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Prostitution Policy: Revolutionizing Practice through a Gendered Perspective. Lenore Kuo.

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system is an audacious one which should be understood by social security's proponents. It should also be compared with the evidence being collected in other countries such as Chile which have already privatized their social insurance systems. The fact that the Chilean government now spends sizable tax resources through social assistance subsidies to supplement the incomes of poor elderly people while, at the same time, underwriting the profits of commercial carriers, presents a somewhat different picture to the optimistic one presented in this book.

Lenore Kuo, *Prostitution Policy: Revolutionizing Practice through a Gendered Perspective*. New York: New York University Press, 2002. \$40.00 hardcover.

Prostitution is currently a key social, political and economic issue in many communities across the country and around the world. Kuo indicates that her interest in prostitution policy was sparked while attending a conference in Amsterdam which has a much more liberal stance toward the sex industry than the United States. Although prostitution in a few communities is considered a legitimate business operation, in many cases it is labeled sexual exploitation at best and criminalized sexual behavior at worst. In this book, Kuo indicates that prostitution is a very different social issue when viewed through a gendered lens. The image of prostitution as an enterprise is greatly altered when observed from the perspective of the women involved.

This book reviews public policies dealing with prostitution from a predominantly feminist perspective. Kuo breaks these policies down into their component aspects: intrinsic characteristics; conceptual construction; current practice; ideal practice. The author is mainly interested in anti-abolitionist prostitutes and policies in favor of prostitutes rights. In this case, the author uses the term anti-abolitionist to connote those who believe that prostitution should be considered a legitimate option, and that it is not necessarily as exploitative as some of the other options available to women today. Most of the data for this study was gathered through interviews with working prostitutes and other stakeholders in the community.

One of the aims of this book is to clear up misconceptions about the prostitution industry. First, although the most frequently observed form of prostitution, streetwalking does not

constitute the majority of prostitution. Although these women are the most likely to be noticed by the public, arrested and labeled as criminal, their activities make up only a small amount of the actual industry. They do however make up the bulk of the public image of prostitution. Also, in many cases prostitutes are dismissed from public policy formation because they have been the victims of childhood sexual abuse or other forms of sexual assault. These already stigmatized women are further marginalized because they have been the victims of crime.

Most of the book is dedicated to the current state of prostitution policy. Kuo discusses such concepts as the relationship between heterosexual activity and prostitution, heterosexual and homosexual prostitution, the conceptual constructs of sexuality and prostitution, the ideal character of intercourse and prostitution and the current legal status and policy of the sex industry. These topics are carefully fleshed out to describe prostitution as it is currently practiced. The feminist framework in which this information is presented might be quite revolutionary to those that do not ordinarily engender that perspective. The book ends with a chapter on solutions to the current issue through policy recommendations. In general, it can be deduced from Kuo recommendations that she espouses a stance that decriminalizes prostitution, yet regulates its practice.

This book is well written and covers an important, controversial topic from a previously under-explored perspective. It is well organized and might serve well as an excellent resource in a special topics course on prostitution. The language can be technical, especially in the methods and policy recommendations section, therefore it may not be as readily understood by the non-academic public. There are sections where the author indicates that it might be useful for most readers to skip over, unless truly interested in the methodology. In general however this is an interesting and enlightening read on one of today's hottest topics.

Robert A. Dentler, *Practicing Sociology: Selected Fields*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002. \$22.95 papercover.

Sociologists have historically been divided on the question of social and political engagement. While some have consistently argued for a value free sociology that avoids engagement of this kind, others have urged sociologists to generate knowledge for