance Brigade, Coast Guard Administration | South |
| B | male | 40 | 5 | Reconnaissance Brigade, Coast Guard Administration | East |
| C | male | 37 | 13 | Reconnaissance Brigade, Coast Guard Administration | Middle |
| D | male | 40 | 7 | Reconnaissance Brigade, Coast Guard Administration | Middle |
| E | male | 41 | 10 | Reconnaissance Brigade, Coast Guard Administration | Middle |
| F | male | 40 | 4 | Detention Affairs Corps: Hsinchu Detention Center | North |
| G | male | 40 | 11 | Reconnaissance Brigade, Coast Guard Administration—in support of Detention Affairs Corps: Hsinchu Detention Center | South |
| H | male | 37 | 7 | Detention Affairs Corps: Hsinchu Detention Center | North |
| I | male | 48 | 15 | Police office | north |
| J | male | 33 | 6 | Reconnaissance Brigade, Coast Guard Administration | south |
| K | male | 43 | 6 | Police office | middle |
| L | male | 38 | 7 | Reconnaissance Brigade, Coast Guard Administration | middle |
| M | male | 29 | 7 | Reconnaissance Brigade, Coast Guard Administration | middle |
| N | male | 35 | 5 | Police office | middle |

Limitation of samples

Illegal Immigrants from Mainland China

This research adopted a purposive sampling method. The Care Centres for Mainland Chinese people in Hsinchu and Ilan spot-checked the interviewees. However, due to some misgivings about the emotions of subjects and the truthfulness of their words, subjects were carefully chosen prior to the interview. Although this arrangement

avoided some unnecessary difficulties, there was the danger that interviewees could become impatient or refuse to answer questions. This was the first limitation on the research.

Experienced Officers

To know what officers of various positions think about illegal immigration hot spots, the requirement was that sampling be undertaken in eastern, northern, southern, and middle parts of Taiwan. However, the researcher faced difficulty in collecting samples. Due to geographical convenience, the researcher began interviews with officers in middle Taiwan and continued, by using the 'snowballing' technique, to locate additional interviewees. In principle, each area should have had at least one representative interviewed, but average sampling in each area was not attainable due to geographical reasons. This was the second limitation of the research conducted.

Findings and conclusions

This project resulted in three findings:

1. Most illegal female immigrants are involved in the sex industry.
2. Gangs involved in illegal immigration from Mainland China have special characteristics which result in the geographically different distribution of illegal immigration hot spots.
3. In Taiwan, there is a correlation between the distribution of illegal immigration hot spots and the market mechanism for the sex industry.

Let us examine each conclusion in more detail.

Most illegal female immigrants are involved in the sex industry

As Table 2 shows, most female illegal immigrants in Taiwan are involved with the sex industry and work in the northern area, but some of them are active in the middle or southern area. This indicates that, although the sex market is centralised in the north, in other areas there is still a demand for the sex industry.

Gangs involved in illegal immigration from Mainland China have special characteristics which result in the geographically different distribution of illegal immigration hot-spots

During the interviews, we found that most police officers agree with a saying that is common within the circle of smuggling and illegal immigration: 'South, smuggling goods; north, smuggling illegal immigrants'. This saying reflects the difference between the northern gangs and the southern gangs. Armed with fisher-boats, the southern gangs smuggle tobacco, agricultural products, drugs and firearms. Since the southern ports are mainly international ports with huge ships, contraband is easily hidden and smuggled. The reason why the southern gangs do not engage in illegal immigration is that they have easy access to resources in the familiar environment in the south and because there is demand for smuggled goods in the south. In contrast, the northern gangs engage in illegal immigration because the north is close to Mainland China and they are more familiar with the northern environment than the southern environment.

That the southern gangs are primarily engaged in smuggling goods while the northern gangs are mainly involved in smuggling illegal immigrants is a stable phenomenon. The main reason for this stability is that any change of the smuggling strategy and of the smuggled items would result in serious effects on possible profits and costs to the gangs, both south and north. More specifically, the cost of smuggling illegal immigrants is typically higher than that of smuggling goods, for the former involves human lives. Taking this factor into consideration would lead gangs in the south not to easily change its strategy of smuggling goods, for making the change would mean more risks and higher costs. Similarly, since the gangs in the north have better resources and conditions for smuggling illegal immigrants, they can reduce the risks and maximise the profits. There is thus no need for the northern gangs to change the strategy of smuggling people, despite the typically higher risks involved.

A correlation between the distribution of illegal immigration hot spots and the market mechanism of the sex industry exists in Taiwan

Based on our analysis, we can see that to know the distribution of illegal immigration hot spots we first have to know the expenses of illegal immigration. According to the interviews with police officers, expenses of illegal immigration differ by methods of immigration. In the case of immigrants who are guaranteed work after arriving in Taiwan, the expenses are higher. Such phenomenon will affect how illegal immigrants from Mainland China choose their work. For fear of being caught, they

will prefer work that offers a high salary so that they can soon pay off the high expenses of illegal immigration.

Due to high expenses of illegal immigration, female illegal immigrants tend to choose the sex industry for a high and quick compensation. Moreover, the sex industry is competitive and requires a huge amount of cheap labour, for which Mainland Chinese females qualify. The demand for the sex market in big cities is huge. Gangs of illegal agents carefully calculate the lowest cost and possible risks, with the attempt to send those females into cities safely. This study confirms the fact that illegal immigration hot spots emerge in city areas. (See Table 4 for details of the conditions for forming illegal immigration hot spots, as identified by the police interviewees.)

Table 4: The conditions for forming illegal immigration hot spots

| Conditions for forming hot-spots | Number of police interview | Detail of interview |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| The demand of sex industry | I | Hard to settle down once you arrive at the city. Someone will arrange work for you. Men go to the building site and women to the sex pubs. |
| | N | Yeah...the police arrest women involved with sex industry, and men with illegal immigration...Male illegal immigrants are arranged to work at building sites as part-time workers; women usually are involved with the sex industry. |
| | C | There is great demand in the labour market in the north. Of course the development of the building industry is centralised in the north. We have few records of arrest in the south, most of them happening in Taipei. Indeed the Kaohsiung MRT demands labour, but they hire foreign workers. |

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| | C | <p>Women are usually involved in the sex industry. Speaking from the aspect of supply and demand, as long as customers need sex, there will be sex agents. Since there are sex agents, the possibility of being arrested enhances. The rate of successfully arresting female illegal immigrants in Chiayi city during 93-95 was much lower than in Taichung City, Taipei City, and Kaohsiung City. But you would say that during 91-93 there were many female illegal immigrants. That is because at that time there were many pretend marriages. To catch sex agents you can bait the hook, but it is hard to detect pretend marriages. In 92 the Snake-Hunting Project was carried out and female immigrants became fewer---fewer than males after 93.</p> |
| Index effect of urban form | C | <p>We can't say the cases happen mostly in the west section of Chaiyi City. If you compare Chaiyi City with Chaiyi County, there are few female illegal immigrants involved with the sex industry than the latter, because Chaiyi County is not a big city. At most, there are some sex spots in Dalin and Minsyong. There are more motels and sex spots in the west section of Chaiyi City, so that the police always arrest criminals.</p> |
| | G | <p>Taichung and areas north of it are spots favored by illegal immigrants because the police caught many in these places. You can easily find a job in these areas. Taipei citizens tend to hire workers for work demanding labour, but in the south, people do this kind of work themselves. Thus in the north there are more chances for finding a job. That's why they've caught many illegal immigrants in the Northeast Coast.</p> |
| Special features of smuggling gangs | M | <p>There are few illegal immigrants in Chaiyi. Mostly they smuggle tobacco and wines. There are more illegal immigrants in the Northeast Coast.</p> |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| | A | In fact, this has nothing to do with historical origin. There are also gangs in the south, but in the south they smuggle tobacco and drugs...if we talk of majority, they smuggle tobacco in Dasi of Ilan, and Suao; illegal immigration happens in Taiwan and Keelung; smuggling of guns and drugs is in Kaohsiung and Pingtung. Indeed there is demand of “humans” in the south, but his gang doesn't focus in that...so to speak, the demand in the north is greater. |
| | B | Talking of the southern area...never heard of it...if ever, it is in Pingtung or Chaiyi. Have you heard there is illegal immigration in Kaohsiung? I am thinking about this, too. It is about the crime form and method. I smuggle tobacco so that I won't smuggle firearms. I don't have any channels and source of goods if I am to smuggle firearms. Similarly, you won't sell drugs if you sell tobacco. |
| | D | If you come from Fuchien you won't disembark on the eastern coast because of the long distance. Rather, you may choose Taichung or the Northeast Coast. Coast of Hsinchu is the closest and smoothest, but recently they seldom come from there because everyone knows that the police will catch you. |

Note: The above information is based on interviews with police officers.

The qualitative interviews clearly reveal that there are natural, human and marketing factors at work in the formation of illegal immigration hot-spots. The main factor operating in the sex industry is the market mechanism. Markets and profits are mainly responsible for attracting the illegal agent gangs (Human Snakes) to smuggle illegal immigrants. This research result, however, does not show whether the smuggled Chinese women are victims or not. Some of the Chinese female interviewees indicated that they were not coerced when smuggled, and hence that they did not perceive themselves as victims of these smuggling incidents. The relation between smuggling illegal immigrants on the one hand and the reality and perception of the smuggled people's victimisation on the other hand is intriguing, but we cannot investigate this issue here. It will be the topic of our next research.

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