

politicized agendas and contributed enormously to constitutional reforms and legislative changes. Three key factors led to the rise of new women's movements: 1) influence of international norms and ideas pertaining to women's rights; 2) political liberalization and democratization; and 3) access to alternative funding sources such as international donors.

The authors assert that a thriving and politicized women's movement is insufficient for the successful entrenchment of women's rights. Rather, countries that pass legislations safeguarding women's rights exhibit the following patterns: 1) active autonomous women's movements; 2) openness to changing international norms regarding women's rights and representation; 3) availability and deployment of resources to advance women; and 4) the opening of new opportunities as a result of a major upheaval, such as the end of conflict. For example, Cameroon, Mali, and Kenya have encountered challenges in the legislative process in comparison to post-conflict Uganda and Mozambique that have implemented constitutional changes.

Even in countries that have been open to change, not all proposed legislative changes by women's organizations are embraced. Proposals that have received the most resistance often challenge traditional customs, family relations, and gender relations. The recent August 2009 mass protests in Mali against a new family code promoting women's marriage and inheritance rights comes to mind as a perfect case in point.

The authors provide an illuminating discussion on the challenges that women's movements face such as government attempts to restrain autonomy and voice as well as expectations that demand for equality and rights will be limited to particular aspects of societies rather than cross-cutting issues. Another challenge that the authors discuss is public misperception about acquisition of assets as a result of donor funds instead of utilizing the money to

address the issues of the community and less privileged. I believe they have glossed over this issue by offering the explanation: "Because of the general deprivation of society, this (mis)perception is more strongly felt in Africa than in other parts of the world." I think that they should have addressed the possibilities of this being true and the cases in which it has happened rather than brush off critics' often legitimate perceptions as "(mis)perceptions". They should have further broached an honest discussion on how to minimize this "(mis)perception" and create more transparency and accountability to the community.

African women's movements were optimistically characterized as organized across ethnic, clan, religious, and rural-urban divides while the authors failed to question possible class and power relations that may pervade women's organizations. Also, there is a disproportionate focus on women politicians and rights activists whereas other women's organizations that are more informal and/or with less opportunities to influence policy and legislation were submerged. More disconcertingly, the authors, whether intentionally or unintentionally, essentialize African women and fail to sufficiently demonstrate that there may be conflicting interests and definitions of women's rights among women. To exemplify, I recall that while many women's rights activists promoted the proposed family code reform in Mali, there were some women's organizations that were concomitantly protesting it.

Despite the above criticisms, *African Women's Movements* presents an unparalleled and much needed comparative analysis of politics, gender, and women's movements in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, I like that the authors note that African women's movements are not only influenced by international norms, but also contribute to the creation of international norms. This book addresses any misconstrued notion that African women have limited agency

and that African women's movements are a byproduct of feminist movements in the North.

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GLOBALIZATION, PROSTITUTION AND SEX-TRAFFICKING: CORPOREAL POLITICS

Elina Penttinen
London: Routledge, 2008

REVIEWED BY LEEANN TOWNSEND

I was quite intrigued by the project that Elina Penttinen endeavoured to carry out in her book. Through an examination of sexual commerce in Finland and Russia, the author proposed to do the following: to question what sorts of subjectivities and agency are produced by globalization; to ascertain how globalization is embodied and enacted in everyday life; to write feminist IR, an alternative to traditional mainstream/male-stream academic IR; and decentre positivist research methods by conducting an ethnography of sex bars and foregrounding the narratives of the women who work in them. This all sounded rather promising and potentially useful for studies of international relations, globalization, and sex work and having practical implications for feminist praxis and methodology. After reading through the text, however, I am not convinced that the author fulfills these goals.

In the first three chapters, Penttinen draws on theorists such as Judith

Butler, Luce Irigaray, and predominantly on Michael Foucault and his notion of governmentality to make her arguments. She contends that globalization is a form of bio-power in which women adjust to the changing demands for particular bodies. Penttinen maintains that globalization produces sex work as a means to cope with globalization. New forms of agency and subjectivities are created by global neo-liberal processes of marketization and commercialization. The resultant agent and subject positions are both gendered and ethnicized. The ethnicized other woman, such as the construction of the “Eastern girl” that Penttinen discusses, has been produced as a subject position, when she takes advantage of the demand for an erotic other or becomes an abject consumable body. The position of the ethnicized other women engaged in sex work needs to be maintained in order for the category of subjects to exist. These are all interesting points.

While the author’s theoretical insights are important contributions, there are a number of issues in her text that need to be questioned. In chapter three, Penttinen relies on Appadurai’s concepts of ethnoscaping, technoscaping, finascapings, ideoscapes, and mediascapings to discuss the landscapes of globalization. The flow of people, through migration or trafficking, establishes an ethnoscape. Penttinen reveals the sexscapes within these concepts. The fact that Russian women are working in the sex trade in Finland is an ethnoscape. The technoscape refers to the tools and techniques that rapidly disseminate information about commercial sex. The finascapingscape refers to the profits that the sex industry generates. The ideoscapes include the various discourses that exist about the sex industry, including rights movements, abolitionist movements, and the like. The mediascape refers to the depiction of the sex industry in the media. All of these landscapes have shadow sexscapes. For instance, according to Penttinen, the shadow

sexscape refers to the informal/illegal sex trade. The shadow finascapingscape is carried out through the buying and selling of trafficked women. The shadowscapes of the mediascape include the informal networks that advertise sexual services. Although this discussion does make sense, the employment of this “fancy” language, as the author dubbed it, seems to reinforce mainstream-positivist academic writing, not challenge it.

Penttinen obtains the data used in this book from her fieldwork in sex bars, including her observations between clients and prostitutes, erotic dancers, and pimps, as well as informal conversations with women who work in sex bars in Finland. The author also acquires information from local people, police, and observations of trafficked women. In an effort to move away from quantitative studies, the author attempts to share her data as a form of ethnography that foregrounds narratives. In addition, Penttinen makes a conscious effort to situate her positionality and privileged researcher role throughout the text. She notes that her Russian male assistant helped her to develop rapport with many of the female sex bar employees that she wished to speak with. She notes that the managers of the bars knew who she was and allowed her to conduct her research in their establishments. In chapter four, the author tells the story about what she saw in these sex bars. In chapter five, Penttinen provides a fictional narrative of a Russian sex worker in Finland in order to discuss the subjectivities of this experience. And, in chapter six, the author presents information that she obtained while talking with erotic dancers. While I applaud Penttinen’s attempts to employ non-standard research methods, I find that the author’s voice dominates the text, thus reinforcing hierarchies. This, coupled with her fictive narratives, often sounds like a work of sensationalized journalism. Where are the voices of the women whose situations the author is taking up? There must be a way to employ

non-standard research methods (ethnography, fieldwork that prohibits note taking, etc.) for research topics that are ethically (and logistically) challenging while also prioritizing the voices of those groups being studied.

At the start of her text Penttinen asserts that she sees prostitution as an ethnicized and sex specific position produced by the bio-power of globalization and that such a position does not necessitate her participation in contentious moral, rights based, or choice versus force debates. However, the author does not remain as politically neutral as she so claimed. Penttinen explicitly states that she does not share the view that prostitution could be characterized as sex work. She does not think that the distinction between forced and free prostitution works all that well. The author explicitly states that she is against prostitution, she cannot help but notice the “harm” that the employment in sex bars does to women, as well as commenting on the “dehumanizing,” “degrading,” and “disgusting” nature of these establishments. When the author does provide quotes they are in support of these claims. As well, the author tells us that she wants to “evoke a feeling in her readers” so that we will not remain “neutral bystanders.” The author certainly provides fodder for abolitionist politics. While a book review may not be the best medium to debate our respective politics, I can at least state that this book does, despite the author’s claim, espouse a particular political agenda. While trafficking is certainly an important issue, Penttinen relies on an ambiguous definition of what she understands as trafficking. She seems to be adopting a victim perspective regarding all migration and sex work and does not allow for the diversity of experiences of women’s migration, employment, and agency. Such a stance could be dangerously adopted to tighten borders around the globe, restricting women’s entry into various countries under the guise

of “saving” women from trafficking – a very problematic situation. This book does foster a continuance of these feminist debates and, therefore, should be read, albeit cautiously.

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THE IDEA OF PROSTITUTION

Sheila Jeffreys
North Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 2008

REVIEWED BY ELYA M. DURISIN

Sheila Jeffreys' primary concern in *The Idea of Prostitution*, an updated version of her 1997 text of the same title, is to subject the sex workers' rights position (such as the idea that prostitution is work or that women have choice in prostitution) to a radical feminist critique. Jeffreys takes issue with what she describes as the 'normalization' of the sex industry by sex worker organizations and some postmodern and queer theorists writing on sexuality, and attempts to show how the interests being represented by these parties are not those of prostitute women but actually those of the sex industry. She includes chapters on prostitution as male violence and international approaches to ending trafficking of girls and women for work in the sex industry. As Jeffreys explains in the last chapter, her purpose in this book is to challenge the idea that "prostitution is just work, and sex, and choice."

With this text, Jeffreys revives a radical feminist anti-prostitution analysis; however she does not successfully overcome its limitations, which have caused it to fall out of

favour among many sex workers, activists, and academics. Jeffreys maintains that there is one definitive truth about prostitution, that is, it is violence. This results in her discounting sex workers and sex worker organizations that do not support her arguments. In describing her understanding of prostitution as a form of male violence, she acknowledges that not all prostitutes support this position. However, Jeffreys' resolution to this situation is to suggest that those sex workers who do not share her perspective should not be listened to as they have not been given adequate opportunity to understand the harm of their occupation. For Jeffreys, prostitution is an inherently harmful violation of women's human rights, regardless of context or what the women involved might think.

Jeffreys responds to arguments put forth by sex workers' rights activists through reference to American sex worker organizations and sex worker performing artists; however she does not engage with current writing and research from sex workers or sex worker organizations. A review of recent sex workers' writings and community and academic collaborations with sex workers' rights organizations clearly demonstrates that sex workers, and the organizations representing their interests, have a complex and sophisticated understanding of the problems, challenges, benefits, joys, and so on, of sex work. The sex workers' rights position recognizes that sex work is many things to many different people, the breadth of which cannot be appreciated through a lens that apprehends male violence exclusively. Sex workers' rights organizations recognize that sex workers may experience violence and exploitative working conditions; however they do not advocate for an abolition of prostitution.

Although Jeffreys' text, first published in 1997, was updated and reprinted in 2008, she has not engaged with the breadth of newer writing on prostitution, sex work, and traffick-

ing. She instead relies heavily on Hoigard and Finstad (1992,1993), Giobbe (1990,1991,1992), and Farley and Hotaling (1995) and does not engage with the plethora of methodological critique towards anti-prostitution feminist research. While Jeffreys maintains that prostitution is harmful to women in ways that other jobs are not and could not be, she does not discuss this assertion in relation to research on embodied, emotional, and care-giving labour, which is particularly relevant given the increase in service-related occupations such as domestic work in the global economy.

Jeffreys' discussion of trafficking in the concluding chapters of the text is particularly troubling in a climate where it is becoming increasingly difficult for women in many parts of the world to cross borders. She does not address how her position, one that sees all migration for work in the sex industry as trafficking and a violation of women's human rights, could be used by particular political interests to justify increased border security that would further limit women's rights to mobility.

This book is most useful if understood as a particular, and rather outdated, perspective on prostitution. It is reflective of a time in feminist theorizing and political debate on gender and sexuality in which feminists and sex workers were often pitted against one another. While it is important to recognize and discuss the problems with working conditions in sex industry, it is unclear what the advantages of this position are and why this perspective seems to have such lasting appeal among some feminists. Given the growth of the international and North American sex workers' rights movements, it is critical that academic researchers begin to take seriously the analyses of sex workers and the numerous sex worker organizations representing their interests.

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