Canadian anti-trafficking policy and practice. Elya is a board member at Canada’s oldest sex worker-run organization, Maggie’s: The Toronto Sex Workers Action Project.

Emily van der Meulen is a Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Centre for Research on Inner City Health, St. Michael's Hospital, Toronto. She holds a supplementary Post-Doctoral Fellowship with the Comparative Program on Health and Society at the University of Toronto. She is also a board member of Maggie’s. Her research interests include international and Canadian sex work policies, sex industry labour organizing, and decriminalization.

EXPLORING MONEY, POWER AND INTIMACY IN THE SEX INDUSTRY

Melissa Hope Ditmore, Antonia Levy and Alys Willman, Eds.
New York: Zedman, 2010

REVIEWED BY NAOMI DE SZEGHEO-LANG

Sex Work Matters aims to bridge some of the current divides in scholarship on sex work/ers, which, according to the editors, revolve around divisions within feminism, across disciplines, and between academics and activists. Largely influenced by U.S. policy that demarcates “sex trafficking” as the most pressing aspect of the sex industry, Sex Work Matters challenges dominant narratives that focus on violence, abuse, and coercion. It offers alternatives to standard “mainstream” research projects that all too often frame sex workers as women who have sacrificed their good moral standing or as agentless victims and dupes of exploitative systems.

Not only do such existing accounts erase the myriad of choices people (of any and all genders) make to engage in sex work, but moralistic frameworks
also inherently assume all workers begin from a privileged position of having their perceived ‘moral worth’ intact and unquestioned. The reality is that many people who occupy marginalized positions do not have this luxury as a starting point—racialized people, indigenous populations, queer people, and those with chronic mental health concerns and physical disabilities have all historically, though differently, had their morality treated as suspect. This recognition, acknowledged but not elaborated upon by the book, further complicates debates around previous constructions of sex workers.

Given these considerations, the reframing called for by Sex Work Matters is much needed, and the intervention is an important one. Although many scholars and activists have been contributing to anti-morality and anti-trafficking discourses for some time, there is still a shortage of contemporary academic collections that reflect current research across a variety of disciplines. However, while the intent of Sex Work Matters is clear, the execution is inconsistent.

Several pieces in this collection build strong foundations from which to reimagine scholarly engagement with sex work/ers—notably, chapters by Laura Augustin, Jo Weldon, and Maggie O’Neill and Jane Pitcher map out potential alternative frameworks and methodologies in order to ground both the research process and results, and engage the lived experiences of sex workers in more reflective ways. Though each case presented in this book strives to challenge dominant paradigms (disciplinary, socio-cultural, legal, discursive), some do so only while continuing to uphold familiar tropes of sex workers, and/or to reinforce hierarchies of the nonparticipant researcher and the participant researched.

With the goals of Sex Work Matters including a creation of more dialogue across research/ers, it seems logical—indeed, perhaps imperative—that an intersectional approach be fostered. Here, a nuanced intersectional approach must mean more than simply looking at interrelating factors of race-class-ability-gender-age-sexuality (an equation that is challenging enough for some). Intersectionality in this case should also encompass awareness and understanding of various forms of sex work and the relationships between and among them. While some chapters elucidate these linkages, others stay firmly rooted in their own cases and do not explore broader connections to other employment in the sex industry. Rather than undermine the collection, however, these shortfalls actually serve to support the editors’ call for more dialogue between researchers and activists alike.

Reading from a sex-positive and sex work-positive feminist framework, Sex Work Matters ultimately leaves something to be desired. The analysis across chapters is inconsistent, and should be pushed further in order to better reflect debates and activisms that have been occurring outside of the mainstream academy for some time now. While including different viewpoints is important in furthering dialogue, editors must pay careful attention to the ways in which they place differing approaches in conversation with one another. Ditmore, Levy and Willman tend to fall back onto a human rights discourse that glosses over differences in geopolitical location in favour of advocating for sex workers to “enjoy the same rights and conditions as anyone else.” They fail to substantially ask the question, however, who is this ‘anyone else’? This is left as an unmarked (highly privileged) group that has full access to legal, state-sanctioned support—one that is, indeed, elusive.

With that being said, the collection offers an important step in the right direction, and begins to reframe the terms for engaging research on and with sex work/ers. It is a good resource for those seeking an initial sampling of contemporary research on sex work that does not rely on narrowed visions of trafficking and calls for abolition. Readers should bring an open mind to alternative methodologies and lines of inquiry while keeping a critical eye to potential reproduction of research inequalities. Ideally, the contributions made by Sex Work Matters will encourage more publications of this kind, and will continue to expand the field of sex work studies in ways that are useful to, and inclusive of, sex workers and their demands.

Naomi de Szegeoo-Lang is a doctoral student in Gender, Feminist, and Women’s Studies at York University. Her research areas include feminist cultural studies, queer theory, sexuality studies, and queer cultural production. Her current work takes up productive tensions between sexual citizenship, homonationalisms, affect, and feminist porn.

THE WOMEN’S MOVEMENT: INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE STATE

Lee Ann Banaszak
New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010

REVIEWED BY LISA MAE BOUCHER

The Women’s Movement: Inside and Outside the State analyses the intersection between social movements and states. Exploring the role of feminist activists located within the state bureaucracy, Lee Ann Banaszak considers the important contributions that feminist insiders made to the American women’s movement from 1960-2000. Although she notes the relative weakness of the U.S. women’s policy machinery in comparison with other liberal democracies, Banaszak argues that feminist insiders were dispersed across the bureaucracy and were often able to develop policies and create political opportunities which were consistent with movement goals. Critical of scholars who argue that insiders are inevitably co-opted and committed to limited