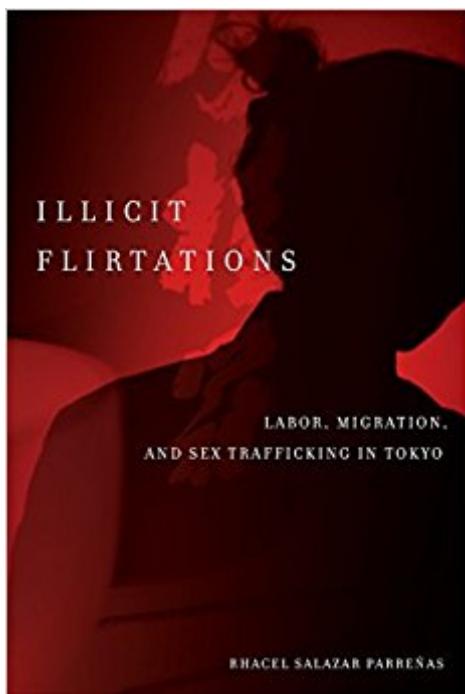


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# Illicit Flirtations: Labor, Migration, And Sex Trafficking In Tokyo



## Synopsis

In 2004, the U.S. State Department declared Filipina hostesses in Japan the largest group of sex trafficked persons in the world. Since receiving this global attention, the number of hostesses entering Japan has dropped by nearly 90 percentâ •from more than 80,000 in 2004 to just over 8,000 today. To some, this might suggest a victory for the global anti-trafficking campaign, but Rhacel ParreÃ as counters that this drastic declineâ •which stripped thousands of migrants of their livelihoodsâ •is in truth a setback. ParreÃ as worked alongside hostesses in a working-class club in Tokyo's red-light district, serving drinks, singing karaoke, and entertaining her customers, including members of the yakuza, the Japanese crime syndicate. While the common assumption has been that these hostess bars are hotbeds of sexual trafficking, ParreÃ as quickly discovered a different world of working migrant women, there by choice, and, most importantly, where none were coerced into prostitution. But this is not to say that the hostesses were not vulnerable in other ways. *Illicit Flirtations* challenges our understandings of human trafficking and calls into question the U.S. policy to broadly label these women as sex trafficked. It highlights how in imposing top-down legal constraints to solve the perceived problemsâ •including laws that push dependence on migrant brokers, guest worker policies that bind migrants to an employer, marriage laws that limit the integration of migrants, and measures that criminalize undocumented migrantsâ •many women become more vulnerable to exploitation, not less. It is not the jobs themselves, but the regulation that makes migrants susceptible to trafficking. If we are to end the exploitation of people, we first need to understand the actual experiences of migrants, not rest on global policy statements. This book gives a long overdue look into the real world of those labeled as trafficked.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Illicit Flirtations is an excellent book that is well written and thoroughly researched. Parreñas untangles an incredibly complex system of migration, middlemen, and international laws to reveal the global implications of the US morality on international policies and migrant workers. Parreñas should be commended for making a sensitive and cogent argument that avoids sweeping claims." (Cristina Firpo International Review of Modern Sociology)"Parrenas did an excellent job in combining field interviews with participant observation to obtain rich and reliable data from her research subjects. The result is a highly readable and informative book with firsthand accounts of the work and lives of Filipina hostesses in Tokyo. Parrenas' book is based not only on rich, empirical data, but also on theoretical framework. This book undoubtedly makes a major contribution to our understanding of the relationship between hostessing, prostitution, and sex trafficking." (Ko-lin Chin Criminal Law and Criminal Justice Books)"With chapters exploring how Filipina female and transgender hostesses manage love, flirtation, and morality in Japan, Parreñas deepens the reader's understanding of the socially constructed nature of these phenomena. Comparing the situations of female and transgender hostesses also provides an excellent intersectional analysis of hostessing as, for example, transgender hostesses reported much more satisfaction with their work conditions than did female hostesses overall." (Bernadette Barton American Journal of Sociology)"With insight, brio, and compelling empirical evidence, Rhacel Parreñas offers a novel interpretation of Filipino hostesses working in Japan. Boldly departing from standard accounts that treat all migrant hostesses as equal victims of sexual trafficking, Illicit Flirtations presents a nuanced portrayal of the women's multiple labor and sentimental experiences. Scholars and policy-makers should take note." (Viviana A. Zelizer Princeton University, author of Purchase of Intimacy and Economic Lives: How Culture Shapes the Economy)"Avoiding broad-brushstroke mischaracterizations of sex-work, Rhacel Parreñas makes an important contribution to transnational feminist scholarship by productively reworking multiple binaries—motion and stasis, fixity and freedom, opportunity and risk—through her concept of 'indentured mobility.' She refuses to view her subjects as victims in need of rescue by Euro-American feminists, while simultaneously enables a useful analysis of the vulnerability to human rights violations all these women experience." (Susan Stryker Indiana University-Bloomington, editor of The Transgender Studies Reader)"By now, Rhacel Parreñas's

depth of knowledge about the migrations of Filipinas allows her to mark distinctions, unsettle commonplace understandings, and make legible that which is shrouded. Out of this depth also comes the possibility of genuine theorizing. This is an extraordinary book whose audience will go well beyond the specialists of the subject." (Saskia Sassen)"In this superb new study, Parreñas takes her rapt readers into the lives of scantily clad Filipina hostesses in Tokyo nightclubs and into the work of the professional flirter. Caught between money-gouging middlemen, club owners, and anti-trafficking laws, these women live in a labile moral world. They mix business, body, and heart in complex ways, each making peace with her own mix in her own way. A brilliant work, a must-read." (Arlie Hochschild author of *Commercialization of Intimate Life: Notes from Home and Work*)"Illicit Flirtations draws on ethnographic immersion to illuminate the little understood reality of Filipina hostesses in Japan. Rhacel Salazar Parreñas's courageous, nuanced ethnography and provocative analysis of 'indentured mobility' make vital contributions to our understanding of the social realities of migration and to the debate on the policies that regulate it." (Robert C. Smith Baruch College, CUNY, author of *Mexican New York: Transnational Worlds of New Immigrants*)"Unflinching in its stark descriptions of day-to-day activities that transpire inside an entertainment club, the author detailed all the mundane and gritty matters of working as an entertainer in Japan . . . [T]his book contributes to the literature on Filipinos in Japan as it enriches our knowledge of what particularly goes on in the life of an entertainer." (Cherry Amor Dugtong-Yap)"This book is a triumph from a leading scholar of migrant-female labor. In this work of daring ethnography and thinking, Rhacel Parreñas challenges conventional views about sex work and sex trafficking, revealing sex work as not solely prostitution but a continuum of practices, along which issues of volition, morality, and law collide and converge in complex dynamics." (Mae Ngai Columbia University, author of *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*)"After extensive research, which included several months working undercover as a hostess herself, Parreñas arrived at a nuanced understanding of [Filipina hostesses'] situation . . . The book brings together issues of gender and labor migration with discussion of human trafficking, contributing the theoretical concept of 'indentured mobility' to describe the hostesses' situation . . . [Parreñas] calls attention to the varied perceptions of the women themselves, noting that their experience of their work depends on the particular moral lens they use to evaluate and make sense of what they do." (Natalie Marine-Street Stanford Report)"Illicit Flirtations is a daring rethinking of the conditions of trafficking, the nature of sex work, the meaning of citizenship, and the moral classifications given by the workers themselves to intimate labor performed for pay. Bold and daring, this engaging ethnography breaks theoretical ground by advancing our understanding of the

relationship between the economic and the sexual, focusing on global exchanges of people as well as cash." (Eileen Boris University of California, Santa Barbara, editor of *Intimate Labors: Cultures, Technologies, and the Politics of Care*) "Illicit Flirtations brings together riveting ethnography, conceptual innovation, and significant policy implications. Parreñas breathes new life into gender and labor migration scholarship with an analytic focus on sexuality, morality, and money to challenge simplistic notions of trafficked victims. This book prompts us to rethink what we thought we knew about citizenship, intimacy, and work in transnational contexts." (Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo University of Southern California, author of *Domesticstica: Immigrant Workers Cleaning and Caring in the Shadows of Affluence*)

Rhacel Salazar Parreñas is Professor of Sociology at the University of Southern California. She is the author of *Servants of Globalization: Women, Migration, and Domestic Work* (Stanford University Press, 2001) and *Children of Global Migration: Transnational Families and Gendered Woes* (Stanford University Press, 2005).

This is my favorite book ever written. Very informative, inspiring and well researched. I used it for my senior thesis and I could read it over and over again to keep learning new things. Completely shocked and very compelling. Explains the complexity of the sex industry in Japan and all the different angles of it.

Purchased for a university class. The author successfully traces the links between immigration, nationality, sexuality, gender, beauty ideals, prostitution, trafficking, and employment abroad. She also keeps things fresh, entertaining, and insightful. I would easily read this book for leisure even if it weren't required. Never an alarmist, Parrenas explains how the concept of these women as trafficked sex workers not only feeds into the West's puritanical savior complex, but actually opens up these Filipina hostesses to worse exploitation than before.

Parrenas' well researched book on Filipina hostesses working in Tokyo provides much needed insight into the lives of these migrant workers, and the great harms that anti-trafficking policies have on their lives. An important read for anyone interested in gender, labor, and migration. A critical read for people designing counter-trafficking interventions, be they government or NGO.

Excellent. Sociological. Glean from for anthropologists as well. Anyone interested in labor,

migration, and the sex trade. Very readable while theoretically challenging.

Wonderful research, Great scale of content & rarely to find the similar ones. This books make me know about the error of Human Trafficking's norm. Rhacel ParreÃ  as invited us to discuss and set the controversy debate about justice and order in the world politic.

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