

Prostitution, Harm and Gender Inequality: Theory, Research and Policy

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Prostitution, Harm and Gender Inequality brings together international research exploring the range of gendered harms to women involved in prostitution and the consequences of growth of the sex industry for global gender relations. While there is an increasing amount of research and academic output on prostitution, the current focus is often on discussion and critique of policy frameworks, and contemporary debates over harm are largely limited to sex trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. Less attention is paid to questions of how the sex industry perpetuates notions of objectification and male entitlement with respect to sexual access to women's bodies, despite being key feminist concerns for several decades. This position has become effectively marginalized, but the global growth and industrialization of the sex industry requires a return to these questions. Through exploring gendered inequality and re-engaging with an understanding of prostitution as harmful with impacts on the self and body that are experienced as abusive but do not always constitute violence, this book introduces a range of research and thinking, while also drawing on existing literature to explore the consequences of prostitution for women in the sex industry and wider gender relations. These issues are discussed with regard to: coercion and recruitment, including trafficking; notions of male entitlement in accounts of men who buy sex; critical interrogations of agency and choice; legal and policy frameworks; and representations of prostitution in popular culture.

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Editorial Review

Review
'This impressive collection tracks the multiple and substantial harms of the prostitution industry to women worldwide. Those seeking to normalize men's purchase of women rely on abstractions of agency and empowerment while marginalizing the recruitment and oppression that creates this lucrative industry. Anyone committed to equality between men and women will find in this book a welcome dose of reality.' Janine Benedet, University of British Columbia, Canada 'This lucid and wide-ranging volume constitutes a much-needed intervention in feminist debates about prostitution. Integrating theoretical innovation with new empirical research, Prostitution, Harm and Gender Inequality is a must-read for scholars and activists alike.' Rebecca Whisnant, University of Dayton, USA 'Taken together, the contributions of the book can be seen as pieces of a puzzle. Each one tells a part of the story of the contemporary commercialization of sex, which has been culturally normalized, by being conceptualized as women's 'choice'. Such popular approaches, the 'puzzle' shows, shadow the lived experiences of violence, exploitation and dehumanization of women in prostitution, while at the same time promoting regulatory policies based on decriminalization with doubtful effectiveness in controlling the industry.' LSE Review of Books 'In this hugely important work, the authors expose prostitution as a fundamental practice of gender inequality. It is shown to be both a cause and a consequence of unequal relations between women and men. Together the works blast through the fog of neoliberal rhetoric around individual choice and agency, and using evidence-based analysis place the harms inherent to prostitution centre-stage... Prostitution, Harm and Gender Inequality is crucial reading for academics, practitioners, and activists. What the research and analysis attest to is that as long as society tolerates or even enables prostitution, there can be no equality for women... Prostitution, Harm and Gender Inequality is an important contribution to the growing global resistance to the sex industry.' Gender & Development '... rather than presenting or advocating a single viewpoint ... Prostitution, Harm and Gender Inequality provides an engaging range of voices on various issues relating to prostitution through this analytic lens. ... an engaging, multifaceted review of the sex industry through the overarching analytic lens of gender inequality-the nuanced expressions of which work to tease out many of the intricacies often forgotten in oversimplified, polarised discussions on prostitution and its regulation. ... this collection offers an important contribution to the field and to progressing debates on how prostitution should be understood and responded to. the book would be useful and worthwhile for any academic or student with an interest in prostitution and the sex industry, and in gender (in)equality and feminism more broadly, to read.' Prostitution, Harm and Gender Inequality

About the Author
Dr Maddy Coy is Deputy Director of the Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit at London Metropolitan University, UK

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