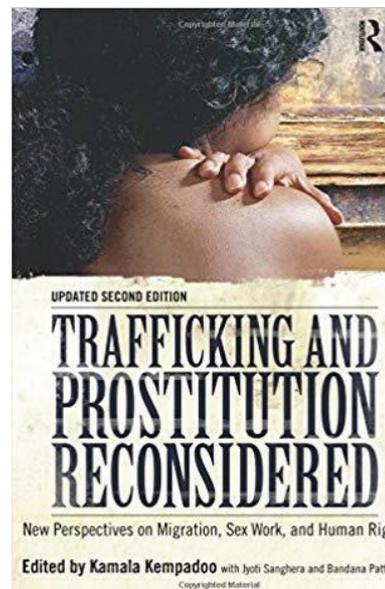


Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered: New Perspectives on Migration, Sex Work and Human Rights

Edited by Kamala Kempadoo with Jyoti Sanghera and Bandana Pattanaik
Second Edition
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Reviewed by Susan Robinson



The book *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered* edited by Kamala Kempadoo and others, challenges the traditional discourse and rhetoric around human trafficking, voluntary and involuntary migration and voluntary and forced prostitution; in order to reframe the discussion of this problem within a human rights perspective. The book is a compilation of edited essays that cover the pertinent themes and sub themes that need to be considered to properly understand these issues. It is divided into four parts with each part covering a broad theme with the summarised themes being: shifting paradigms/globalisation; the complexities of sex work; reports from the field; and looking back and looking forward.

Human trafficking and forced prostitution are primarily international crimes but these issues are gaining more attention in the domestic criminal justice field as more is known about how victims are trafficked into western countries and sexually exploited within these countries. In the past the response has been to treat the victims as criminals, firstly for being engaged in prostitution and secondly for being in the country illegally. The authors argue that this has been an unsuccessful approach in preventing sex trafficking and has also been an unjust approach.

Criminalising the victims of trafficking and forced prostitution conceptually places the responsibility for the trafficking on the victims rather than the traffickers. It also places an obstacle in the way for victims to come forward to report the crimes against them. This book discounts much of the previous attention given to these subjects as hyperbolic and sensationalist and tries to reconceptualise sexual slavery by unpacking and normalising the types of arrangements covered by this term. For example, one of the authors makes the claim that true slavery makes up a very small proportion of the people smuggled across the border and that most of the sex and labour workers smuggled into countries are in debt-bondage, indentureship or tied to exploitative contracts. Unfortunately, the author does not successfully argue why these conditions are actually different to slavery.

In regard to the trafficking of children, the author makes good points around the tendency for children to be lumped together with adults in the discourse around trafficking and the need for change in this regard, especially when it comes to the development of anti-trafficking legislation. In regard to the sexual exploitation of children the complexities around the issue of consent is considered in the discussion, as is the tendency to criminalise children for having been engaged in illicit activities, some of which, the author argues, is tied up in issues of consent and agency. I found this argument to be a little confronting and confusing as it seems to suggest that children should be given the right to choose in regard to these activities. Overall however, the author states that he is advocating for the protection of children in these circumstances rather than supporting child prostitution as it might otherwise be interpreted.

The book covers the changing international legal and policy environment but disappointingly it tends to convey an overtly left leaning political position on topics such as immigration and counter-terrorism. The language used by one author refers to the enactment of “regressive” anti-terrorism laws and there is discourse around “the other” which has the effect of demonising all conservative opinions on immigration and national security without actually engaging in a balanced discussion of these or considering other perspectives as potentially being able to contribute positively to the discourse.

Despite the criticisms contained in this review, in the main, the second edition of the book *Trafficking and Prostitution Reconsidered* edited by Kamala Kempadoo et al is an interesting and well compiled book that is useful for criminologists, victimologists, social workers and other academics interested in better understanding the trafficking process and how to assist the victims. It is also a useful book for professionals working in the criminal justice field, students studying this area and those working in law enforcement. People working in border control and immigration areas may also find this book useful.

ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Dr Susan Robinson is a criminologist and lecturer with the Australian Graduate School of Policing and Security. Her research interests include theoretical and applied criminology, women in the criminal justice system, crimes involving women and children, child abuse, policing, juvenile crime and correctional services.

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