



Book Review

Sex industry slavery: Protecting Canada's youth.
University of Toronto Press, 2020. 277 pp, with index.

By Robert Christmas

Review by John Winterdyck
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Before completing his Ph.D. in sociology in 2017 at the University of Manitoba, Robert Christmas had amassed over forty years of experience in various Canadian law enforcement (i.e., Winnipeg police force) and peacekeeping roles. Both his practical and academic training makes him amply qualified to have written this book.

The book is based on his dissertation (Modern-day slavery and the sex industry: Raising the voice of survivors and various stakeholders across the

spectrum of those who combat sex trafficking in Manitoba, Canada). For this work Christmas received the Canadian Distinguished Dissertation Award, a notable accolade.

The title of Christmas's dissertation is arguably more revealing and reflective of the focus of the book as it reflects what the book strives to achieve; that is, giving a voice to the survivors, mostly women, who have been trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Manitoba. To do so, Christmas conducted sixty-one interviews with survivors and various stakeholders and frontline workers over seven years. Eight of the interviews were conducted with survivors who were trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

In addition to giving a voice to the various participants, Christmas's book is divided into ten distinct chapters which offer an insightful overview of the sex industry and human trafficking in Canada (but mostly Manitoba), and most of the chapters conclude with several key summary points which provide the foundation for a series of wide-ranging recommendations (in Chapter 10). The recommendations provide a roadmap for how we might begin to protect Canada's youth, with particular attention to those more vulnerable groups such as Indigenous girls and women.

For those who are somewhat familiar with the subject matter, the central findings are not novel. Yet, it would have been useful to situate some of the key findings within the four UN Office on

Drugs and Crime (UNODC) pillars of combatting human trafficking (i.e., Prevention, Protection, Prosecution, & Partnership). Nevertheless, in using a qualitative approach, Christmas makes excellent use of quotes from the various interviewees to lend face-validity to the range of themes and topics covered in the book. Since the eight survivors who were interviewed have gone on to combat the sexual exploitation of trafficking girls and women, their voice lends considerable credibility to the central findings. However, since the data is based mainly on interviews conducted with survivors and an assortment of key actors from Manitoba, some caution should be exercised when generalizing other Canadian jurisdiction findings, let alone other parts of the world. For example, Christmas spends little time situating the findings within a broader national and transnational context, and given the complexity of the subject matter consideration could have been given to using a mixed-methods approach to help strengthen his conclusions and recommendations.

Nevertheless, Christmas's book represents a noteworthy contribution to the growing body of literature on human trafficking. The book complements the existing and more limited body of related literature on sexual exploitation and human trafficking within Canada. Perhaps, most importantly, the author offers a bevy of recommendations for policy reform and future research that should serve to inspire and guide our efforts to combat the enigma of human trafficking.