

Lenore Walker  
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Kalyani Gopal *Editors*

# Handbook of Sex Trafficking

Feminist Transnational Perspectives

 Springer

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# Preface

We called this book *Handbook of Sex Trafficking: Feminist Transnational Perspectives* to reflect the most recent scholarship and practice for mental health clinicians working with survivors of the commercial sex trade. We have brought together authors from a variety of perspectives who have knowledge of working within the commercial sex trade industry. Given the recent focus on the topic of sex trafficking, we have included chapters with information from both academic scholars and those who are working in this area in various countries.

The term *transnational feminism* is now being used to denote what is perhaps the fourth wave of feminist scholarship that originated with the social science studies of the global economy and politics that transcends national and even regional borders. This is often due to supply and demand, with the demand for sex workers taking place in countries with resources to afford the trafficking industry and the supply that can be filled by those poorer countries, often in the Third World or colonized areas, where the supply is available and people are willing to emigrate to another country. Although the politics of the various governments continue to play a role, in fact, movement across borders for both people and goods has become much easier than ever reported previously.

The *feminist* part of the definition includes the study of power relationships and how gender, economics, and class impact on migration. In this book we particularly study the sex workers, many of whom migrate with or without knowing what the sex work will entail. We also discuss the conditions that give rise to the desire for migration, the economics that particularly impact women and the LGBTQ population, and the gender politics that intersect with vulnerability and recovery. We understand that our analyses come from sex workers who have left what is called “the life” and not from sex workers currently inside, often working under the belief that they stay because of free choice. We have read their reports in the literature but have not been persuaded that they entered the life all that voluntarily. Many sex workers have witnessed or experienced other forms of gender violence such as child abuse, domestic violence, sexual exploitation and harassment, and rape in addition to poverty, hunger, poor or no education, and lack of opportunity. Some are kidnapped and sold into trafficking, while others are lured and recruited in specific

ways, but most go through certain similar stages of commitment to their new work that are visible when we study large numbers of girls and women. One stage of commitment occurs when the sex worker makes the choice to remain in the life without coercion and with the knowledge of what the work will encompass. After all, if everyone entered the commercial sex trade voluntarily because it is such a desirable job, why would it be necessary for traffickers to lure, trick, purchase, kidnap, and enslave the women into their stables? Nonetheless, we continue to explore and respect the discussions of choice and consent provided by those active sex workers themselves.

The issue of sex trafficking has been added to the list of gender-based violence topics during the past 20 years following a period of about 30 years of feminist discourse around the issue of consent and choice for those women (and some heterosexual men and identified LGBTQ persons). Both groups of feminists believe that sex trafficking comes about because of the sexual, economic, and inequitable development and globalization of the world causing some girls and women to believe they have no other future. Both groups believe in the feminist understanding that the inequality between women and men causes men to have more power than women and therefore more options to earn money and have a future in the world. This is a social construction of the problems we are discussing. The divergence comes about with the issue of whether or not some sex workers have consented to work in the commercial sex industry with understanding of what is required. One group, often referred to as the “transnational anti-trafficking networkers,” believes that such consent is impossible because of the intersecting conditions that cause the lack of other choices, while the other group, often referred to as the “sex worker activists,” claims that a large number of sex workers who migrate know what the work entails and freely choose it.

The differences between these two groups, despite their feminist similarities, are important for those of us who are interested in prevention and recovery when working with survivors of sex trafficking. If our portrayal of the typical sex worker is one who is naively duped into their life of horror from which escape is nearly impossible, we miss the positive parts of the experience that keep these girls and women going back to what they call “the life.” Human rights networks suggest that prostitution should be seen as a form of labor engaged with self-determination and not as a result of violence against women although they do concede that sex trafficking may not be voluntarily entered into by many young girls, boys, and LGBTQ-identified persons. In these discussions there is often a distinction made between prostitution and sex trafficking with the former being voluntary and the latter coerced. Other feminists conclude that the gendered structure of life prohibits true free choice. We include these discussions in various articles throughout this book, hoping that readers will form their own opinions, listening to both sides of the story.

In the first part, we include chapters that describe many of the compromises made internationally with the two most important actions taken: the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons* (2000) and the *US Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act (PL-106-386)* (2000) which has been reauthorized every 5 years with the latest in 2015 titled *Justice for Victims of Trafficking*

*Act (PL-114-22)* in response to desiring a greater emphasis on programs for victims rather than criminalization of traffickers. Belle gives an excellent account of the typical definitions used in the field of study and explains some of the differences in philosophy, while Walker and Gaviria further describe the US actions around the world. Dryjanska argues that sex trafficking is akin to modern-day slavery, while Pataki and Robison argue just as forcefully that choice and consent must be considered. Mesa adds the view of a government agency creating policy and offering services. Drain looks at sex trafficking from an organizational systems view. We believe this is the essence of *transnational feminism*: understanding these issues from all sides of the discussion.

There is no question that sex is power for women. But does commercial sex work actually give power to women? Those of us who are mental health workers see so many who are harmed by their work, similar to others who have been victims of other forms of violence against women. The stigmatization and degradation are all part of the job. The activist sex workers claim that decriminalizing it and providing prostitutes with the human rights and labor conditions typically found in a job would eliminate the negative effects of prostitution. The finances behind what is sometimes called the transnational shadow market of trafficking make it difficult to combat and demand change. Yet, legalization of prostitution in the Netherlands has not had such an impact although health conditions for the workers and police protection have definitely improved some job conditions.

One of the issues needing more information is the impact racism has had on part of the sex worker's conditions. We explore the question of who are the victims in the second part looking at race, culture, ethnicity, poverty, and war as they intersect with children, gender, and sexual orientation. Until recently, before the collapse of the Soviet Union, the typical sex worker was a woman of color, usually from Asia or Africa. Today, Russian women, especially those from the Ukraine, are in demand even in Iowa.<sup>1</sup> Gill and Gaviria describe the high risk factors that make a girl vulnerable to being seduced by a trafficker, and Barron describes the risk factors for boys and men as well as those identifying as LGBTQ. Sarachaga-Barato writes about child brides who are forced into marriages with adult men who have raped them and then sexually exploit them for their own commercial gain. War has always been associated with the rape and pillage of the women in a country. Antonopoulou describes the plight of the Syrian children who are forced to flee their war-torn country in search of a better life. With or without their families, many of these children end up being trafficked as a way to survive.

In the third part, we turn our attention to the traffickers about whom less is known. Sidun describes what we do know about the traffickers and presents some ideas about what to do about them. We include issues around the seduction of

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<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Erin Murphy, Sex Trafficking in Iowa Widespread, Experts Say, *The Gazette*, Aug. 26, 2016 <http://www.thegazette.com/subject/news/government/sex-trafficking-in-iowa-widespread-experts-say-20160826>; Lee Rood, Des Moines Identified as Top 100 Human Trafficking Site, *The Des Moines Register*, Nov. 16, 2016 <http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2016/11/16/des-moines-identified-top-100-human-trafficking-site/93952890/>.

children by other children and gangs, an important source of those sex trafficked. Lambine and Gaviria suggest that sex trafficking is more lucrative than even the drug trade for gangs as it is not a commodity that gets used up. We also include several stories by Antonopoulou about missing children and a possible sex trafficking ring with parents who themselves may have been trafficked at one point in their lives, engaging in selling their boys in Greece. Sarachaga-Barato and Walker attempt to understand the phenomenon of women who were once victims and then become the victimizer of other girls and women. Many of those who are arrested cover for the usually male head trafficker, so the statistics make it appear that there are more women who are in charge than actually are. Finally, Alicea and Gopal describe the role of financial institutions and economic structure that keeps trafficking a flourishing business despite all the laws and policies outlawing it.

Preventing people from being trafficking victims must start when boys and girls are young, learning to recognize the signs of seduction. Gopal describes the Safe Schools curriculum used in the schools that both boosts the youth's self-esteem and mood and educates them of the dangers behind the seduction. The SAFECHR group led by Gopal has worked with community leaders to help them be aware of these dangerous lures. A fascinating new program developed by groups of long-distance truckers and airline flight attendants has saved many of those trafficking victims being transported when recognized by a trained person who had learned what to do is described in Trimble, Rivard and Gopal's chapter.

In Part V, we present the discussion about trauma treatment and Walker's STEP and Mahler's description of Complex Trauma Treatment, two evidence-based treatment programs with the caveat that most of the psychotherapy treatment has been studied in the United States and not in other countries around the world. Nonetheless, it is important to provide these tools for clinicians who will see survivors needing help in recovery from their time as a sex worker. Meichenbaum describes the most important evidence-informed core therapeutic tasks that those who were sex trafficked need to become survivors. It is important to identify these survivors as experiencing complex post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms rather than personality disorders that do not lend to designing helpful interventions.

Survivors who get out describe their feelings from the abuse, degradation, and harm done to their health and well-being. Dealing with the feelings of betrayal when the man (or sometimes woman) who made them promises reneged or failed to mention the rest of the deal when luring them into "the life" is similar to battered women who feel betrayed by the loving partner who turns abusive when he doesn't get her to do what he wants or the child who feels betrayed when her father or his priest demands sex in return for love. These are difficulties psychotherapists trained in trauma-specific approaches have learned to help clients deal with. Re-empowerment, a specific feminist therapy intervention, is helpful in these situations as are many of the other techniques working with regaining power and control to rebuild a future with choice. Adapting many of the trauma-specific techniques to the sex trafficking victim seeking recovery is still a daunting task. Needle applies her work with women and couples who have had sexual issues to those survivors who may want to engage in a negotiated couple relationship also in this part.

One of the major areas affected when people are exposed to trauma is their ability to recover with resilience should a future trauma occur. Meichenbaum has explored the various approaches to restore resilience in survivors who are known to succumb to new traumatic experiences without rebuilding their capacity to heal and recover. He also includes a chapter on special ways to bolster resilience in LGBTQ youth who have come from homes where they witnessed or experienced abuse even prior to having been trafficked. In that chapter, he presents a checklist of core tasks that can help rebuild resilience.

In Part VI we present Dykstra's chapter discussing the program utilized by many religious organizations in attempting to restore hope, faith, and spirituality in those recovering from being sex trafficked. Her organization has developed this curriculum used to train others in countries around the world where the culture trusts their religious advisors more than a psychotherapist. Gopal shares the Safe Village Project where the girls and women go from having been trafficked to safe homes as a transition step toward recovery.

We end the book with Part VII where we examine what else is known about sex trafficking and the most recent statistics provided by the various groups dealing with this issue around the world. Obviously, Mahler, Sarachaga-Barato, and Gaviria's compilation is incomplete; these numbers change daily despite our best efforts to document the help given to those who wish to leave the life. Nonetheless, they give an important glimpse into the enormity of the problem around the world. Lambine gives us a glimpse of the work going on in the United Kingdom, while Antonopoulou focuses on Greece and Gaviria and Masias on Latin America as an attempt to describe the similarities and differences in each of these regions. We close with Cook's description of the plight of the Yazidi who are enslaved in the world of the Islamic terrorists. Women's rights are woefully absent in many regions of the world and compromised in other areas including those of Europe and the United States where it is often thought that there is more freedom than actually experienced.

In the end, if we truly come from a perspective of transnational feminism, we must consider the possibility that the middle-class values of obtaining gender equality, which may indeed help eradicate the commercial sex trade industry or at least sex trafficking, may be highly oppressive to poor women of color and further cause them to be trapped in the role of sexual servants if the other intersections are not also addressed. These include the intersection of poverty, race, economics, politics, class, as well as gender issues. We hope you keep this perspective in mind as you read through the various chapters in this book.

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**Natalie Sarachaga-Barato** is a Fourth year student at Nova Southeastern University in the Clinical Psychology PsyD program, forensic concentration, and expected to graduate summer of 2019. Upon graduation, Natalie would like to work with law enforcement and help to identify and protect sex trafficking victims from further victimization.

**Nancy M. Sidun, PsyD, ABPP, ATR** is a clinical psychologist, academician, and art therapist. She has published and presented widely on social justice and international women's issues. She served as the co-chair of the American Psychological Association's (APA) Task Force on Trafficking of Women and Girls. She has been awarded APA Fellow status by both the Society for the Psychology of Women and International Psychology.

**Dugal Trimble** is from Columbus, Ohio, a 17-year veteran of the trucking industry and now he currently works in the hospitality industry. He founded the Truckers Missing Child Project in 2012 to bring awareness to the transportation industry of all the missing children in the United States and hopefully help bring them home along the way.



**Lenore Walker** is a pioneer in studying the psychological impact of interpersonal violence and trauma. She began her early work when she was on the faculty at Rutgers Medical School at the University of Medicine and Dentistry in New Jersey in the early 1970s at first studying psychological effects from child abuse, then added battered women, and now sex trafficking and other forms of gender violence. Her later research funded by the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health named the Battered Woman Syndrome (BWS) and helped introduce it into the courts around

the USA and the world. In the 1980s it was her work on BWS that helped battered women who killed their abusive partners in self-defense get that testimony admitted in criminal trials. She had an independent practice of psychology for many years as well as contributed to policy development in many countries around the world as Director of the International Domestic Violence Institute. Although she has now retired from her long academic career at Nova Southeastern University's College of Psychology, she continues her research there as Professor Emeritus. She also maintains a small forensic private practice specializing on cases where gender violence issues are raised and is a keynote speaker and consultant around the world. Walker has published over 20 books on psychology covering women's issues, gender violence, and forensic psychology. Her most recent is the *Battered Woman Syndrome, 4th Edition*, in 2017 and in 2018 she has two new books in press: one co-edited on *Sex Trafficking* and one co-authored with her husband, David Shapiro, on *Forensic Practice for the Mental Health Clinician: Getting Started, Gaining Experience & Avoiding Pitfalls*. A master clinician and trainer, she has joined together with Dr. Rachel Needle to present the new trauma program for *Innovative Professional CEs*. To learn more about Dr. Walker and all her activities, please visit her website, [www.drlenoreewalker.com](http://www.drlenoreewalker.com).



**Yvonne G. Williams** has been working in the anti-trafficking field since 2004 and is the screenwriter and Second Unit Director for the first feature film produced about human trafficking in the USA, *A Dance for Bethany*. She is the co-founder of Trafficking in America Task Force, Inc. founded in 2011 and currently is a member of the Advisory Board with Jerome Elam, sex trafficking survivor; she served as co-host of the weekly television program, *Trafficking in America Now*, in 2011–2012. She served as the Coordinator for National Educators to Stop Trafficking (NEST) from 2013 to 2016. Yvonne has spoken at universities, conferences, churches, schools, and other organizations

across the USA bringing education and awareness about human trafficking in America. She is the recipient of the Middle TN and the State of Tennessee’s Professional Advocate of the Year Award of 2011 presented by the Tennessee Conference on Social Welfare, and the Visionary Award presented by TIATF in 2014.

**Part I**  
**What Is Sex Trafficking?**

# Defining Sex Trafficking



Nita Belles

Sex trafficking is a form of human trafficking, and although it is illegal in every country in the world, it is the second largest and fastest-growing crime worldwide (US Department of Health and Human Services, 2006). The definition of human trafficking set forth by the United Nations was universally adapted in the year 2000 (Dempsey, Hoyle, & Bosworth, 2012); prior to this, there was no internationally accepted definition. The definition of human trafficking set forth by the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons (UN Protocol) will be used throughout this publication and is defined as follows:

- (a) “Trafficking in persons” shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.
- (b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used.
- (c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered “trafficking in persons” even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article.
- (d) “Child” shall mean any person under 18 years of age.<sup>1</sup>

Human trafficking consists of labor trafficking as well as sex trafficking, which involves the exchange of commercial sex acts, such as pornography, striping, or

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ProtocolTraffickingInPersons.aspx>.

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prostitution, for something of monetary value. Sex trafficking involves a vulnerable person (often called a victim) who is controlled and sold by a trafficker (often called a pimp). It also will involve some sort of force, fraud, or coercion, because the victim does not have a choice in their participation. The victim is virtually powerless in defining the terms of the relationship, and the trafficker maintains power and control over what the victim does, wears, where she goes, how many sex buyers she will service, where, when, and for how much. The trafficker also controls all the financial proceeds from any sex that is sold. Although in most cases the trafficker is a male and the victim is a female, there are female traffickers and male victims as well as transgender victims and traffickers. For the purposes of our discussion, I will refer to the trafficker as a male and the victim as a female.

Sex trafficking victims may or may not admit that they are being forced to perform the sex act, and sometimes it requires further investigation into the history of the relationship between the potential sex trafficking victim and the potential sex trafficker. Often the victim comes to believe through continual force, fraud, or coercion that they are willingly participating. They may even refer to themselves as a “prostitute” or claim they are doing it on their own volition. Oftentimes a trafficker has multiple victims, and the group of people he controls are often called the trafficker’s stable. The trafficker has ultimate control over all his victims and just about every aspect of their lives. There is a hierarchy within the stable where every victim is vying to be the trafficker’s favorite, a position that is often referred to as “bottom bitch,” “bottom girl,” or just the “bottom.” In addition to providing dates, the trafficker gives the “bottom” authority to do things within the stable such as recruiting other victims, punishing victims when they do not conform to expectations, arranging dates, and collecting money.

Both sex trafficking and labor trafficking are often intertwined. For instance, a victim who is being sold for sex may also be required to do cleaning, cooking or other household chores, or run errands at the traffickers’ direction. A victim may be trafficked at times for labor (agriculture, nail salons, restaurant work, etc.) and at other times for sex acts by the same trafficker. She may also be forced to commit other crimes as a result of being under the traffickers control such as stealing, involvement with drugs, or transporting minor victims to sex trafficking dates. According to the UN protocol, sex trafficking does not require cross border movements of humans<sup>2</sup>. A person can be born, raised and trafficked in the same house without ever having left; it’s the crime of trafficking, not the movement of a person that comprises human trafficking.

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.publiclegaled.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/English\\_Human-Trafficking-In-Canada\\_2010.pdf](http://www.publiclegaled.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/English_Human-Trafficking-In-Canada_2010.pdf).

## **What Are the Different Stages of the Crime of Sex Trafficking?**

There is sometimes a misconception that sex trafficking victims are kidnapped, trapped, and transported to a life of sexual servitude. In some countries, parents will sell their children into sex trafficking, and in some cultures, it is honorable for a young woman to allow herself to be overtaken by sex traffickers who reportedly send a portion of the funds to her family for living expenses. While this happens occasionally, for the most part, sex trafficking victims are wooed using lures by a person who pretends to care about the potential victim. That process happens over a series of stages, and while the exact details of the stages may vary from case to case, the intent and purpose of the stages are very similar.

### ***Gaining Trust/Recruitment***

It is common for the trafficker to learn of a need of the potential victim and offer to fill that need in glamorous ways in order to motivate her to trust and become closer to him. For instance, if a potential victim needs love, he may woo her with words that cause her to feel loved and to trust him. If she needs shelter, the trafficker will offer her safe shelter and may even offer travel and glamorous hotels. If she needs family, the trafficker will offer to be her family and show her evidence of how he can satisfy her needs. This is the first stage of recruitment of a victim, gaining her trust which will help her begin to associate more closely with the trafficker.

### ***Seasoning/Breaking***

During the seasoning phase, the victim may feel that she is “falling in love” with the trafficker and that he is returning her affections. He will spend time learning about what and who she loves. While this may seem to be a development of their relationship to her, he is storing all of this information and will use it to control her at a later date in time. In this stage, the trafficker is fully aware that he is manipulating her for his ultimate goal of using her as a sex trafficking victim. There will usually be an attempt to separate the potential victim from her support system which often consists of family and friends. During this time, sexual contact with her increases as does the manipulation. Sometimes the trafficker will facilitate a new style of dressing for her that includes very seductive clothing or ask her to “dance” in a strip club to help them earn money. The trafficker’s goal during this stage is to get the victim to the point that she will do anything for him. This may involve some conflict between them and can lead the trafficker to demand that the potential victim prove her love for him.

## ***Turning Out***

During the turning out stage, the trafficker seeks an opportunity to coerce the victim into performing commercial sex for the first time. Once she has been prostituted by him, the trafficker takes control as her trafficker. Once the trafficker has persuaded the victim to “turn her first trick,” which is sex trafficking slang for the first time she has had sex with a sex buyer, he feels he has complete control over the victim.

## ***Maintaining Control***

Next, the trafficker must maintain the control he feels he has achieved. During the recruitment and seasoning phases, he has already gathered information from her about who or what she cares for deeply. He might threaten to, or even actually hurt or kill those she loves, if she decides to resist his control in any way, such as trying to escape. He will take advantage of her emotions because she most likely still believes she loves him and will try to please him to earn his love and affirmation. He now uses affection and affirmation, interspersed with manipulative control or violence against her and others to maintain control by keeping her off balance and to maximize the profits he can gain from selling her for sex.

Once the trafficker has gained control over the victim, there may be many short-term or long-term outcomes. She may be under his control, being sold for sex by him for many years, or may be traded to another trafficker in a deal which probably won't consider her feelings at all. She may have children by her trafficker which increases his control over her and may prolong their relationship. She may be forced to have an abortion if the trafficker finds out she is pregnant and he does not want her to have the child. She may contract a disease or be injured by a sex trafficker or sex buyer and die. On very rare occasions, she may determine she no longer wants to be trafficked and find help and services which allow her to get out of the life and begin rebuilding her life outside of sex trafficking.

## ***Recovery***

Recovery for those who have been sex trafficked and have somehow managed to get out of this life is difficult at best. They may suffer from many physical ailments and injuries that they have sustained while being sex trafficked. Common injuries or ailments include STDs, head injuries, sexual injuries, and physical ailments from

drug overdoses. Often, as a result of their feeling trapped or hopeless, they may attempt suicide, or death may occur as a result of physical assaults. As horrific as the physical injuries and ailments are, the psychological injuries are much more difficult from which to heal. Some of the commonly diagnosed conditions are posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), dissociative disorders, and many other deep emotional scars as a result of the severe trauma they have suffered while being sex trafficked. Many have been being sex trafficked after a life of abuse as a child, (which makes them more vulnerable to sex trafficking) and these childhood wounds may have not been healed either. Professional help physically, emotionally, and spiritually is often a necessary part of their healing. The healing may take years or even a lifetime.

## **How Is Sex Trafficking Different from Prostitution or Smuggling?**

Sex trafficking is often used as a term that is synonymous with prostitution; however, there are key differences between the two. Prostitution is the process of someone willingly engaging in a sex act for payment and having control over the use of that payment. While a small percentage of those engaged in prostitution are doing it willingly, the large majority are forced into prostitution. Therefore, when prostitution occurs as a result of sex trafficking, it should be called forced prostitution. Similarly, smuggling of persons is a crime that is separate from sex trafficking. Smuggling is a crime against a country, in which a person enters secretly and illegally. Sex trafficking is the controlling of and selling of a person for sex who may or may not have originated from outside the country. Sometimes the two crimes occur in conjunction with one another.

## **Language Is Important**

- Prostitute—while forced prostitution may occur during sex trafficking, the person being prostituted should not be called a prostitute. She is called a victim of sex trafficking while being trafficked or a survivor once she escapes the horrors of this crime.
- Sex buyer—common vernacular for a sex buyer is often a “john” or “trick.” A more appropriate name for the person buying sex is to name them for the crime they are committing, they should be called a sex buyer.
- Sex trafficker—while traffickers have often been called pimps, society has sometimes given the word pimp, a positive connotation. Using the term sex trafficker gives a clear description of who they are and the crime they are committing.

- Sex trafficking—is often wrongly referred to as the sex industry or sex trade. Those terms indicate that it is a legitimate business, not a crime. Sex trafficking is a crime punishable by law and should always be referred to as such.

Sex trafficking has been called one of the greatest crimes against humanity, and many of its victims and survivors would agree with that assessment. It is only as the world becomes more aware of this crime, the atrocities faced by its victims, and what to do if it is seen, that society will be able to stop sex trafficking.

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# Transnational Feminism and Sex Trafficking



Lenore Walker and Giselle Gaviria

The recent interest in human trafficking, a large percentage of which involves involuntary commercialized sex or sex trafficking, has caused a new look at what is sometimes called the oldest profession, prostitution, and created a new understanding of how people are crossing national borders around the world to support the trafficking economy. Research has suggested that the global income from sex trafficking is over \$150 billion, although it varies in different sections of the world (International Labour Organization, 2017). Polaris (2015) states that trafficking has become the second most lucrative crime in the world with drugs being number one. Often called a new form of slavery, victims of sex trafficking are moved from one area of the world to another more quickly and easier than people think is possible. Building such global economies and businesses has been termed, *transnationalism*, as the national borders are ignored and regional groups are put together, sometimes with people that are not even geographically near one another. Perhaps the best recent example is the movement of the Syrian people from their country, through other countries in the Middle East, into Western and Eastern European countries until finally settled in a new home. Despite the eradication of the old geographic boundaries by this migration, the Syrian culture remains fairly stable where ever the Syrians live, at least during the initial transnational migration period.

Antonopoulou and Konstantinidis (2017) have studied the Syrians who have migrated through Greece and were then sent to other Western and Eastern European countries. They found a high rate of children who have disappeared into the global world of forced sex trafficking. Any attempts to rescue these children, many of whom have been orphaned by the death of their parents either under the Syrian regime or during their flight, have been difficult if not impossible (see Walker's chapter "[Psychological Intervention with Sex-Trafficked Persons: Assessment and](#)

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**Survivor Therapy Empowerment Program (STEP)**” in this book). A transnational approach is necessary so Greece cooperates with other countries on the trafficking route that often goes through Turkey and Bulgaria before dispersing these children to other countries.

Other transnational approaches include the attempts to locate certain cultural groups, such as Muslims, who have crossed into Western countries including the United States. Often identified by the Hijab that women wear, they are easy to trace as they migrate outside the Middle East trying to keep their culture with all its intersectionalities rather than their nationalism. In Nigeria, there is a well-known network of brothels with top-level women who take charge of the girls who are sent to Western countries to provide trafficking sex services to men who want African women (see Sarachaga-Barato & Walker’s chapter “**Victims Becoming Victimizers**” on Victim to Victimizer in this book). When adding the feminist perspective to transnationalism, it includes the addition of analysis of power relationships and how the various intersections of gender, race, culture, economics, class, poverty, and histories of colonialism impact on the individual’s lifestyle and decisions made.

There is more than one feminist perspective concerning the commercial sex industry as described by Doezema (2005, 2010) classifying the views into those held around the issue of consent and choice. A dichotomy arose during the negotiations around the *UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking in Persons* (2000) where coalitions of sex workers formed, insisting prostitution is often a choice for women and, at the same time, human rights anti-sex trafficking groups made the claims that it is not voluntary given they are frequently kidnapped, held captive, coerced, and made unwilling participants being exploited by their trafficker managers in most parts of the world. Both groups held other similar feminist values despite their differences on the sex trafficking issue. While the anti-trafficking groups prevailed in the final formulation of policy, there was room for separating non-coerced or voluntary prostitution and some voluntary sex trafficking. Belle (chapter “**Defining Sex Trafficking**” in this book) presents an interesting model that suggests there are stages of accommodation that those who are sex trafficked go through beginning with being kidnapped or lured, then trusting their recruiter, followed by “seasoning or breaking” them, being turned out commercially, and learning to maintain control or seek recovery. Each of these stages may produce different psychological adjustments that could make the sex worker begin to believe she has choice about her entire situation despite the fact that she may only have some levels of choice and consent. This is a complicated issue but needs greater feminist scholarship given the compelling arguments made by sex worker rights advocates Pheterson (1989), Kempadoo (2001) and Barry (1979), most recently, Truong (2014) who examined the sex workers who gained legitimacy and labor rights in the Netherlands.

The international and national governments including the *US Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act* (PL-106–386) (2000) reauthorized every 5 years adopted the viewpoint that many sex trafficking victims are not voluntarily providing sex. It is a feminist issue because the vast majority of those exploited are women, children, or young LGBTQ and non-gender conforming persons. Their exploiters are usually men although there are a number of women victimizers being arrested as described later in chapter “[Victims Becoming Victimiziers](#)” by Sarachaga-Barato and Walker. Both the buyers who frequent them due to their own sex role socialization about what it means to be a man and the trafficking managers get their control partly because they are male, even with both male and female victims. Some feminists, such as psychologist Farley (2004), argue that prostitutes are also held captive by their backgrounds and sex role expectations as evidenced by their severe mental health difficulties when leaving sex work although others are equally as vocal that women make a choice to engage in prostitution and it is a noble profession that has lasted for eons. We discuss the economics that trap women in the commercial sex trade elsewhere in this book, but for now, it is important to state that when women and men can earn a sustainable wage at other occupations, they do not choose prostitution. Rather, there are many commonalities with other forms of gender violence including sexual abuse, rape, sexual harassment and exploitation, child sexual abuse, and intimate partner violence (domestic violence). Trauma-focused interventions are often modified to work with survivors of sex trafficking.

After studying the transnational pathways, the US government has developed legislation and regulations to identify and prosecute the traffickers and protect the victims. So far, the third part of the triangle, the buyers, have not been as aggressively pursued, but there appears to be efforts to decrease the need for commercial sex through feminist social training. For example, young boys are being trained to think about the victims as persons with feelings and needs rather than sex objects. Although the mass media have not yet bought into this new socialization, there are groups that remain hopeful even with the new US administration that so far appears to be hostile to feminist issues as evidenced by media announcements of the disbanding of former President Obama’s White House Task Force on women’s and girl’s health issues.

The US government passed the first major comprehensive legislation to combat sex trafficking in the United States and around the world in 2000 with the *Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act* (PL 106–386). Every 5 years since then the legislation has been reauthorized, and in 2015 in the *Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act* (PL 114–22) (2015), the scope of the act was considerably broadened to include child pornography in the definition of trafficking as well as child abuse. It also increased penalties for both buyers and traffickers including forfeiture of property and raised the evidentiary burden for defendants who attempted to prove they had a reasonable belief that a minor was over the age of 18 from a preponderance of evidence to clear and convincing evidence. It was hoped that these changes would help prosecute more traffickers and also hold the buyers legally responsible for having a