

# Trafficked

*Kathleen Maltzahn. (2008). Sydney: University of New South Wales Press*

REVIEW BY HALEY CLARK

**Kathleen Maltzahn is a leading activist on behalf of trafficked women and the founder of Project Respect, an organisation dedicated to ending violence against women in the sex industry.**

In *Trafficked*, Kathleen Maltzahn brings together the stories of women who have been trafficked and the work that “put trafficking on the agenda and the subsequent responses by state and federal governments to the problem” (p.16). Delivered in a tone of dedication and optimism Maltzahn explains how the issue of trafficking in Australia progressed from ignorance and a “... general lack of attention to violence against and exploitation of women in the sex industry” to a “remarkable shift in public policy” (p.72), the allocation of government funds to “eradicate trafficking in persons” and the need for further action.

Maltzahn deals swiftly with stereotypes and explains what it really means to be trafficked, to be brought to another country, put on “contract” and forced to repay “debt”:

**[Women] were coming to Australia on the promise of decent conditions and good pay. Many knew they might be doing prostitution, or at least, would be connected to the sex industry through karaoke bars or strip clubs. Some, a small minority, had no inkling that they would have anything to do with prostitution. Either way, their experience was similar. Women told us of being lied to, raped, beaten and locked up, of having no control over how or if they had sex with customers, having to have sex when they were sick or menstruating, being deprived of their passports and threatened with violence and deportation. (p.58)**

How these circumstances translate into the lives of women who are trafficked is demonstrated through Maltzahn’s constructions of the stories of real women, keeping the reader centred on the central issue: the women. Maltzahn draws on women’s stories to provide parallels to the experiences of women trafficked into Australia and abroad, sex tourism and trafficking, and trafficking into the sex industry and domestic violence. For instance, Maltzahn associates the experiences of violence and enslavement of Filipino women trafficked into brothels with those “trafficked” into domestic relationships—the “mail-order bride” phenomenon—and suggests that the (similar) struggles with political, legislative, organisational and governmental responses to trafficking for marriage and prostitution tourism set the foundations for responding to trafficking for prostitution.

In *Trafficked* Maltzahn provides a human face not only of women trafficked into prostitution, but also of those committed to improving the position of trafficked women and reducing opportunities for trafficking. By detailing actual events and the names of those involved, the issues are made real and immediate. Although the book demonstrates how campaigning, lessons from abroad, key events, lobbying and building alliances led to cultural, political and policy change, Maltzahn argues that common decency and dedication is what ultimately made the difference:

**There are many ways to explain social change, and no doubt there are many people who can and will look at trafficking in Australia and provide a sophisticated analysis of why policy changed. From where I stood, aside from [reporters] [Elisabeth] Wynhausen and [Natalie] O’Brien making sure readers had the facts, much of it had to do with individual decency. It’s not an analysis I’d usually give a lot of truck to, but it explained what otherwise didn’t make sense. (p.67)**

In the final chapter of her book, Maltzahn lobbies governments to do more to address trafficking. Maltzahn provides instructions on how to provide “genuine protection and restitution” for women trafficked to Australia and to progress towards the eradication of trafficking. Maltzahn sends a clear message that we have the capacity to move forward in addressing trafficking, stating, “[b]y changing a few key areas, the government can, without adding another cent, dramatically strengthen its anti-trafficking work” (p.13). Maltzahn identifies seven steps that “would help reinstate Australia as an international leader both in

human rights and in strengthening the status of women” (p.103) and provides the details about who should be involved and how, what models should be adopted in Australia and even nominates the organisations and people that need to be involved. The program suggested includes: declaration of amnesty to all trafficked women; expanded and unconditional support to trafficked women; enhanced government–NGO collaboration; the provision of education on trafficking to broader community; inclusion trafficking and violence in the sex industry in the broader violence against women prevention agenda; improved training for those who come into contact with trafficked women, such as immigration officials, judges, lawyers and community representatives; an investment in research; and commitment to prevention by dealing with demand.

Left with no space for excuses—“it doesn’t seem much to ask” (p.101)—Maltzahn concludes with a demand for action:

**Trafficking in this country is still a manageable problem. With some intelligent, considered work by the federal and state governments, we have a real chance of significantly reducing this cruel, corrosive crime. (p.113)**

More information on Project Respect can be found at <[www.projectrespect.org.au/](http://www.projectrespect.org.au/)>

See also Furgus, L. (2005). *Trafficking in women for sexual exploitation* (ACSSA Briefing No.5). Melbourne: ACSSA, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

**Haley Clark** is a Research Officer at the Australian Institute of Family Studies.

## LITERATURE HIGHLIGHTS

COMPILED BY JOAN KELLEHER, LIBRARIAN

The following are a selection of resources recently received by the Australian Centre for the Study of Sexual Assault (ACSSA) Library. Print resources are available via the interlibrary loan system. Contact your local library for details. Electronic resources are available directly via the web address. The inclusion of a publication in this list does not necessarily mean that it is endorsed by ACSSA.

### Adult survivors

*Fragments of home: Piecing life together after childhood sexual abuse.* (2008). Lisbon, M. Fairfield, Vic: Braidwood Press.

As a child, the author was sexually abused by a trusted caregiver. In this book, she reflects on the experience of sexual abuse and its effects as a way of learning new, healthier patterns of relating to oneself and others. The book and the accompanying CD explore psychological and spiritual themes of self reflection and understanding as a means of recovering from abuse.

### Consent

*Amaor fati? Gender habitus and young people's negotiation of (hetero)sexual consent.* (2008). Powell, A. *Journal of Sociology*, 44(2), 167–184.

In recent years, the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has sparked the interest of some feminist sociologists who, in response to a perceived cultural

determinism of the postmodern turn, are seeking theoretical space to consider women’s and men’s agency within a changeable, albeit constrained, world of gender relations. This article draws upon the voices of young women and men (aged 14–24) talking about their perceptions and experiences of love / sex relationships. It explores the potential for an adaptation of Bourdieu’s central concepts of habitus and symbolic violence, to understand the interplay of structure and agency in young people’s negotiations of heterosexual encounters. Finally, the implications of this analysis for young people’s relationships and for the prevention of sexual coercion will be considered. (Journal abstract)

### Homelessness

*Sexual violence, trauma and homelessness: Why are our responses disengaged.* (2008). Tully, D. *Parity*, 21(3), 61–62.

Without an understanding of the links between childhood sexual abuse and homelessness, service responses may fail to meet the needs of many young